

Current Concerns

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

English Edition of *Zeit-Fragen*

The US are using Volkswagen (VW) to test their TTIP power

by Professor Dr Eberhard Hamer



Eberhard Hamer
(picture ma)

What the United States and their global corporations call “Free Trade Agreement” (TTIP) has been compared to NATO by former US-vice president *Biden*. It is meant to subject Europe to American economic domination and their interests. This

has an inner and an outer goal:

- For a long time, the *Juncker* clique in Brussels has been working on dismantling the nation states in Europe and on disempowering their parliaments in order to gain central power for the EU

Commission. This is why the politbu-ro in Brussels is negotiating in secret with only the US, excluding the nation states and even keeping things secret from them. This is in contradiction to the EU clause of subsidiarity and sovereignty. But centralisation is *Juncker*’s main programme as has been demonstrated in the financial crisis (from a competitive union to a union of liability and debt and from there to a financial union) and now in Poland in the EU intervention against the disempowerment of US agents in the Polish national broadcasting corporation. Brussels does not tolerate divergent opinions in governments or parliaments nor does it allow any restrictions of US influence in Europe on their part.

- Outwardly, TTIP is meant to start an economic war (just like NATO) of the US economy against Russia (sanctions, oil embargo, currency war). According to the *Brzezinski* doctrine, the US can only maintain their status as a super-power if they keep their grip on Europe while Europe can only be controlled if the central power Germany is kept under control. This is not only politically true (Atlanticists), but also economically (the majority of DAX companies is controlled by the US). The plan is now that by means of TTIP the whole region be welded into a common Euro-Atlantic economic region, directed against Russia.

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German Association of Judges rejects to establish an Investment Court System for TTIP

The *German Association of Judges (Deutscher Richterbund, DRB)** rejects the proposal of the European Commission to establish an investment court within the framework of the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP). The DRB sees neither a legal basis nor a need for such a court.

The clearly implied assumption in the proposal for an International Investment Court that the courts of the EU Member States might fail to grant foreign investors effective judicial protection, lacks factual basis. Should the negotiating partners have identified weaknesses in this area in individual EU Member States, these should be taken up with the national legislature and clearly defined. It would then be up to the legislators and those responsible for the judiciary to provide remedy within the proven system of national and European legal protection. Only in this way can

the full legal rights to which any law-seeking party in Germany and the European Union is entitled, be guaranteed. The creation of special courts for certain groups of litigants is the wrong way forward.

Review in detail

The European Commission’s proposed Investment Court System (ICS), that is to be integrated into a system of mediation and consultation, would be responsible for claims relating to breaches of investor protection clauses included in the Treaty (Art. 1, para. 1). According to the definition in the proposed text, investments extend to any type of asset, including stocks, shares in companies, intellectual property rights, movable property and receivables (Chapter II, Definition x2). The legal protection of investment thus extends from civil law through to general administrative law and social and tax legislation. The Commission’s proposal would mean that an ICS would obtain a judicial competence in these areas in order to ensure comprehensive protection of the investor, who should be able to resort to ICS when

incurring losses through a breach of investor protection rights (Art. 1 para. 1).

Missing legislative competence

The German Association of Judges has serious doubts whether the European Union has the competence to institute an Investment Court. The establishment of an ICS would oblige the European Union and the Member States, upon the conclusion of an agreement, to submit to the jurisdiction of an ICS and the application of certain international procedures chosen by the claimants (Art. 6 para. 5, 2; Art. 7 para. 1). The decisions of the ICS would be binding (Art. 30 para. 1).

An ICS would not only limit the legislative powers of the Union and the Member States; it would also alter the established court system within the Member States and the European Union. In the opinion of the German Association of Judges, there is no legal basis for such a change by the Union. As the European Court stated in its Opinion 1/09 of 8 March 2011 on the establishment of a European Patent Court, the Union

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* The German Association of Judges (DRB) is the largest professional organisation of judges of all kinds of courts and public prosecutors in Germany. The DRB is a member organisation of the International Association of Judges.

"The US are using Volkswagen ..."

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This seizure of power over Europe by means of economy politics and commercial law with the help of TTIP is accompanied with attacks on economic strongholds, mainly in Germany, which are not yet controlled by the US. The main target is currently Volkswagen.

Twice *General Motors* has attempted to take over "the fat VW" by means of unlimited Fed credits. The first time they were beaten by the *Porsche* family, the second time their lawsuit against Lower Saxony Law at VW (stipulating a vetoing power) was rejected. Now they are trying to bleed VW for a third time, through US lawyers and administrations commissioned by them. The goal is to weaken VW, to make it cheap, in order to be able to take it over for a lower price.

Were VW to try a reciprocal coup in the US, the US government would immediately intervene and declare the transaction a violation of national security. The real current VW scandal is that the German government is not backing VW, that it is obviously more loyal to the US power than to the over a hundred thousand VW employees.

If we allow the Americans to destroy VW in favour of the two American competitors *Ford* and *Opel* (General Motors), Germany will lose one of its economic beacons, not only on the national but also on the international level. This illustrates what the US will undertake also against the others of our corporations and know-how monopolists, with the help of US law installed in Germany through TTIP.

And thus it is not surprising that a government that keeps silent about the destruction of VW also tolerates and even supports the seizure of power of the Ger-

man economy by US corporations. A destruction campaign like the one the US has launched against VW would be inconceivable conversely for Germans in America – and it would not be tolerated by any US government or any Congress. This demonstrates again the worth of a contract between a powerful (the US) and a powerless partner (EU) if it is negotiated between a global power on the one side and its puppet officials on the other (EU Commission) and if the officials of the employers' association pursue their corporations' interests, against the majority of their medium-sized member companies.

The importance of the US economic seizure of power over Europe for the US president is demonstrated by *Obama's* plan to visit the Hanover Fair in order to "align politics and economy in favour of TTIP."

(Translation *Current Concerns*)**"German Association of Judges ..."**

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maintains "a complete system of legal remedies and procedures designed to ensure review of the legality of acts of the institutions (para. 70)". Like the proposed Patent Court that was then being assessed, the ICS would be a court which would be "outside the institutional and judicial framework of the European Union" (para. 71).

Like the Patent Court, it would be "an organisation with a distinct legal personality under international law". It is clear that if a decision of the ICS were to be in breach of European Union law, that decision could not be the subject of "infringement proceedings nor could it give rise to any financial liability on the part of one or more Member States" (para. 88). Consequently, an ICS would "deprive courts of Member States of their powers in relation to the interpretation and application of European Union law and the Court of its powers to reply, by preliminary ruling, to questions referred by those courts and, consequently, would alter the essential character of the powers which the Treaties confer on the institutions of the European Union and on the Member States and which are indispensable to the preservation of the very nature of European Union law" (para. 89).

The German Association of Judges sees no need for the establishment of a special court for investors. The Member States are all constitutional states, which

provide and guarantee access to justice in all areas where the state has jurisdiction to all law-seeking parties. It is for the Member States to ensure access to justice for all and to ensure feasible access for foreign investors, by providing the courts with the relevant resources. Hence, the establishment of an ICS is the wrong way to guarantee legal certainty.

In addition, the German Association of Judges calls on the German and European legislators to significantly curb recourse to arbitration within the framework of the protection of international investors.

Independence of judges

Neither the proposed procedure for the appointment of judges of the ICS nor their position meet the international requirements for the independence of courts. As such, the ICS emerges not as an international court, but rather as a permanent court of arbitration.

The Magna Carta of Judges of the Consultative Council of European Judges (CCJE) of 17 November 2010 (CCJE (2010/3) calls for the legally secured independence of judges in professional and financial terms (para. 3). Decisions on their selection, appointment and career must be based on objective criteria and be taken in such a way as to ensure the independence (para. 5). The ICS meets neither criterion. The decisions to be taken by the ICS would not only relate to questions of civil law, but administrative, labour, social and fiscal law would also significantly come into play. Selecting the judges of the ICS

from the group of experts in public international law and international investment law with experience in the resolution of international commercial disputes (Art. 9 para. 4) considerably narrows down the pool of candidates and sets aside the indispensable expertise in each relevant national sectoral legislation. The pool of judges will be limited to the circle of persons already professionally predominantly engaged in international arbitration. This impression is reinforced by the fact that the selection process is not yet outlined in detail. Nevertheless, it will depend on the independence of the selection committee and its distance from the international arbitration to what extent a top selection of national lawyers with specialist knowledge of the relevant fields of law is ensured. So far at least, this is in no way guaranteed.

In addition, a term of office of six years with the possibility of a further term of office, a monthly base salary ("retainer fee") of approximately 2,000 euro for the judges of first instance and 7,000 euro for those serving on the Appeal Tribunal, plus an expense allowance in the event of actual service (Art. 9 para. 12 and Art. 10 para. 12) cast doubt on whether the criteria for the technical and financial independence of judges of an international court are fulfilled.

Source: *DRB-Opinion No. 04/16, February 2016; www.statewatch.org documents: commission draft text – investment: http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2015/sepember/tradoc_153807.pdf*

(Translation *statewatch.org/Current Concerns*)

“An important contribution to peace-building measures”

Preface to the first international edition of the “Body Count – the number of victims after 10 years ‘War on Terror’; Iraq – Afghanistan – Pakistan” (March 2015)

by Dr h.c. Hans-Christof von Sponeck, former Deputy UN Secretary-General*

ef. Every person who is killed, is one too many. The majority of citizens in Western countries does not want war. In a time where wars are fought without end, where international law and international humanitarian law are constantly being trampled on and ignored, the present study ‘Body Count – Casualty Figures after 10 years “War on Terror”; Iraq – Afghanistan – Pakistan’ the International Physicians against Nuclear War, IPPNW (German, US and Canadian section) is urgently needed and a milestone. It is also urgently needed in order to oppose the indifference of warring states regarding the number of human victims and to help the decision-makers of politics and civil society to claim the right and justice for the crimes committed. It is the world’s first meta-analysis that evaluates the major surveys and aggregates its results.

The study, which was published in September last year in the first international edition in German (English edition March 2015), has revealed that by 2013 the actual number of deaths, resulting from the “war on terror”, is almost ten times as high as previously known. With great honesty and under appreciation of the previously available sources and studies and with numer-

ous other sources, the authors, Joachim Guilliard, Lühr Henken and Knut Mellenthin wrote a well prepared documentation on the true loss of human lives as a result of wars that were carried out since 2001 in the name of the “war on terror”. They prove that the total number of victims of the wars in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iraq is drastically underestimated in most public representations. In fact, the death toll is well over one million. After 10 years of war in Iraq, the death toll has reached one million. The actual death toll in Afghanistan is 220,000, in Pakistan it is approximately 80,000. This appalling extent of these deaths must urgently be perceived by the public and also widely discussed. This even more, since the human costs of war are not known to either the population or to the decision-makers.

At the same time, the reader of this study is taken along in the trouble to come to reliable statements. The sources are very heterogeneous and the statistical intervals for relevant studies are very wide.

In the following we publish the preface to the study by Hans-Christof von Sponeck, former UN coordinator for Iraq.

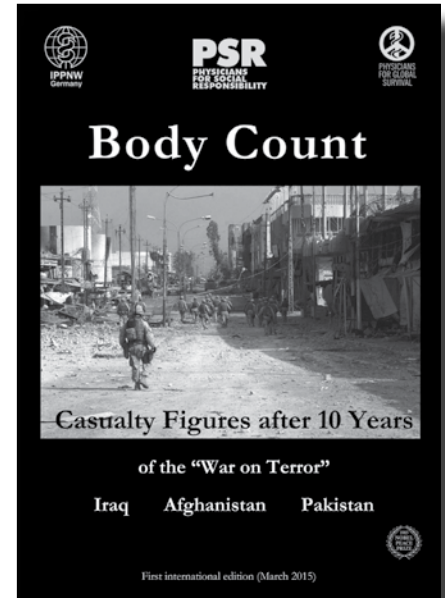
The U.S.-led *Multinational Force (MNA)* in Iraq, the *NATO International Security Assistance Force (ISAF)* in Afghanistan and the U.S. *Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF-A)*, also in Afghanistan, have carefully kept a running total of fatalities they have suffered. However, the military’s only interest has been in counting “their” bodies: 4,804 MNA soldiers have died in Iraq between March 2003 and February 2012, the date when the U.S. body counting stopped. As of early end 2014, 3,485 ISAF and OEF soldiers have lost their lives in Afghanistan since 2001.

Since U.S. and other foreign military boots are only intermittently and secretly on the ground in Pakistan, mainly in the northern tribal areas, there are no body count statistics for coalition force casualties available for Pakistan.

The picture of physically wounded military personnel for both war theatres is incomplete. Only the U.S. military is identified:

- (a) 32,223 were wounded during the 2003 Iraq invasion and its aftermath, and
- (b) until November 2014 20,040 were wounded in Afghanistan.²

No figures are known for mental disorders involving military personnel who



International edition: www.ippnw.de/commonFiles/pdfs/Frieden/Body_Count_first_international_edition_2015_final.pdf
The report can be ordered also directly from IPPNW.

have been deployed in Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Officially ignored are casualties, injured or killed, involving enemy combatants and civilians.³⁴ This, of course, comes as no surprise. It is not an oversight but a deliberate omission. The U.S. authorities have kept no known records of such deaths.⁴ This would have destroyed the arguments that freeing Iraq by military force from a dictatorship, removing Al-Qaeda from Afghanistan and eliminating safe-havens for terrorists in Pakistan’s tribal areas has prevented terrorism from reaching the U.S. homeland, improved global security and advanced human rights, all at “defendable” costs.⁵

However, facts are indeed stubborn. Governments and civil society know now that on all counts these assertions have proved to be preposterously false. Military

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* Dr h.c. Hans-C. von Sponeck, UN Assistant Secretary General & UN Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq (1998–2000); UN Resident Coordinator for Pakistan (1988–94) covering also Afghanistan.

“As the authors of Body Count point out [...] it has been politically important to downplay Allied forces’ responsibility for the massive carnage and destruction in the region. It has been similarly essential for U.S. policymakers to hide from view the trillions of dollars expended since 2001, lest recognition of these costs contribute to war-weariness among the Western domestic populations.

A politically useful option for U.S. political elites has been to attribute the on-going violence to internecine conflicts of various types, including historical religious animosities, as if the resurgence and brutality of such conflicts is unrelated to the destabilization caused by decades of outside military intervention.”

Source: Robert M. Gould, PSR, Tim Takaro, PGS: *Body Count*, Foreword by Physicians for Social Responsibility (USA) and Physicians for Global Survival (Canada)

The estimate of the casualty figures conducted in this study also shows that the much-praised precision weapons do not alter the high percentage of civilians killed in war or dying as an indirect consequence.

Jens Wagner: *Body Count*, Introduction by the editor

"An important contribution ..."

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battles have been won in Iraq and Afghanistan but at enormous costs to human security and trust among nations. One must not forget the financial costs.⁶ The 21st century has seen a loss of innocent civilian life at an unprecedented scale, especially in Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan. Nobody should even dare to ask the question whether it was worth it! As independent U.S. journalist *Nir Rosen* noted, "the hundreds of thousands of dead Iraqis are not better off, [...] the children who lost their fathers aren't better off, [...] the hundreds and thousands of refugees are not better off."⁷

The *IPPNW Body Count* publication must be seen as a significant contribution to narrowing the gap between reliable estimates of victims of war, especially civilians in Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan and tendentious, manipulated or even fraudulent accounts. These have in the past blurred the picture of the magnitude of death and destitution in these three countries. Subjective and pre-conceived reporting certainly is a serious matter. This includes the dissemination of deliberately falsified information. In the context of the Iraq and Afghanistan

"Similarly, the Vietnam war's consequent political destabilization of the region, associated with the rise of the horrific Khmer Rouge regime in Cambodia, is reminiscent of the recent "post-war" destabilization in Iraq and neighbors that has been conducive to the rise of brutal Caliphate "wannabes" such as ISIS that is now terrorizing the region, with often brutal aerial and ground responses by U.S., Canadian and local forces."

Source: Robert M. Gould, PSR, Tim Takaro, PGS: *Body Count*, Foreword by Physicians for Social Responsibility (USA) and Physicians for Global Survival (Canada)

wars, there are many examples of manipulated "facts." The U.S. Department of Defense's shortlived (2001/02) Office of Strategic Influence (OSI) is one stark example of government-generated mis- and dis-information meant to influence public opinion in supporting its Iraq policies.

With this publication the public becomes aware of how difficult it has been to grasp the real dimensions of these wars and how rare independent and non-partisan casualty assessments have been. For governments and inter-governmental organizations, the *IPPNW* review represents a powerful *aide mémoire* of their legal and moral responsibility to

"We [the West] wiped out everything from Mali to Afghanistan."

Willy Wimmer

hold perpetrators accountable. What is reflected in the *IPPNW* study is not for the history books alone, but much more significant it is a plea for justice to prevail.

Without the credible information contained in the *IPPNW* Body Count publication it would be even more difficult to seek redress and justice. As the picture becomes clearer thanks to organizations such as *IPPNW* about dead, wounded, traumatized, tortured, poisoned (due to depleted uranium and white phosphorus), dislocated and impoverished civilians, accountability for the crimes committed is more and more within reach. Winning the battle over the integrity of information, it must be stressed, unequivocally constitutes a prerequisite for a dangerously overdue debate. Global leaders in governments and in the United Nations can no longer escape from an open and intensive reflection, together with civil society, on the origins of recent conflicts. The public conscience is not willing to accept further procrastination. People on every continent, especially the young who are the involuntary inheritors of conflict, insist on actions for peace. Nothing less!

Economics Nobel Prize laureate *Joseph E. Stiglitz*, calculates in his book "The Three Trillion Dollar War: The True Cost of the Iraq Conflict" (2008) that the costs of just the Iraq invasion amount to about \$3 trillion: This is sixty-fold of what the Bush administration had originally budgeted for in Congress. The damage brought about in Iraq is not included therein.

IPPNW's timely *Body Count* publication is evidence of its unrelenting commitment to "ending war and to addressing the causes of armed conflict" and, as such, an important contribution to actions for peace.

¹ See *Casualties.org: Iraq Coalition Casualty Count*, available at <http://icasualties.org/>.

² See Breitbart Newsletter <http://www.breitbart.com/national-security/2014/11/11/over-20k-soldiers-wounded-in-afghan-war-theater/>

³ In 2011, the *Brussels Tribunal (BT)* convened an international conference in Ghent (Belgium) on Iraqi academia. It revealed that 449 academics had been murdered since the U.S./UK invasion in 2003. Neither the occupation authorities nor the government of Iraq carried out an investigation of these crimes.

⁴ Former U.S. Defense Secretary *Donald Rumsfeld* in his memoirs *Known and Unknown* (Penguin Books, 2011) refers to Iraqi death squads and sectarianism as causes of civilian casualties. This is not wrong. He omits, however, any reference to U.S. or coalition contributions to the death of Iraqi civilians.

⁵ Former U.S. President *George W. Bush* concluded in his memoirs *Decision Points* (Virginia Books, 2010): "I did not see how anyone could deny that liberating Iraq advanced the cause of human rights."

⁶ *Joseph E. Stiglitz*, winner of the 2011 Nobel Prize in Economics, and *Linda J. Bilmes* pointed out in 2008 that before the Iraq invasion, U.S. authorities assumed a cost of \$50 billion. Their own estimate came to \$3 trillion, a figure which today is considered too low and likely to be exceeded when final accounts are available. See *Joseph E. Stiglitz & Linda J. Bilmes, The Three Trillion Dollar War: The True Cost of the Iraq Conflict*, Norton, 2008.

⁷ *Nir Rosen, Following the Bloodshed of America's Wars in the Muslim World*. Nation Books. 2010

⁸ *Joachim Guillard* reminds us that many opponents of war are not interested in the exactness of reported casualty data. Any fatality, they argue, due to war is one too many. *Guillard*, however, makes the important point that reported numbers of deaths carry with it the political weight of how serious a conflict is perceived to be. *Knut Mellenthin* provides information that drone casualties in Pakistan's tribal areas had much to do with aimless attacks often facilitated by hired local CIA informants. And *Lühr Henken* puts the word *Taliban* in quotation marks. Rightly so, since both Afghan and Pakistani villagers protesting against corruption and the lack of development in their communities are frequently conveniently labeled as "terrorists" or "Taliban" to justify failed operations.

Source: *Body Count – Casualty Figures after 10 Years of the "War on Terror", Iraq – Afghanistan – Pakistan*. First international edition (March 2015)

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Multipolar World Against War

An Urgent Call for a Multipolar Coalition for Peace

The following urgent call is the result of international cooperation of the peace movement from several European countries and from overseas.

The text has been translated into several European and non-European languages. There is a short version and an extended version is also available. It has already been signed by more than 100 personalities and organizations from all over the world. You can find the list of the signatories, the different translations, and more information on the website (<http://multipolar-world-against-war.org>). You can also sign the call there.

Our world stands at a critical and dangerous juncture. The destructive policy of unilateral military intervention and illegal regime change practiced by the United States and its allies has led to the possibility of a military confrontation between major world powers and nuclear-armed nations that could trigger a new World War.

This is an urgent call to all nations, organizations and individuals worldwide, to join together in forming a global coalition that seeks to avert disaster by strengthening Multipolar cooperation, peaceful diplomacy and international law, while categorically rejecting interventionism and unilateral aggression.

The world has arrived at this point because of reckless foreign policy, gross human rights violations and the wanton destruction of entire cultures. Since the end of the Cold War, the U.S.'s latest aggressive policy shift was enshrined in a PNAC (*Project for Trans-Pacific Partnership*) document published in September 2000 entitled, "Rebuilding America's Defenses: Strategy, Forces and Resources For a New Century," where they revealingly determined that:

"... If an American peace is to be maintained and expanded, it must have a secure foundation on unquestioned U.S. military preeminence"

Under the media guise of "The War on Terror", "WMD's" or "Humanitarianism", the U.S. (together with its allies) presently executes this overtly imperialist doctrine through the expansion of NATO, the launching of multiple wars for control of foreign resources, and the establishment of hundreds of military bases overseas. It overthrows non-compliant heads-of-state through the use of unsanctioned military force or color revolutions. It contaminates entire regions with cancer-causing depleted uranium munitions. It justifies the use of torture, electronic surveillance, killer drones, cyber warfare, and the rolling back of domestic civil liberties – while whistleblowers that expose

these crimes are threatened and criminalized.

Even economic warfare in the form of sanctions, vulture capitalism, IMF-imposed austerity, secretly negotiated trade deals like TTIP, and financial manipulation is unleashed against its enemies – and even its allies – forcing them into submission.

Dangerous Flashpoints

Is the world safer? What are the results of these unilateral actions? The promises of increased democracy, national security and economic well-being from Western intervention has only left a deadly legacy of failed states and disastrous outcomes. Furthermore, this unilateral policy is now targeting Russia and China, exposing humanity to the risk of global thermonuclear war.

In East Asia, Washington has deemed China's dynamic rise as a strategic threat to U.S. interests, and has responded militarily by agitating and encircling China, while inflaming territorial disputes with its neighbors. At the same time, neo-liberal free trade agreements negotiated in secret like TPP are being implemented to counter China's economic influence, while enabling corporations to keep workers exploited, environmental protections sidelined, and entire nations powerless.

Meanwhile, the U.S. and NATO are backing a corrupt regime with Nazi ties in Ukraine that they put into power through a violent coup. The regime's repressive policies sparked a civil war that created more than a million refugees, prompting Crimean residents against the coup to rejoin Russia in a referendum. Though more than 90% of Crimeans voted in favor of reunification, the Western powers and the media accused Russia of interference, choosing to apply tough economic sanctions, and to station NATO military personnel and weapons directly on Russia's borders. The West is even considering the European redeployment of nuclear weapons to "counter the Russian threat". Does this make the world safer?

In Syria, the U.S./NATO/Gulf Coalition is illegally waging a dual campaign of fighting terrorism and regime change simultaneously, demanding that yet another elected head-of-state step down. However, this U.S.-led Coalition is supporting extremist mercenaries with strong links to Al Qaeda and ISIS whom they dub "the moderate opposition" to bring down the Syrian government. So while they officially condemn terrorism and pledge to fight it, they continue to train, fund, arm, and sup-

port the very groups they say they are fighting.

Worse still, the U.S.-led Coalition, illegally operating without a UN mandate and no permission from the Syrian government, is operating with a separate agenda in the same theater as the legally-mandated Syria/Russia/Iran Coalition has overwhelming support from the Syrian people who fear for their lives. Instead of joining forces against terrorism, the West is inflaming the crisis through belligerent rhetoric, dangerous provocations and the flagrant disregard of international law. Does this make the world safer?

Media as a Tool for War

The role of the media in promoting these wars and destructive policies cannot be overstated. Whether demonizing a leader, a religion, or an entire nation, – the Western media chooses to echo Western talking points to scare the public into supporting war, rather than reporting on the facts. Politically motivated criticism is used to discredit and undermine Russia and Syria for "actually" fighting terrorism or legally defending their own borders. Dubious accusations are regularly leveled at Russia and its president without any evidence, while Western media outlets legitimize these often debunked claims – further distorting the reality. Thus, Russia is often portrayed as a threat equal to ISIS!

However, it must not be forgotten who demonized *Saddam Hussein* and *Muammar Gaddafi*, who actually created the chaos that engulfs Afghanistan, Iraq, Nigeria, Libya, Yemen, Syria, and Ukraine, and who continues to threaten other nations – including Russia, China and Iran. Against the backdrop of escalating ecological crises, extreme poverty and increasing social and religious tensions, this extremely dangerous foreign policy pursued by the West and its media is creating more terrorists, more victims, more refugees, more poverty and more destabilization – bringing the world ever closer to the brink of disaster.

There is an Alternative

The time has come to counter this grave threat to humanity. Respect must be restored to the principles of sovereignty, self-determination and non-interventionism – and the adherence to international law must be paramount. Though most nations respect this, Russia and China are the major world powers that support the concept of Multipolarity, and act as a global counterbalance to Western he-

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gemony. Whatever domestic issues they may have, their cooperative approach is supported by the majority of nations, by global alliances such as the Non-Aligned Movement, the G77 or the SCO (Shanghai Cooperation Organization), and by the Latin American alliances (UNASUR, ALBA and CELAC).

Moreover, these Multipolar nations are providing alternatives to Western-controlled institutions and their neo-colonial practices. Their multilateral institutions and development projects such as the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa), the AIIB, and the massive "New Silk Road" Eurasian development project are rooted in non-interventionism and mutual respect. In sharp contrast to Western trade deals, bilateral cooperation with these Multipolar nations is increasingly producing win-win outcomes for many developed and developing nations in Africa, Latin America, Asia, and Europe. In total, the majority of the world's nations support a Multipolar approach to global affairs based on the principles of the U.N. Charter and the Declaration of Human Rights, which is why the West wants to derail it – it's a threat to their global hegemony.

Therefore, all those who seek peace – be it nations, organizations, movements or individuals from all across the political, economic, social and cultural spectrum must stand together as one voice in support of Multipolarity. This voice must be amplified over the Western media spin by supporting truthful, Multipolar and independent media

sources. This voice could be organized through major conferences into a coalition with initiatives, political positions, and a platform.

This Multipolar coalition should be mobilized into a force that can pressure the West into abandoning their destructive policies by directing their political and economic support toward nations that have pursued (or desire to pursue) a balanced policy of cooperation and diplomacy. Even as individuals, we can apply pressure by contacting government offices and media outlets en masse, altering our voting and spending habits to support proponents of Multipolarity, or finding creative ways to spread the word using art, music, film or literature. More than just a call for solidarity, this must be a political and grassroots force for positive change.

The Choice We All Face

Since the September 2015 U.N. General Assembly and the events that followed, two distinct forms of diplomacy have been on display for all to see, presenting the world with a choice: Do we want a Unipolar world in which Western wars dictate the world's fate, or a Multipolar world where sovereign countries work together in an environment of peace, cooperation and mutual respect? It is clear that the global majority chooses the latter.

Therefore, WE, the global majority standing together in solidarity for peace through diplomacy, declare that:

- We respect all nations' sovereignty and their right to self-determination. We believe that the future of any country must be de-

cided by the citizens of that country alone, free from all external threats and interference, and that multinational conflicts should be resolved through political processes and diplomatic negotiations.

- We support all nations that exercise a cooperative, multilateral approach to global affairs. The counterproductive and dangerous policy of unilateral military intervention is a violation of international law, and must be universally condemned.
- We support nations and multinational coalitions that work determinedly to stop terrorism. Nations that directly or indirectly participate in the training, arming, funding and support of terrorist-linked extremist groups do so in violation of international law and must be condemned, and held accountable.
- We applaud and strongly support global media that is fair and balanced, and that objectively reports on world events.
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Austria wants to get out of the EU

EU exit referendum in parliament – Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ) requested plebiscite

Interview with Helmut Schramm, co-representative of the EU exit referendum, Austria

rt. The commitment to an independent Austria and the resistance to an ever more despotic EU centralism are gaining momentum.

In June 2015, a coalition of environmentalists and national minded groups, among others, the independent “Initiative Heim & Umwelt”, managed to get 261,056 signatories for an official, government-approved referendum. This was in fact hushed up completely by the media. This is a great success! 100,000 signatures would have been the statutory minimum. Then the EU exit referendum was negotiated in the Austrian National Council. As a referendum does not necessarily have to take place in Austria, even with 261,056 signatures, it is now up to the National Council alone to decide on the further procedure. In Switzerland, in comparison, mandatory national initiatives result from 100,000 signatures and referendums against passed laws result from 50,000 signatures. Already in the first hearing in the National Council, a large part of the national councils had difficulties. The promoters had to fight for every minute of speaking time for their experts (Prof Dr Heinrich Wohlmeyer and Prof Dr Karl Albrecht Schachtschneider) in a preparatory committee.

On the occasion of the debate on the EU exit referendum in the plenary of the National Council on 27 January, the *Freedom Party of Austria* (FPÖ) surprisingly requested a *referendum* on the withdrawal from the EU. This may be a first very important step at the parliamentary level towards a withdrawal from the EU, as the Commissioner of the EU



Mag. Markus Lechner, Helmut Schramm and Inge Rauscher of EU exit referendum. (picture ma)

exit referendum, *Inge Rauscher*, noted in an APA-OTS press release. Under Austrian law a motion for a *referendum* requires that signatures are given with full address details in a municipal or city authority openly. If a referendum pro/contra EU withdrawal would be actually held then all votes are selected in a secret polling booth. Although results of referendums are not binding for a government, politicians cannot ignore the results.

The entire FPÖ voted for the motion to hold a referendum. “Team Stronach” and the three club free deputies joined the motion, totaling 47 deputies. On contrary, a majority consisting of SPÖ/ÖVP/Green/

NEOS voted against a referendum. (This included even those MPs who spoke out before the elections and even in the debate on 27 January for direct democracy). The motion was rejected but the subject itself could now become interesting for future government coalitions.

Current Concerns spoke about the situation in Austria with *Helmut Schramm*, one of the representatives of the “EU exit referendum”.

Current Concerns: How do you assess the current development in the EU for Austria?

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Austria and its EU membership

rt. The Austrians have never been quite happy with their accession to the European Union. In the year 1994 the Austrian voters agreed to the accession after an extensive pro-EU-campaign. According to estimates about one billion Austrian shillings had been spent on the pro-EU-campaign. Even sections of the leadership of the Austrian Catholic Church had been involved in order to promote an accession.

Six years later, in 2000, the country got a bold pretaste of the authoritarian style of the EU. Because the Austrians had dared to vote for a government not agreeable by the EU – namely, a coalition of FPÖ and ÖVP – the land was taken hostage and „boycotted” on behalf of the rest of the EU.

Extreme leftists from Germany and France met in Austria to detect so-called

rightists and to “boycott” them. In autocratic style the EU finally appointed a “committee of wise men”, which were to render their verdict on the country. Of course, these “wise men” appointed by the EU were not wise and above all at no level democratically legitimated! But the political elite in Vienna, submissive to the EU, caved in.

Shortly after this boycott the Austrians then were to find out that they are no longer allowed to decide for themselves in their own country how much transit traffic they would allow to thunder over the Brenner pass. Their opposition went unheard in Brussels despite repeated complaints, particularly by the affected population in Tirol.

Also the Austrian population is one of those who do not like to eat genetically modified food, even if “allowed”

by Brussels. The Austrians had to grind out their right against the Brussels authorities. They braced themselves against the uninhibited use of GMO by means of a substantially accepted referendum, so that the EU bureaucracy retrograded, although it was strongly “lobbied by Monsanto”. (Now Brussels is trying to introduce GM food in a roundabout way.)

Even the country’s constitutionally guaranteed neutrality is suffering. 25 of the 28 EU member states are, as NATO members, heavily dominated in their foreign policy by this globally acting war organization. Especially the „big countries” fulfill the commands from Washington without any questioning. Therefore Austria is increasingly coming under pressure to participate in questionable, warlike “peace missions”.

“Permanent preying on unprotected or inadequately protected children”

by Manfred Paulus, Chief Superintendent retd., Ulm

Nobody should be surprised by the following report and no one should consider it to be exaggerated. Whether we are willing to observe and admit it or not, being sexually abused or sexually exploited in other ways has already been a basic risk of childhood in Germany (and perhaps also in Switzerland) for a long time.

And greatest danger always occurs when children are taken out of their familiar surroundings, when the commonly existing protective mechanisms fail.

Of course, surely not all of the 10,000 or more missing children are in the clutches of so-called paedophiles.

But due to all previous experiences it is likely that this paedophile and paederast (preference for boys) scene has set out to hunt refugee children traveling alone and being unprotected or inadequately protected. And, unfortunately, it can be assumed that it is not unsuccessful in these endeavours.

Also after the natural disasters in Haiti, Thailand and Nepal, to name just a few

examples, reports went round the world about this scene's immediately befriending those children, who had suddenly become help- and defenseless.

I foresee quite considerable danger for those children who come to the west via the Balkan route.

On this route, there has been a perfectly developed infrastructure for decades as regards trafficking in women and children for the purpose of sexual exploitation. It

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Nearly 5,000 refugee children missing in Germany

cc. On 3 February, the “Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung” reported: “According to the Federal Criminal Police Office several thousand minor refugees cannot be accounted for in Germany.”

The report continues: “Earlier this year, almost 4,800 unaccompanied minor refugees were at least temporarily reported missing in Germany.” “Unaccompanied minor refugees” are minor refugees unaccompanied by parents or guardians. A spokeswoman of the Federal Criminal Police Office is quoted as saying, 4,749 unaccompanied refugees in childhood and adolescence were counted as missing on 1 January 2016. 431 of them were younger than 13 years, 4,287 were between 14 and 17 years old and 31 were over 18. Half a year earlier, the number of missing unaccompanied refugees had been 1,637.

Earlier, the European Police Authority *Europol* reported that over the past 2 years at least 10,000 unaccompanied refugee children disappeared after arriving in Europe.

The newspaper quoted a spokesman of *Europol*: “This does not mean that something happened to all of them. Actually some of the children might presently be staying with relatives. But it also means that these children are at least potentially at risk.”

The President of the German *Child Protection Association* is quoted saying that in these circumstances children are “easy prey” for criminals. Often they are not registered, and as long as they are not in care anywhere, they are “without rights and protection” and could be exploited particularly easily.

Furthermore in the report it is mentioned: “*Europol* also has evidence that

those criminals who had initially profited as human smugglers and traffickers of the refugees, are now de facto trying to enslave the refugees or to exploit them sexually. The public must assume that these missing children are not ‘hidden somewhere in the woods’, but that this is happening ‘right before our eyes’”.

In the European Parliament, several members requested information on the over 10,000 unaccompanied refugee children. In a letter to the European Council, they pointed out that the missing minors might have become victims of pan-European criminal organisations that could misuse them for sex work, slavery or even organ trafficking.

Source: *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*
from 3 February 2016

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

“Austria wants to get out ...”

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Helmut Schramm: As a supporter of direct democracy and compliance with the Austrian neutrality from 1955 I see the development of Austria with sadness. As before, the Austrians live in a “party state”, a “spectator democracy” that is far apart from the Swiss success model and ideal. The parliamentary discussion on the EU exit referendum – without real democratic debate – and the deployment of Austrian soldiers in NATO war areas such as Mali and participation in the EU economic sanctions against Russia prove this. The unemployment rate and the national debt are reaching new record heights. Wages have stagnated, the loss of purchasing power since Austria's EU accession is noticeable for everybody.

At the EU level, these “pseudo-democracy” is even stronger: The Austrian MEPs

have hardly any influence on the EU laws, in any case far too little: The European Parliament strengthens only the legislation in the EU, but is unable to implement laws. Although each state has one representative in the Commission, Council and European Council – they are very distant from the people, and thus have a remote indirect legitimacy. This was explained in detail by Prof Dr *Karl Albrecht Schachtschneider* in his expertise.

How do you assess the mood in the Austrian population?

Mass immigration causes a more negative attitude in the population towards a totally failing EU. The Schengen and Dublin agreements are not respected. The open frontiers and the invitation policy towards the so-called “refugees” cause great damage. The welfare state is suffering immensely, and the Austrian people are gradually replaced. This negative attitude towards the EU will be expressed by the

people's votes. Those parties still consider the EU a success and a peace project, they will have to fear for their votes. This is a chance for Austria.

Which options currently exist for leaving the EU?

Currently, the FPÖ is considered in all polls as the strongest party. In the case of government participation they could lay down in the Coalition Agreement with the partner or the partners a commitment to give the public the opportunity to participate in a referendum to leave the EU – as the British soon may have to decide. Then, no other party can prevent a referendum! But in any case, education and information needs to be continued at the base and independent of political parties with all possible efforts. Freedom has never ever been given as gift to any nation!

Thank you for the interview and good luck in your commitment, Mr Schramm. •

On a growth course with low wages

by Udo Bongartz*

In the EU, Latvia is regarded as a model pupil, showing southern Europeans how to master crises. But the national budget savings are missing in the social sector, and Latvian workers prefer seeking their fortune in foreign countries.

The train station of Liepaja could pass as the setting of *Dürrenmatt's* "Güllen". That place had also seen better days before the old lady arrived. The vengeful billionaire had to pull the emergency brake to even get off the train. But the western Latvian harbour city is the final destination anyway. The historical building seems to be built far too big for its purpose. A passenger train to Riga is scheduled only twice a week. Traffic has shifted to the forecourt and has changed the train station into a bus station. From here, modern travel buses leave for the capital.

Liepaja officially has a population of 76,000 people – estimations are even lower. In 1989, the population was still at 115,000, including the Soviet soldiers in the war port quarter. Since their withdrawal, numbers have decreased. Nowadays, Liepaja could be promoted as Europe's smallest big city. A little still remains of all its big city traits. The city tram consists of one single line. Its tracks make their way from the steel factory, which is about to close down, through the inner city down to the Eastern Sea shore. In times when Liepaja was governed from Moscow, the city was prohibited for tourists. Today, it is opened to the world again and offers the visitor an appealing mixture of dark brown wooden houses and stone facades. But the splendour is fading. The sign "Paradod" – for sale – is stuck to nailed-up windows. At the edge of town, the big empty

factory halls from Soviet times outline the horizon.

Priest *Martinš Urdze* and his colleagues take care of the socially disadvantaged, unemployed and invalid. When asked what poverty means in Latvia, the head of the diaconical centre in Liepaja invites me to the old city house of the deaconry, where he has established a refuge for the losers of the Latvian success story.

Low wage level

Steep stairs lead to a dark hallway on the first floor, where the rooms have been renovated with bright colours. The meeting room appears like a sitting room, with plants and an old couch. The chimney breast exudes warmth, as everything is still heated with wood around here. The Holy Cross hangs on the wall beside a portrait of *Luther*. Here we meet five female Sunday teachers. The women have a solid education. They work as kindergarteners, scientific assistants, grocery controllers or printery employees. In other countries jobs like these would enable them to get by very nicely with their income, but Latvia skimps on its employees' salaries. These women need several jobs to feed their families.

The printing house employee *Ilze* worked for a private company until recently. But she was dismissed as the Russian crisis led to job shortages in Latvia. She will receive unemployment support for nine months from that date on, and if she does not get a new job during or after that period of time, her relatives will have to step in. In spite of their own problems the women take care of fourty children each Sunday. The 14- to 16-year old children come from the adjacent quarters. Here,



Market in Riga. (picture caro)

they play, learn, tinker and eat together. The meals that teacher *Ingrida* prepares are tempting. The children are not starving, but they really love to eat here. At home, their parents mostly have no time, since many of them struggle to make ends meet although they hold down several jobs at once.

The percentage of low wage earners is higher among the employees in Latvia than anywhere in the EU. About 25% of the employees are just earning the minimum wage, which was raised to 360 euros by the government at the beginning of this year.

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"Permanent preying on ..."

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would indeed be naive to assume that the traffickers operating there would not attend to the unaccompanied refugee children.

German and Swiss criminologists have several times in the past verified the fact that there are connections and interconnected groups – even in Germany and in Switzerland – of (potential) offenders fixated on children in their sexual orientation. So an extremely secretive, locally and globally acting criminal group was unmasked, that had permanently been on the hunt for unprotected or insufficiently protected children. ("Hunting is as exciting and as gorgeous as the catch," one of them said).

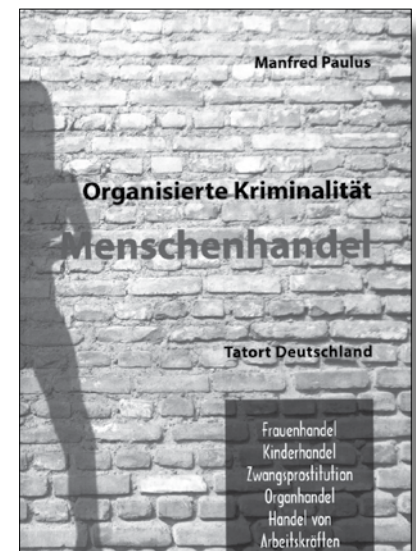
As early as at the stage of smuggling, unaccompanied minors are already in very substantial danger of being sexually exploited.

But even in Germany "helpers", that are not always helpers, are waiting for them.

From a criminological perspective, there seems to be an urgent need of professionally working through children's potential escape experiences and of effectively protecting unaccompanied refugee children against impending sexual exploitation by suitable measures directly from the moment of their arrival.

But there has as yet been no mention of this. After all, this kind of criminality is not consistent with our standards and ideals at all.

(Translation *Current Concerns*)



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"On a growth course with ..."

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This is not enough to support a family. After years of inflation, the Latvian price level is nearly that of other western European countries. Most of the children only know cheap convenience food. The children whose parents work in foreign countries live with their grandmothers, who are unable to cope with round the clock child care.

Modest benefits

The diaconal centre also takes care of people who have to shape their life with a low income as a result of disability. They meet daily at the centre, where they manufacture gifts for the in-house Domino business or just spend time together. At a breakfast gathering in the small hall of the ground floor, unemployed and handicapped readily give an account of their situation. The lack of fairly paid work is their main problem. They cope by means of seasonal work and are dependent on government support. The social welfare offices ensure their survival, but they do not allow for an independent life. *Janis*, a slender, wiry man in his mid-thirties, was unable to find a perma-

Latvia in brief

Name	Latvia
Capital	Riga
Area	64,573 km ²
Inhabitants	1.995 Millions
Languages	
	Latvian (official language) 53%
	Russian 34%
	Others 13%
Live expectancy	women 79 years
	men 68 years
Migration	2.3 emigrants per
	1,000 people (2014)

Economy

Latvia's economy is highly export-oriented – its most important sectors are timber industry and agriculture, food production, machinery- and high-tech industry, electrical industry.

Poverty

By the end of 2014, the unemployment rate was at 10% and is slightly below the EU average. However, Latvia had the highest proportion of low-paid workers among the employees with nearly 28% throughout the EU in 2010; despite economic growth more than one third of the Latvian population is at risk of poverty and social exclusion.

nent place as a cook's assistant, and then a partial disability supervened. Now he lives in a boarding house financed by the city of Liepaja. He receives his monthly income of 128 euros from the state. This must suffice to cover his living expenses. He cannot even think of a car or a vacation, an apartment or the start of a family. Only the occasional trips offered by the diaconal centre or some free events organized by the city of Liepaja for destitute citizens provide a diversion.

Difficult decisions

Zigrīda uses a crutch to drag himself to a chair. She has been attested a 100 per cent disability, therefore she is partially exempt from medical fees. But the co-payments for consultation rates and medication weigh heavy on her monthly 450-euro budget, which she also uses to help her children and grandchildren make it through life. In Latvia basic medical care is guaranteed, and in acute emergencies even surgeons treat their patients at state expense. But much of what is medically necessary must be paid out of pocket. But co-payments quickly exceed low-income patients' means, who therefore shun fee-based visits to the doctor. The breakfast group reports cases of pensioners who had to choose between buying food in the supermarket or drugs in the pharmacy with their meager income.

In the afternoon *Martinš* takes me to Aizpute, which is situated 40 kilometers further inland, with his small car. The tranquil village lies between meadows and forests. Hardly anyone can be seen on the road, only here and there someone is working in the garden. It is deathly silent. One would not like to call the place bus station where hardly ever a bus stops. Only massive concrete piers soar futilely as a remnant of the former shelter for waiting passengers. Some construction vehicles are parked on private ground. Road construction provides a few jobs.

We stop in front of a one-storey villa. The wooden facade is new, only the last planks are still missing under the roof. 30-year-old *Margita* greets us. She lives between scantily washed walls and worn furniture. Her two children are at school. Three years ago, she returned to her home country full of confidence. She hoped life in a foreign country would have been temporary, and that she would be able to risk a new beginning with the money saved. Her husband works in Peterborough in Britain and sends money, as she would not be able to live on the 33 euros child support grant-

The Baltic States

The Baltic states are the three countries in northern Europe on the eastern coast of the Baltic Sea Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania; they border Russia, Belarus and Poland. In August 1989, the Balts demonstrated with a human chain 600 km in length for the independence of their countries, which they achieved in spring 1990 – against the resistance of Moscow. Thereafter the three small states experienced a rapid boom. In 2004, they joined the EU and NATO. In the course of the financial crisis a heavy economic slump followed. Latvia plunged into the deepest recession within the EU, from which the country recovered only slowly. In 2014, Latvia and Estonia adopted the Euro, followed by Lithuania in 2015.

ed to her monthly by the municipality of Aizpute. She has already worked in several jobs as a shop assistant, cashier or office worker. But now her situation seems hopeless. It is particularly difficult for her, because being a returnee she is regarded as a stranger. And if you want a job you need connections. Actually, the young woman is a country girl and hates the bustle of the big city. But now she is considering to move back to be with her husband in Peterborough, where already many Latvians live. The exodus continues, Latvian population fell below the two million mark in 2015.

No prospects

In the international arena, the Latvian government is shining with high performance figures. The country is back on track after the severe 2009 recession. But the beauty of the economic data does not alter the prospects. The success story propagated by the government sounds satirical to the unemployed. The breakfast gathering at the diaconal centre made a video in which they quoted the ministers who dismiss Latvia relative poverty as a luxury problem: Not everyone was able to go on vacation twice a year. *Karina*, an employee of diaconal centre, regrets that her compatriots are too well-behaved. The Latvians lack the spirit to protest as the Greeks do, she says. •

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Source: *Eine Welt*, No. 3/2015 SDC (The Journal of the SDC is available for free.)

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

The significance of direct democracy to ensure the economic and social order of Switzerland

After the Second World War the people decided for a new Family Article, new Economic Articles and the establishment of the OASI in the Federal Constitution

by Dr rer. publ. Werner Wüthrich

After the Second World War, there was a short period of a few years in Swiss history in which the people have laid the foundations in various referendums for the social market economy, in which we live today. The Federal Constitution was not just about new business articles, but also a family article and in a new law about the establishment of the OASI (old-age and survivors' insurance). *Current Concerns* has published a series of articles entitled "The significance of direct democracy for securing social peace" (Part 1 on 2 June 2015, Part 2 on 16 June 2015, Part 3 on 30 June 2015, part 4 on 29 July 2015, part 5 on 23 September 2015, part 6 on 1 December 2015), which outlined the history of these central events for today's Switzerland.

The year 1943 is a special year in the history of the world. The fortune of war by Hitler's armies during the Second World War was changing. In Africa, Rommel had to withdraw after the Battle of El Alamein. Retreat started in the east as well after the defeat at Stalingrad. On the high seas, the German submarines got increasingly on the defensive and the US succeeded more and more in supporting its allies in Europe with material. In Tehran Churchill, Roosevelt and Stalin met for the first time and discussed the post-war order – after the capitulation of Hitler. The war lasted longer, however, than many had expected at the time.

In Switzerland, which had fortunately been spared of hostilities, some citizens thought as early as in 1943 about the question "What's next after the war?" The crippling mood of the thirties and the fears during the war diminished and made room for political optimism. However, unemployment remained at the top of the political agenda. In April 1943, a large, two-day national conference on "government and business in the fight against unemployment" took place at ETH Zurich, which was attended by personalities from the communes, the Federal Council, the trade unions and the business community. Three popular initiatives on the "right to work", which were intended to rearrange the economic life, were filed during these months. The new business acts in the Federal Constitution, which were revised by Parliament, were ready for vote. But not enough. Two other popular initiatives were added in these months trying to answer the basic social policy issues of

social life: namely the protection of the family and the pensions. The people were wondering.

Provision for old age yes – but how? First attempts

As early as in 1925, the people had agreed in principle on a constitutional article establishing a retirement and survivors' insurance. However, actual implementation in a federal law was not so easy. In 1930, the Federal Council and the Federal Parliament had drafted an OASI (old-age and survivors' insurance) act together with insurance experts – namely taking the following approach: The public insurance should be mandatory and – similar to today – be financed through payroll deductions and employer contributions. Funds from the tobacco and alcohol tax would be added. The insurance should – again similar to today – function according to the PAYG system, i.e. the premiums received should be immediately paid out again as a pension to old people. Unlike today, however, the premiums and pensions were uniform, i.e. regardless of income, and very modest. A man paid 18 Swiss francs, a woman 12 francs premium a year. The employer's contribution was 15 francs. The annual pension after the age of 65 should be 200 francs for all. This was little, even taking into account the decrease in value of the money in the 20th century.

This OASI was intended to be a minimum insurance and from the outset it was based on the citizens making provisions within the family and the cantons setting up supplementary insurances. The canton of Glarus had led the way. Already in 1918 the "Landsgemeinde" (communal voters' assembly) had adopted an OASI and a disability insurance in an open ballot. The unified pension amounted to 180 francs per year from the 66th year of age and then increased every year. Previously the citizens' meeting had already agreed on an unemployment fund. Glarus thus lived up to its reputation as a pioneer canton, since the "Landsgemeinde" had already decided in 1863 on the first modern factory law at that time – Europe-wide. The concept of retirement funds based on three pillars in the thirties: 1. the self-provision in the family, 2. the public or private pension scheme and 3. the welfare for the elderly, which was paid by the communes and also by non-profit organizations (such as the "Foundation for

the old age" (now Pro Senectute)). They helped in cases where there was not enough money. Communes also ran citizens homes – which originally were, as the name suggests, associated with citizenship. They cared for and maintained those elderly who were no longer able to care for themselves.

OASI without social compensation

From today's perspective we immediately become aware that social compensation was completely absent in the planned pension scheme of 1931. Rich or poor should pay the same premiums and get the same pension in later years. In Parliament all major parties voted in favour, even the Socialist Party. However, there were citizens and smaller parties that did not agree with it. The Communists advocated a kind of people's pension and rejected the submission because the pension level was fixed too low. They spoke of an disrespectful "pauper's broth". Catholic circles were oriented towards the papal encyclical "Quadragesimo Anno" and wished for an old age provision borne by the family, the professional communities and the Church. Liberal circles saw the OASI rather as a private matter which they wanted to complete by a voluntary pension insurance and supplemented by welfare for the elderly supported by the federal government. They claimed it was the only way to prevent people from receiving a state pension which they did not need.

As happens often in such a situation, citizens who did not agree started a referendum (which also came about). Others made a suggestion in a popular initiative on how things could be handled differently. Thus industrial circles demanded that the federal government should subsidize the welfare of the communes and cantons for the elderly – at least until an old-age insurance was established.

The people's No had a sobering effect

The 6 December 1931 was one of the not so rare voting days on which the "Classe Politique" realized in the evening, that the people "reacted" differently from what they had assumed. Nearly 80 percent of eligible voters went to the polls and rejected the OASI in the then current form with a bulky No of 60.3 percent. This was amazing, but the Great Depression had begun with all its needs. Moreover, the

"The significance of direct democracy ..."

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vote of individual regions in the country was very different. While Zurich adopted by 57 percent, only 7 percent voted in Fribourg for this type of retirement. – The OASI was still far from being the institution underpinning the state as it is today.

After the people's No, it was crisis and World War II that delayed the rapid development of a new submission. The federal government financially supported in these difficult years the welfare for the elderly of the communes and cantons, as the Liberals had requested in their popular initiative. However, the call for a compulsory old-age and survivors' insurance for all did not silence.

From wage replacement of soldiers to OASI – popular initiative of the Swiss Mercantile Society SKV

During the Second World War a new idea for the establishment of pensions developed. It had its origins in the experiences of the soldiers in the militia. In early September 1939, the Federal Council had mobilized the entire army of about 500,000 troops to fend off a feared attack from the north. When Hitler attacked the Soviet Union in 1941, the active units were gradually reduced by more than half. After the Battle of Stalingrad in 1943, the number of the fighting soldiers fell temporarily even below 100,000 men. The German armies were now busy on so many fronts that the danger of an attack was no longer considered to be "high". Some of the militiamen were able to return to work. Others, however, had to endure at the borders and in the Alps fortresses until the end. In these long years it was important that the wage substitution of soldiers in active duty was regulated. In the First World War that had not been the case, which had led to serious social tensions and was one of the reasons for the general strike of 1918 to come about.

Wage replacement of the soldiers had priority over many other things

In 1939, the Federal Council acted quickly. Already in the first month of the war, wage compensation for the soldiers was established on the following principle: two percent of the salary of those men and women who were still at work was deducted. In addition, the employer paid the same amount. This money was supplemented by public funds. A social balance was incorporated in this system, since high earners paid significantly more due to the premiums being calculated as a percentage of income. In the cantons, compensation funds were set up, which managed the funds and paid off the wage compensation to the soldiers.

We could do it just like that!

In 1942, the merchants of the *Swiss Mercantile Society SKV* were thinking "commercially": Their idea was that exactly this system could be adopted for the future OASI. The well-functioning compensation funds for wage adjustment of the soldiers could be converted into OASI schemes and continued after the war. The solidarity between the people and their soldiers could be a model for solidarity between young and old, the merchants thought and did not hesitate long. They collected signatures for a popular initiative. They experienced that their arguments were convincing and their fellow citizens eagerly signed the initiative. Several times the required number of signatures were collected quickly.

It was then (and it is even today) not rare that the state government responded defensively to a new popular initiative, because it interfered with its plans. At that time, however, it was not the case. The competent Federal Councillor, *Walter Stämpfli*, gratefully accepted the initiative from the people. In his 1944 New Year's speech he promised that he would draft an OASI law, together with Parliament and professionals, which contained the basic ideas of the popular initiative. Moreover, he promised that the new law would come into force on 1 January 1948. Hence the initiative committee announced that in this case, they would withdraw the initiative at the appropriate time.

Memorable 6 July 1947

Stämpfli, who could be described as the "father" of the OASI today –, should keep his promise. The referendum against his bill was indeed – as expected – taken, and on 6 July 1947 it was put to the vote. The opponents brought forward similar arguments in their campaign as they had already done in 1931. Catholic circles wanted the retirement pension rather in the care of the Church and in the hands of professional associations. Liberal circles (who had taken the referendum) from the Romandy (French-speaking part of Switzerland) favored – similar to 1931 – a concept with a private pension scheme, supplemented with a welfare scheme for the elderly – supporting the needy – that was co-financed by the federal government. They claimed it was the only way to prevent that someone received a state pension, who did not need it. – The vote of the people was clear, however. More than eighty percent of the electorate went to the polls on this memorable day and said a clear Yes to the new OASI with almost eighty percent.

The OASI in its basic concept has been undisputed until today. It is a prime example of a law in whose creation the population was directly involved.

Popular initiative on the "Protection of the family"

Almost simultaneously with the initiative on pensions, another sociopolitical popular initiative was launched. The *Catholic Conservative Association KKV* submitted a popular initiative on the "Protection of the family" in 1943 with 178,000 signatures. It should provide the basis in the Constitution, to refocus politics on family needs. As a result, the *Family Compensation Funds FAK* should be promoted in the cantons. Families with children should receive higher wages. Some companies had already taken this into account, however, for quite some time. The housing system should be designed family-friendly and much more.

Once again, the Federal Council and Parliament positively accepted the popular initiative. Moreover, the Parliament worked out a counter-proposal, which went even further than the proposal of the initiators (so that they could withdraw their initiative later). The counter-proposal contained an additional maternity insurance. The relevant passage in the proposed constitutional article (now Article 116) was as follows: "The federal government shall by means of law establish a maternity insurance scheme. It may also require persons who cannot benefit from that insurance to make contributions. (...)". The new constitutional article was widely accepted by the people with a clear majority in the referendum of 76 percent Yes votes on 25 November 1945.

Yes to a maternity insurance – but how?

The implementation of the Family Article, however, was not always easy. In housing and tenancy things were designed much more family-friendly. Family compensation funds were gradually introduced in all cantons or those already existing were strengthened, but the differences were quite large. In 2006, the voting citizens said Yes to a federal law unifying the family compensation funds in the cantons, for example by stipulated minimum amounts for child allowances. This step has also been launched by a popular initiative, which was withdrawn after Parliament had drafted a counter-proposal.

In 2013, the sovereign, however, said No – by a small majority – to a new family act, which wanted to expand the "compatibility of family and work" even stronger in the Federal Constitution. So, for example, childcare facilities should be prescribed by law everywhere. The submission was accepted by the people, but failed due to the cantonal majority, i.e. the No-vote of especially the smaller, rural cantons. It was also difficult to find a so-

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lution for the maternity insurance. In the years after 1945 proposals were made repeatedly, but none obtained legal status. Later the protection of motherhood was considered in the Health Insurance Act. Women's associations did not agree. In 1980 the Organization for Women OFRA, together with the Progressive Organizations of Switzerland POCH, launched a popular initiative and handed it in with 136,000 signatures. The Federal Council rejected the accusation of having failed to fulfill the constitutional mandate of 1945. It acknowledged that there was nominally no maternity insurance. By its very nature this insurance was, however, integrated into the social security system and would also be extended within this framework. That was not sufficient for the initiators. They demanded a separate maternity insurance with parental leave, daily allowances, employment protection and funding over pay rises. This popular initiative from the left was rejected in the 1984 referendum with 84 percent no-votes and by all cantons. In 1987 and 1999 there were two further referendums also with a negative outcome. The main issue was the question of whether non-working mothers (who had no income) should be given a daily allowance. Only in 2004 the people said Yes to today's maternity insurance, which paid the working women 80 percent of their salary for 14 weeks after giving birth. The maternity insurance was included in the *Income Compensation EO for Military Personnel* – and for very practical reasons. There was money that was not used in the now smaller army and could now be used as income replacement for working mothers. Thus the maternity insurance returned after nearly sixty years of debate with numerous referenda to the starting point of today's social insurance: to the wage replacement order of the soldiers in the Second World War.

The people point the way to a social market economy

Let us go back in the years after the Second World War: The referendum on a new family policy in November 1945 was only the prelude to a series of groundbreaking referendums that have shaped the social market economy until today. This major political discussion focused on the reform of economic laws. It had become necessary because numerous emergency legislation adopted by federal decrees in the thirties violated the fundamental right of freedom of trade and commerce. They were limited and had often been passed in a flash, so that a reliable legal framework had become urgent as the legal basis for economic policy. On top of that numerous

popular initiatives had initiated the constitutional debate in the thirties. (cf. parts 5 and 6 part of this series of articles in *Current Concerns* of 23 September 2015 and 1 December 2015). Reform work of the Parliament was finished at the beginning of the Second World War. The referendum was to be held after the war.

What were the main points of the proposed reform of 1939/1945? The core of the economic articles in the Federal Constitution was the freedom of trade and commerce as a fundamental right of the citizen and as a guiding principle for the economic order. (cf. part 2 of the series of articles of 16 June 2015). They both remained untouched.

The authorities should, however, receive new extended powers to intervene in the economic events. The federal government should be able to take measures on the "pursuit of trade and commerce" and on the "promotion of individual sectors and professions", while it would remain bound by the principle of freedom of trade and commerce. In five areas, the federal government could take action in the overall interests and, if necessary, deviate from the freedom of trade and commerce – namely

1. to maintain existentially vulnerable sectors or professions,
2. to maintain a healthy peasant class and a powerful agriculture and to consolidate the ownership of agricultural property,
3. to protect economically endangered parts of the country,
4. to combat the misuse of cartels and price fixing,
5. to ensure the country's supply – even in crisis and wartime. Furthermore, the federal government could establish rules on the protection of workers, on the relationship between workers and employers, on vocational training, on the job placement, on unemployment and on unemployment benefit.

Collective job agreements could be declared generally binding, so that their peacemaking action could unfold not only for the participating organizations but in an entire industry.

The new economy laws would upgrade the economic and professional organizations very generally by granting them the explicit right to be consulted in the legislative process (consultation process). This was not new, however. The business associations, trade unions and in particular the agricultural organizations have always played an important role both in the preparation and the implementation of the laws. The administration relied on their expertise.

The draft economic laws were discussed for a second time briefly by the Parliament in 1945. The Federal Council sent it along for the later vote as follows:



Campaign poster for the acceptance of the introduction of the compulsory OASI in the year 1947 (picture cc)

The new economic constitution would uphold the Right to Work, keep to the liberal economic system and take account of social democracy.

Reactions

However, the draft of the Parliament should not remain without contradiction. In 1943, three popular initiatives were submitted, all of which were discussed only after 1945. They all had the "Right to work" as their topic (cf. the details on this in part 6 of the series of articles in *Current Concerns* of 1 December 2015):

1. The Social Democrats wanted to abolish the freedom of trade and commerce and let the economy increasingly be directed by the state.
2. *Gottlieb Duttweiler* and the *Ring of Independents* refused to accept that the "old" economic liberalism should be limited by more laws and regulations. In their initiative they demanded more economic freedom associated with a greater reference to ethics and responsibility, in order to reconcile capital and labor.
3. In the field of agriculture, the Young Farmers (Farmers' homeland movement) demanded a new land law which connected the soil with the work. Only those should be able to purchase agricultural land who also worked on it for their livelihood.

After the Second World War the people were facing the challenging task to take a stance in numerous polls on fundamental issues of the economic order, the pension and the family protection and to pave the way into a new era.

The results

The Ring of Independents' initiative on the "Right to Work", which wanted to

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combine economic freedom with social attitude and responsibility, was clearly rejected by 81 percent No-votes in 1946. The initiative of the Social Democrats, who wanted to put the economic system in principle on a new basis, was also significantly rejected several months later with 69 percent No-votes. On 6 July 1947, 53 percent of the people said 'yes' to a reform of the economic laws, which Parliament had drafted (today's constitutional Articles 27 and 94–113). One reason for the rather scarce vote was that the SP – the then largest party in Parliament – had voted against it, because the draft would support full employment too little. The Socialists' fear that it could lead to a post-war crisis, proved to be unfounded in retrospect. Unemployment should be no longer an issue in Switzerland for a quarter century – on the contrary.

In another vote, the popular initiative of young farmers was rejected after Parliament had drafted a bill to preserve the rural estates, which granted privileges in land acquisition and inheritance to members of the farmer's family and the farmers. The new Family Act (today's constitutional Article 116) and the Federal Law on the OASI which – as already mentioned – was adopted by the people on the same day as the economic acts with an overwhelming majority of nearly eighty percent of the votes, completed the voting round in the forties.

There have been many other polls in the social and economic sectors to this day. They ranged within the framework that the people had set in the postwar years. OASI was often voted upon – for example on the amount of pensions, the deductions from wages, retirement age, the additional financing via value added tax and much more. A few years after the founding of the OASI, disability insurance was set up on the same principle. In 1972, the 3-pillar model was embedded in the Constitution – with the OASI, IV (Invalidity Insurance) and EO (Compensation for loss of earned income during military service, civil service, community service or maternity) as the first pillar, the occupational pensions as second and private pension schemes as third pillar. Once again, the people agreed with an impressive 74 percent of yes-votes. Several popular initiatives of the Left were clearly rejected since they wanted to convert OASI into a national pension.

Referendums secure social peace

These historic votes established the constitutional foundations for today's modern Switzerland immediately after the Second World War. In the economic

sphere there was a "small total revision of the Federal Constitution, which on the whole has been maintained to this day" (Alfred Kölz). The referendums on retirement and family protection were no less important. They shaped the market economy, the social character, which we know today. The interaction between government, parliament and people had worked perfectly, so that the economic system in combination with its social orientation represents an image of Swiss democracy today.

It is striking how real and lifelike direct democracy has worked in those years, and how many signatures were then collected for the popular initiatives. It is impressive how many voters went to the polls, even though the topics were rather demanding. It is amazing how naturally very different sections of the population from the German, French, Italian and Romansh speaking Switzerland took up their rights as a people and were thus directly involved in the construction of modern Switzerland. – Moreover, it is noteworthy to say that quite a few points of those popular initiatives that were once rejected later made their way into the Federal Constitution or in the legislation. For example, certain decisions of associations can be declared generally binding, as had demanded a popular initiative already in 1934, wanting to give the associations and professional associations more political weight at that time (cf. part 5 of 23 September 2015). The Right to Existence (which is based on the Right to Work and was included in several popular initiatives) is explicitly guaranteed today in the Federal Constitution – on the one hand directly on the Right to assistance when in need (Federal Constitution Art. 12) and on the other hand indirectly through the developed network of social insurance. It is further apparent that it would be wrong to reduce the economic constitution simply to the freedom of trade and commerce – today's economic freedom – and its numerous variations. This freedom right is probably the most basic legal pillar of the liberal economic system and represents a liberal economic system of the private sector. This only works, however, because it is embedded in a national context and also regulates social spheres. It is further supported by a stable monetary system and supplemented by a public sector which is now called the Public Service. And last but not least it works because the food supplies are backed up from our own country – at least to a greater extent. These are other areas that are yet to be examined from the perspective of direct democracy.

Successful model

The many referendums at the federal level that are taken on a mandatory level

or brought about the people's rights, determine the economic and social life in Switzerland. Then there are the countless other votes in the communes and cantons in which citizens express their diverse interests and political views. The fact that the representatives of the people often do not represent these voices of the people correctly in parliament can be observed in many of the votes described above. It has been found that really viable, future-proof political solutions often only arise from the interplay of Parliament and the people – and sometimes it requires several polls to realize them. It actually takes time, which is not detrimental to the quality – on the contrary.

From various sides, criticism is raised today against individual popular initiatives at the federal level. They are said to violate international law or the principle of separation of powers. Sometimes people demand that the number of signatures has to be increased or that more popular initiatives should be declared invalid by Parliament. There are also other voices. The constitutional lawyer *Zaccaria Giacometti*, for example, in a famous sermon in 1954 as rector of the University of Zurich honored the people as "guardian of human rights" (cf. part 3 of 30 June 2015).

Today's criticism distorts our view on the whole and on the significance of people's rights. The numerous referendums at the federal level (more than 600 since the establishment of the Confederation) and the numerous submitted popular initiatives (over 300 since the introduction of this people's right in 1891) represent life and social development in Switzerland in their variety and in their dynamism. They are an expression of the social nature of man in their creative power – far stronger and more immediate than the pure representative democracy, in which people hand over their political affairs and let themselves be represented. Therein lies perhaps the secret to the success of Switzerland. •

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“Monsieur Bötler’s” quiet grandeur

A Swiss saved the lives of over 5,000 Jews in France

by Heini Hofmann

After seven decades, the world remembered the horrors of the Second World War. Hardly in the focus were the courageous escape helpers. There are well-known names among them, but also those who were forgotten, such as the artist and philanthropist Hans Beutler from Bueren on the Aare who did not even make it to an entry in the Swiss encyclopedia.

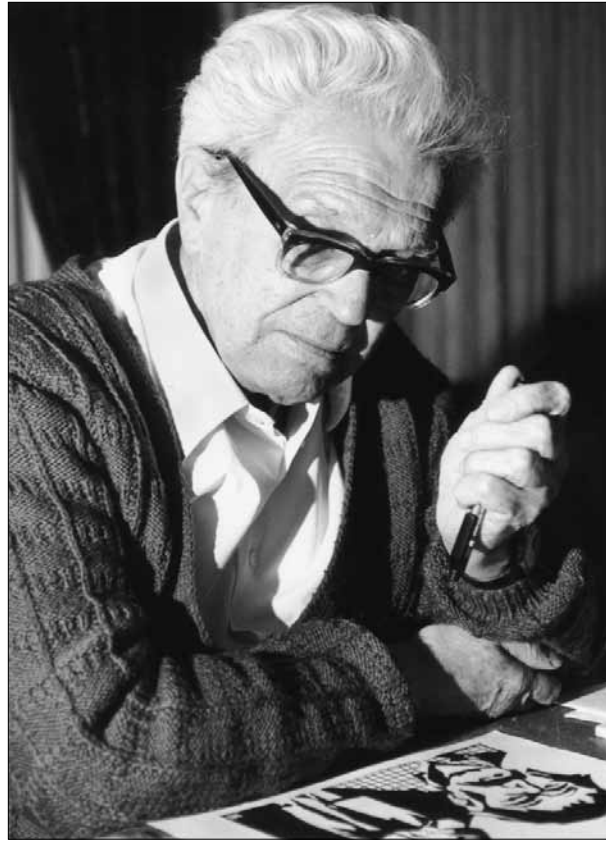
There are no mistaking certain parallels to other World War II escape helpers and Holocaust Rescuers, who acted without regard to their own lives and to their own career: St. Gallen Commander of Police, *Paul Grüninger*, being removed from office in 1938, who saved the lives of more than 3,000 refugees and who was even sentenced for this good deed, has not been rehabilitated posthumously before 1993. Following this, a street in Jerusalem was named after him, and in Switzerland in fact a film of his brave act was now made.

Something similar happened to *Carl Lutz* of the Ausserrhoden borough Walzenhausen. As Vice Consul in Budapest, the diplomat had led the biggest rescue operation of Jews, and doing so he had saved many thousands, but returning to Switzerland, Berne admonished him. After all, before his death he was still nominated honorary citizen by the community; but it took the Confederation twenty years after his death – fifty years after the end of the war – to thank him.

No official thanks

It was different for Bernese artist and philanthropist *Hans Beutler*, who saved more than 5,000 Jews, mostly children, from persecution and death. He was admittedly not punished for it, because he acted as a Swiss abroad. But unlike Paul Grüninger and Carl Lutz, down to the present day he was never praised by official Switzerland.

Only a decade after his death one remembered again this great philanthropist just in his borough, where he was born and where he died. Politicians and a representative of the *Red Cross* spoke words of acknowledgement. But then again it kept being quiet about Hans Beutler, so quiet that in 2013 even his 100th birthday and



Artistic creation accompanied Hans Beutler through his entire life, and even in old age he guided as draftsman, as painter, and as illustrator the pen, the brush and the cutting knife with a steady hand.
(picture: Hans-Beutler-Stiftung)

in 2014 the 20th anniversary of his death were forgotten.

In the service of the general

“Unter dem Bogen” in Bueren on the Aare, Hans Beutler saw the light of the day on 3 May 1913. This was right next to the imposing castle of the district administration, there where his father, married to a French Huguenot, led a bicycle repair workshop. His childhood was overshadowed by illness. A stay in a sanatorium compelled him into isolation, where he took refuge in children’s and storybooks.

In order to get him out of isolation, the parents sent him to the Boy Scouts, where he blossomed and even took a leading role later on. In the prewar years, he headed the International Scout Centre in Kandersteg, and in the Scout Movement, he, as *v/o Mutti*, made many friends, so among others with the later travel writer *René Gardi*.

The profession as a graphic designer, learned in Welschland, aroused his de-

sire to artistic creation as draftsman and painter. Pen, ink pen, brush and linocut knife were his instruments of labor, which he led with ease bubbling over with ideas. In 1939, his breakthrough came with a card series “600 years Battle of Laupen”. He willingly responded to the call of the *Swiss National donation* as their objective to alleviate the suffering of the war corresponded to his intention. Unforgettable subjects to soldiers’ Christmas right up to the design of General *Guisan’s* Christmas letter made his name known all over the country.

Painter, draftsman and illustrator

Throughout his life, the talented and versatile artist worked for various publishers as book and magazine illustrator, and this even in the last years, overshadowed by painful disease. In addition to his color-intensive oil paintings and watercolors, his pen and ink drawings as well as his intaglios fare impressing. He conjured the latter with old gramophone needles in over-dyed paper. He painted his pictures on everything just being available for him: on wooden boards, old cardboard boxes, even on the back of used envelopes ...

But in Hans Beutler’s chest still lived a second soul – his willingness to aid. As a result of the war this willingness became even more pronounced and urged him to action. Thus in Davesco in the Ticino in 1942, he took over the lead of an internment camp for young people. Here his pedagogical natural talent attracted attention. This in turn led *Rodolfo Olgiati*, former head of *Swiss Red Cross’ child welfare organisation*, to entrust him with the management of a children’s home in France, so that he became *Red Cross* delegate.

Rescuer of more than 5,000 people

His arrival at the Cevennes village Le Chambon-sur-Lignon, situated on the Central Plateau in the department of Haute-Loire, in 1943 (Lignon is the name of the first tributary of the Loire) took place during the German occupation of

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France. In the former Huguenot village people knew what it means to be persecuted. Indeed, thanks to his selfless commitment, Hans Beutler very soon had as many as five infant homes at his disposal, and, on top of that, a number of apprentice workshops and a (donated) farmstead of 57 hectares, where French, Spanish, English and Belgian war orphans were finding shelter.

At Le Chambon-sur-Lignon, which later became the symbol of the voluntary assistance for innocent war victims provided from Switzerland, more than 5,000 Jewish children and adults were hidden and rescued from persecution and deportation during the war with the help of many local persons who assisted refugees. Unfortunately, he could not rescue all people. He became a witness of a cruel extermination campaign in the region. After the war ended, those infant homes were taken over by the *French Red Cross*; but apparently people did not want to miss the broad experience of their beloved “Monsieur Bötler”.

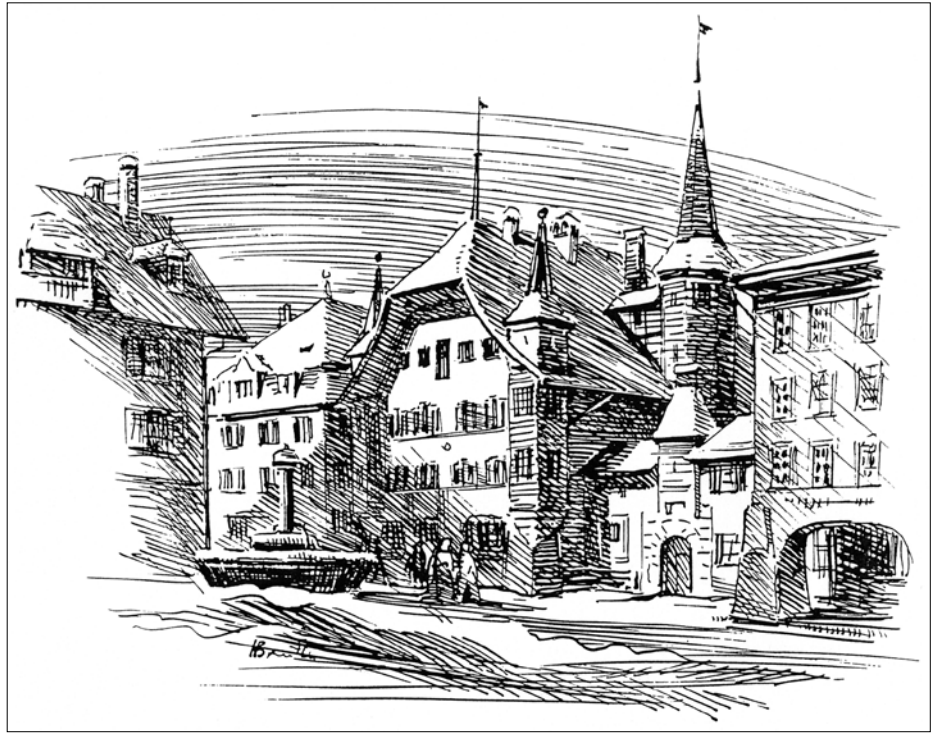
Co-founder of the Youth Red Cross

Hans Beutler did not return to Switzerland until 1956; but he remained in service with the *Red Cross*, to which he gave many impulses, without ever pushing himself to the fore. He was co-founder of the *Swiss Youth Red Cross*, and on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the Red Cross he launched the very first motor coaches for disabled persons, financed by money that young people had earned themselves – which was entirely in tune with his concept of dedicated help.

After the same self-help principle he realised – as a collaborative effort by the Youth Red Cross and the vocational schools from all over Switzerland and the *Casa Henry Dunant* in Varazze at the Mediterranean coast of Italy – another model project: within impressive 60,000 hours of work, apprentices and vocational school students turned a run-down building into a flourishing course centre for adolescents. Only his final years before he died in 1994 did he spend again in Bueren on the Aare.

A valuable stock of cultural assets

Another great passion of “Monsieur Bötler” was collecting. That was also known to his many protégés from the period Le Chambon-sur-Lignon; they were by now living all over the world, and out of gratitude they sent him the desired objects from anywhere of the world: children’s and fairy tale books from a varie-



In Bueren on the Aare, right next to the castle housing the district administration, is the birth house of Hans Beutler located. His father had a bicycle workshop “Unter den Bögen” there. (Drawing: Hans Beutler)

ty of linguistic and cultural areas, artfully decorated Easter eggs as well as children’s toys, and in particular nativity scenes from around the globe.

Fortunately, these unique collections during his lifetime found a new home at the toy and nativity scene museum in Bubendorf/BL¹. Hans Beutler decided to take this step, because he felt that in the little town of Bueren on the Aare he was not really understood. Consequently, it was in Bubendorf, that his 100th anniversary was commemorated with a special exhibition in 2013.

Silently practiced brotherly love

When Hans Beutler was awarded the cultural prize of the town and district of Grenchen in 1981, his friends were highly delighted. In the laudatory speech, he was honoured for his “extraordinary work in the service of humanity” and for his “rich activities as a painter, graphic artist, illustrator, and collector of valuable cultural assets”.

The gifted artist and great humanitarian with his charming personality, a mixture of Bernese staidness and French openness to the world, put his artistry wholeheartedly at the service of his social helper activity. His life was dedicated to a brotherly love silently practiced in everyday life.

The decisive impulse

It was a Solomon-like advice that prompted him to take the decisive step at an early age. At the time a scouting friend said to

him: “Imagine you were a great painter, and you were standing like *Michelangelo* high up on a scaffold in a large hall, and down below in the corner there was a door, at which somebody was knocking. If you are a great painter, you will stay on the scaffold and go on painting. If, however, you are a bungler you will climb down and open the door.

But it could also be that you aren’t a bungler, and still think you should open the door, because somebody may need your help. In that case you should climb down and open the door – for then you will enter a rich landscape full of surprises and new challenges – challenges you have never sought, but that will carry you through life.” Hans Beutler decided to climb down!

There are innumerable people who are greatly indebted to him, and many who owe him their lives. But modest as he was, his good deeds went largely unrecognized. In his country, he has never been officially honoured to this very day, and the only reminder of him in the town of Bueren on the Aare is a humble commemoration note at his birthplace “Unter dem Bogen”. •

¹ Nativity Scenes and Toy Museum in the former village schoolhouse in Bubendorf/BL: Annual nativity scenes exhibition with exhibits from Hans Beutler from early November until the middle of January; on Sundays from 2 p.m. until 5 p.m. (free entry); Guided tours on request, www.museum-bubendorf.ch or Phone: (0041) 61 931 32 92.

(Translation *Current Concerns*)