

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*

“Whistleblowers like Julian Assange are the heroes of our time”

Since the detention of WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange on 11 April in the London Embassy of Ecuador and his conviction to 50 weeks imprisonment, there have been numerous protests, demonstrations, appeals for the release of Assange worldwide. Edward Snowden spoke from his asylum in Russia in a letter that was read in Berlin. In Switzerland, a group of lawyers has asked the Federal Council to grant Assange asylum in Switzerland because he is politically persecuted and threatened with torture and the death penalty if he is extradited because of his revelations of war crimes in the USA.

Assange himself has repeatedly expressed this fear since his flight to the Ecuadorian embassy. Numerous articles can be found in the alternative media. Many mainstream media, which at the time were keen to publish the WikiLeaks material on war crimes on their front pages, are now demonstrating at best restrained reporting.

But there's more at stake here. It is about the protection of people who uncover war crimes, serious violations of international law by governments for the public, about the right to public participation of citizens. It is about protecting those for whom the UN Charter and human rights are still important.

To protect democracy and the dangers to world peace. “In a democratic society, everyone must have access to reliable information [...] so that a personal opinion can be formulated,” as Alfred de Zayas, who visited Assange 2015 in the embassy, stated in his demand for a charter of whistleblower rights already in 2016. And: “The weight of the law should fall on the persons whose criminal acts are uncovered by the whistleblowers. But those who commit war crimes, those who engage in corruption, those who conspire to defraud states of their tax revenue, continue to enjoy impunity.” (Current Concerns No. 11 from 18 May 2017).

It is also and above all about truth and justice for the countless innocent victims of the wars. Quite a few of these victims have expressed their gratitude to Assange for publishing with WikiLeaks the truth about the war, as Mairead Maguire, the Nobel Peace Prize laureate (1976) from Northern Ireland, writes in her haunting appeal. The hunt for Julian Assange – as the extensive chronicle makes clear – Chelsea Manning, Edward Snowden and many other whistleblowers must stop.

Eva-Maria Föllmer-Müller

“Unfortunately, it is my belief that Julian Assange will not see a fair trial”

Excerpts from an appeal by Mairead Maguire*



Mairead Maguire
(picture nobelwomens-initiative.org)

Thursday 11 April, will go down in history as a dark day for the Rights of humanity, when Julian Assange, a brave and good man, was arrested, by British Metropolitan Police, forcibly removed without prior warning, in a style befitting

of a war criminal, from the Ecuadorian Embassy, and bundled into a Police Van. It is a sad time when the UK Government at the behest of the United States Government, arrested Julian Assange, a symbol of Freedom of Speech as the publisher of *Wikileaks*, and the worlds' leaders and main stream media remain silent on the fact that he is an innocent man until proven guilty, while the UN working Group on Arbitrary Detention defines him as innocent.

The decision of President *Lenin Moreno* of Ecuador who under financial pressure from the US has withdrawn asylum to the Wikileaks founder, is a further example of Unites States' global currency monopoly, pressurizing other countries to do their bidding or face the financial and possibly violent consequences for disobedience to the alleged world Super Power, which has sadly lost its moral compass.

Julian Assange had taken asylum in the Ecuadorian Embassy seven years ago

precisely because he foresaw that the US would demand his extradition to face a Grand Jury in the US for mass murders carried out, not by him, but by US and NATO forces, and concealed from the public.

Unfortunately, it is my belief that Julian Assange will not see a fair trial. As we have seen over the last seven years, time and time again, the European countries and many others, do not have the po-

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Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*

1. Everyone shall have the right to hold opinions without interference.
2. Everyone shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of his choice.
3. The exercise of the rights provided for in paragraph 2 of this article car-

ries with it special duties and responsibilities. It may therefore be subject to certain restrictions, but these shall only be such as are provided by law and are necessary:

- (a) For respect of the rights or reputations of others;
- (b) For the protection of national security or of public order (*ordre public*), or of public health or morals.

*The treaty of 19 December 1966 is signed so far by 169 states and is legally binding

A Timeline

- ef. *October 2006*: The whistle blowing website *WikiLeaks.org*, initiated and founded by *Julian Assange*, is registered.
- *Early 2010*: WikiLeaks receives a large portfolio of classified US documents.
- *April 2010*: WikiLeaks publishes a classified US military video (“Collateral Murder” video) showing the indiscriminate killing of over a dozen people in the Iraqi suburb of New Baghdad, including two *Reuters News* staff members.
- *May 2010*: US Army Intelligence analyst *Bradley Manning* (now *Chelsea Manning*) is arrested in Iraq for publishing WikiLeaks.
- *July 2010*: Publication of the “*Afghan War Diary*” with 91,000 classified documents giving an unmasked picture of the war.
- *October 2010*: “*Iraq War Logs*” (2004-2009): 391 832 classified military documents are released; according to these, 66 081 of the 109 032 victims were civilians.
- *November 2010*: The Swedish court orders Assange’s detention in relation to the investigation of of rape and sexual assault allegations.
- “*Cablegate*” (publishing dispatches of US embassies by WikiLeaks) WikiLeaks begins publishings a collection of 251,287 internal reports and assessments from US embassies around the world to the US State Department from December 1966 to February 2010. The material is made available in advance by WikiLeaks to selected international media such as the “*New York Times*”, the “*Guardian*”, “*Le Monde*”, “*El Pais*” and *Der Spiegel*. They collaborate to edit and contextualise the material. First and foremost, the despatches show how the USA sees the world and how they try to influence it. US Attorney-General *Eric Holder* states that the Department of Justice and the Pentagon are conducting an “active ongoing criminal investigation” into whether Assange has violated criminal law, including the Espionage Act.
- *December 2010*: British police arrest Assange for a European arrest warrant issued by Sweden. After one week Assange is released on bail.
- *February 2011*: Westminster Magistrates Court orders the extradition of Assange to Sweden – without charge. Assange appeals against the decision, because he fears extradition to the US.
- *April 2011*: “*Gitmo Files*” (Guantánamo files) released: 779 documents on Guantánamo prisoners contain shocking information about each of the “unlawful enemy combatants” out of *George W. Bush’s* “*War on Terror*”, some of whom are still detained on Cuban ground.
- *May 2011*: Reportedly, US government opens a Grand Jury hearing to determine whether WikiLeaks and Assange should be prosecuted for possible crimes, including espionage.
- *September 2011*: WikiLeaks publishes the full set of unredacted diplomatic dispatches after a journalist working with WikiLeaks published the key to decrypt a public backup.
- *November 2011*: The British High Court rules that Assange should be extradited to Sweden – he appeals again and remains under house arrest.
- *February 2012*: 5 million emails of the Texas “security company” *Stratfor* released. Stratfor is a private secret service that works closely with US and Israeli services. In an email Stratfor Vice President *Fred Burton* claims: “We have a ‘sealed indictment on Assange’”.
- *May 2012*: The UK Supreme Court rules that Assange’s extradition to Sweden is lawful and should take place.
- *June 2012*: Assange flees to Ecuador’s London Embassy and applies for political asylum. The Westminster Magistrates Court issues an arrest warrant over breach of bail conditions because Assange had moved from house arrest to the Ecuadorian embassy.
- *August 2012*: Ecuador grants Assange political asylum.
- *August 2013*: Bradley Manning is sentenced to 35 years in prison on charges including espionage.
- *March 2015*: A judge at the US District Court says the *FBI* and the US Department of Justice are still pursuing an “active and ongoing” criminal investigation of WikiLeaks and Assange over the Manning leaks.
- *August 2015*: Swedish prosecutors drop their investigation of sexual assault allegations as the time for prosecution expires. Investigations on allegations of rape continue.
- *February 2016*: The UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention rules Assange’s stay in the Ecuadorian Embassy is tantamount to “arbitrary detention” and he must be compensated for it. The United Kingdom and Sweden reject this ruling.
- *July 2016*: WikiLeaks releases 19,000 emails from the US Democratic National Committee (DNC) and *Hillary Clinton’s* campaign advisor John Podesta. It is later claimed that they were passed on to WikiLeaks by Russian hackers, although Assange denies this.
- *November 2016*: The Swedish prosecutor interrogates Assange at the Ecuadorian Embassy in London over rape allegation.
- *March 2017*: US prosecutors are said to have expanded their investigations into WikiLeaks and Assange by the Grand Jury.
- Under the name “*Vault 7*” WikiLeaks publishes CIA documents that describe in detail the activities and capabilities of the CIA to conduct electronic surveillance and cyber warfare.
- *April 2017*: The then CIA Director *Mike Pompeo* (now US Secretary of State) calls WikiLeaks “a non-state hostile intelligence service, often abetted by state actors like Russia.”
- US Attorney General Jeff Sessions says that the arrest of Assange is a “priority”, and CNN reports that the authorities have prepared charges on him.
- *May 2017*: Chelsea Manning is pardoned by then US President *Obama*.
- Swedish prosecutors cease their investigation into rape allegation against Assange and say it can only continue if Assange is present in Sweden. His arrest warrant is cancelled and withdrawn.
- *December 2017*: Ecuador grants Assange citizenship.
- *February 2018*: Westminster Magistrates Court rejects a motion by Assange’s lawyers to overturn the warrant for his arrest.
- *March 2018*: Ecuador cuts off Assange’s Internet and telephone access and allows only visits by his lawyers, on the grounds that he has “interfered with other states”.
- *June 2018*: Australian consular officials visit Assange for the first time in the Embassy of Ecuador; the reason for this is not disclosed.
- *July 2018*: British Secretary of State *Jeremy Hunt* says Assange faces “serious charges”. It is later claimed that Hunt referred to the warrant for his arrest over breaching bail.
- *November 2018*: It becomes known that the US judiciary has at least secretly prepared an indictment against Assange.
- *March 2019*: Chelsea Manning is arrested again for refusing to testify before the Grand Jury in the trial against Julian Assange.
- *April 2019*: President *Lenin Moreno* (Ecuador) declares that Assange will lose his asylum status because he has violated his asylum conditions. Shortly before, WikiLeaks had reported on corruption investigations against Moreno.
- An independent human rights expert is due to visit Assange on 25 April to assess whether the allegations against him make an investigation necessary.
- On 11 April, Assange is arrested after almost 7 years in the Ecuadorian embassy in London. A request for extradition from the USA has been filed against Assange. The US judiciary accuses him of “conspiracy of invading computers”.
- *May 2019*: According to the Spanish newspaper “*El Pais*”, the Attorney General of Ecuador, at the request of the US judiciary, ordered that the former Assange accommodation be searched and all his documents handed over to the US authorities, including all mobile phones, digital archives, files and storage media (CDs, USB sticks).
- *May 2019*: Chelsea Manning is re-arrested on May 16. Manning was detained for contempt of court in Alexandria, Virginia, USA, a spokesperson for her team of lawyers said. The Whistleblower had refused again before, to testify in the case of Julian Assange.

UN Special Rapporteur on Privacy seriously concerned by Ecuador's behaviour in Assange and Moreno cases

Geneva – The United Nations Special Rapporteur on Privacy, *Joseph Cannataci*, is very seriously concerned by reports that the Government of Ecuador is planning to hand over personal belongings of Julian Assange to the United States.

The independent expert said he had received information that, at the request of the United States Department of Justice, the Ecuadorian Government had decided to search on 20 May its London embassy premises used by the WikiLeaks founder and seize his documents, telephones, electronic devices, memory drives, etc., to hand them over to the US Government.

Concerned by the reports, Cannataci wrote to the Government of Ecuador recommending safeguards that should be in place before any search. He also offered to provide the assistance of impartial experts to monitor the search, and separate information that could be relevant for an eventual criminal process in the United States from information that should be kept private and handed back to Assange. The Special Rapporteur said he was disappointed by the lack of timely response from the Government of Ecuador.

"I have twice formally requested the Government of Ecuador to return Mr. Assange's personal effects to his lawyers,

but instead it seems that it intends to hand them over to the US authorities. While I have no problem with search and seizure procedures which are properly carried out under the rule of law, these are very special circumstances on at least two counts: there is more than the right to privacy at stake. Other human rights and especially the freedom of expression are also at risk if some of Mr. Assange's material were to fall into the wrong hands. Mr. Assange dealt with a number of confidential sources and whistleblowers whose identity and privacy should likewise be protected," said the Special Rapporteur.

"I am also disappointed by Ecuador's lack of timely response to my proposal to visit Quito and further assess the complaint I received from President Lenin Moreno concerning a violation of his right to privacy, related to the alleged hacking that led to the online release of a large number of his communications and private photographs of him and his family." Cannataci said the visit would have been "an excellent opportunity for me to better understand the particularities of the case".

The Special Rapporteur said he hoped to get a response soon to his concerns and proposals for cooperation.

Source: www.ohchr.org from 23 May 2019

Mr. *Joseph Cannataci* (Malta) was appointed as the first Special Rapporteur on the right to privacy by the Human Rights Council in July 2015, with his mandate being renewed in 2018 until July 2021. He is an academic who has had a pioneering role in the development of data protection, privacy law and technology law. A UK Chartered Information Technology Professional & Fellow of the British Computer Society, he also continues to act as Expert Consultant to a number of international organisations.

The Special Rapporteurs are part of what is known as the Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council. Special Procedures, the largest body of independent experts in the UN Human Rights system, is the general name of the Council's independent fact-finding and monitoring mechanisms that address either specific country situations or thematic issues in all parts of the world. Special Procedures experts work on a voluntary basis; they are not UN staff and do not receive a salary for their work. They are independent from any government or organisation and serve in their individual capacity.

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"Unfortunately, it is my believe ..."

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litical will or clout to stand up for what they know is right, and will eventually cave into the Unites States' will. We have watched *Bradley Manning* [now Chelsea Manning] being returned to jail and to solitary confinement, so we must not be naive in our thinking: surely, this is the future for Julian Assange.

I visited Julian on two occasions in the Ecuadorian Embassy and was very impressed with this courageous and highly intelligent man. The first visit was on my return from Kabul, where young Afghan teenage boys, insisted on writing a letter with the request I carry it to Julian Assange, to thank him, for publishing on Wikileaks, the truth about the war in Afghanistan and to help stop their homeland being bombed by planes and drones. All had a story of brothers or friends killed by drones while collecting wood in winter on the mountains.

I nominated Julian Assange on the 8 January 2019 for the Nobel Peace Prize. I issued a press release hoping to bring attention to his nomination, which seemed

to have been widely ignored, by Western media. By Julians courageous actions and others like him, we could see full well the atrocities of war. The release of the files brought to our doors the atrocities our governments carried out through media. It is my strong belief that this is the true essence of an activist and it is my great shame I live in an era where people like Julian Assange, *Edward Snowden*, *Chelsea Manning* and anyone willing to open our eyes to the atrocities of war, is likely to be haunted like an animal by Governments, punished and silenced. [...] This man is paying a high price to end war and for peace and nonviolence and we should all remember that.

* *Mairead Corrigan-Maguire* (*27 January 1944 in Belfast, Northern Ireland) is the co-founder of the most influential peace movement in Northern Ireland to date, the *Community of Peace People*. She and *Betty Williams* received the 1976 Nobel Peace Prize for this work, initiated by the death of Mairead Maguire's three nieces and nephews, who fell victim to a dispute between the IRA and the British army.

Source: www.peacepeople.com/nobel-peace-laureate-maguire-requests-uk-home-office-for-permission-to-visit-her-friend-nobel-peace-nominee-julian-assange-in-prison-in-london/ from 12 April 2019

UN Special Rapporteur on Torture says “collective persecution” of Julian Assange must end now

GENEVA (31 May 2019) A UN expert who visited Julian Assange in a London prison says he fears his human rights could be seriously violated if he is extradited to the United States and condemned the deliberate and concerted abuse inflicted for years on the Wikileaks co-founder.

“My most urgent concern is that, in the United States, Mr. Assange would be exposed to a real risk of serious violations of his human rights, including his freedom of expression, his right to a fair trial and the prohibition of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment,” said Nils Melzer, the UN Special Rapporteur on torture.

“I am particularly alarmed at the recent announcement by the US Department of Justice of 17 new charges against Mr. Assange under the Espionage Act, which currently carry up to 175 years in prison. This may well result in a life sentence without parole, or possibly even the death penalty, if further charges were to be added in the future,” said Melzer, who was also following up on earlier concerns for Assange’s health.

Although Assange is not held in solitary confinement, the Special Rapporteur said he is gravely concerned that the limited frequency and duration of lawyers’ visits and his lack of access to case files and

Mr Nils Melzer, Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment; is part of what is known as the Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council.

documents make it impossible for him to adequately prepare his defence in any of the complex legal proceedings piling up against him.

“Since 2010, when Wikileaks started publishing evidence of war crimes and torture committed by US forces, we have seen a sustained and concerted effort by several States towards getting Mr. Assange extradited to the United States for prosecution, raising serious concern over the criminalisation of investigative journalism in violation of both the US Constitution and international human rights law,” Melzer said.

“Since then, there has been a relentless and unrestrained campaign of public mobbing, intimidation and defamation against Mr. Assange, not only in the United States, but also in the United Kingdom, Sweden and, more recently, Ecuador.” According to the expert, this included an endless stream of humiliating, debasing and threatening statements in the press and on social media, but also by senior political figures, and even by judicial magistrates involved in proceedings against Assange.

“In the course of the past nine years, Mr. Assange has been exposed to persistent, progressively severe abuse ranging from systematic judicial persecution and arbitrary confinement in the Ecuadorian embassy, to his oppressive isolation, harassment and surveillance inside the embassy, and from deliberate collective ridicule, insults and humiliation, to open instigation of violence and even repeated calls for his assassination.”

Melzer was accompanied during his prison visit on 9 May by two medical experts specialised in examining potential victims of torture and other ill-treatment.

The team were able to speak with Assange in confidence and to conduct a thorough medical assessment.

“It was obvious that Mr. Assange’s health has been seriously affected by the extremely hostile and arbitrary environment he has been exposed to for many years,” the expert said. “Most importantly, in addition to physical ailments, Mr. Assange showed all symptoms typical for prolonged exposure to psychological torture, including extreme stress, chronic anxiety and intense psychological trauma.

“The evidence is overwhelming and clear,” the expert said. “Mr. Assange has been deliberately exposed, for a period of several years, to progressively severe forms of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, the cumulative effects of which can only be described as psychological torture.

“I condemn, in the strongest terms, the deliberate, concerted and sustained nature of the abuse inflicted on Mr. Assange and seriously deplore the consistent failure of all involved governments to take measures for the protection of his most fundamental human rights and dignity,” the expert said. “By displaying an attitude of complacency at best, and of complicity at worst, these governments have created an atmosphere of impunity encouraging Mr. Assange’s uninhibited vilification and abuse.”

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UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention expresses concern about Assange proceedings

GENEVA (3 May 2019) – The UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention takes note of Mr Julian Assange’s conviction by a UK court on 1 May 2019, and his sentencing to 50 weeks imprisonment. On 4 December 2015, the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention adopted Opinion No. 54/2015*, in which it considered that Mr Assange was arbitrarily detained by the Governments of Sweden and the UK.

The Working Group issues the following statement:

“The Working Group on Arbitrary Detention is deeply concerned about this course of action including the disproportionate sentence imposed on Mr. Assange. The Working Group is of the view that violating bail is a minor violation that, in the United Kingdom, carries a maximum sentence of 12 months in prison, even though the bond related to the bail has been lost in favour of the British Government, and that Mr Assange was still detained after vi-

olating the bail which, in any case should not stand after the Opinion was issued. The Working Group regrets that the Government has not complied with its Opinion and has now furthered the arbitrary deprivation of liberty of Mr Assange.

It is worth recalling that the detention and the subsequent bail of Mr. Assange in the UK were connected to preliminary investigations initiated in 2010 by a prosecutor in Sweden. It is equally worth noting that that prosecutor did not press any charges against Mr Assange and that in 2017, after interviewing him in the Ecuadorian embassy in London, she discontinued investigations and brought an end to the case. The Working Group is further concerned that Mr Assange has been detained since 11 April 2019 in Belmarsh prison, a high-security prison, as if he were convicted for a serious criminal offence. This treatment appears to contravene the principles of necessity and proportionality envisaged by the human rights standards.

The WGAD reiterates its recommendation to the Government of the United Kingdom, as expressed in its Opinion 54/2015, and its 21 December 2018 statement, that the right of Mr Assange to personal liberty should be restored.”

**The Working Group’s Opinion on Julian Assange’s case (No. 54/2015), adopted in December. The UN Working Groups are part of what is known as the Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council. Special Procedures, the largest body of independent experts in the UN Human Rights system, is the general name of the Council’s independent fact-finding and monitoring mechanisms that address either specific country situations or thematic issues in all parts of the world. Special Procedures’ experts work on a voluntary basis; they are not UN staff and do not receive a salary for their work. They are independent from any government or organization and serve in their individual capacity.*

Source: www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=24552&LangID=E

Not only agriculture ends with the destruction of the peasantry

by Professor Dr Heinrich Wohlmeyer



Heinrich Wohlmeyer (picture uk)

World and regional food supply have come under scrutiny. In 2008 – 11 years ago – the *International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development* (IAASTD) called for a radical rethinking of

world agricultural policy in its study “Agriculture at a Crossroads”. IAASTD warned that the current way of cultivation, which dominates world market, would not be able to secure world food supplies. On the contrary, a small-scaled, site-oriented, diverse land management is necessary. This corresponds to the

* Heinrich Wohlmeyer was one of the first to initiate sustainable concepts and created the Austrian Union of Agricultural and Nutritional Scientific Research and the Austrian Society for Biotechnology. Heinrich Wohlmeyer taught at the Technical University in Vienna and at the University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences in Vienna. Today Wohlmeyer manages a mountain farm in Lilienfeld (Austria).

“UN Special Rapporteur on Torture...”

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In official letters sent earlier this week, Melzer urged the four involved governments to refrain from further disseminating, instigating or tolerating statements or other activities prejudicial to Assange’s human rights and dignity and to take measures to provide him with appropriate redress and rehabilitation for past harm. He further appealed to the British Government not to extradite Assange to the United States or to any other State failing to provide reliable guarantees against his onward transfer to the United States. He also reminded the United Kingdom of its obligation to ensure Assange’s unimpeded access to legal counsel, documentation and adequate preparation commensurate with the complexity of the pending proceedings.

“In 20 years of work with victims of war, violence and political persecution I have never seen a group of democratic States ganging up to deliberately isolate, demonise and abuse a single individual for such a long time and with so little regard for human dignity and the rule of law,” Melzer said. “The collective persecution of Julian Assange must end here and now!”

Source: www.ohchr.org from 31 May 2019



“Rural management views nature as an entrusted good with which it interacts. It is a culture of dealing with the living.” (picture caro)

horticultural patterns of cultivation of all advanced civilisations with scarce land and high population densities. This type of cultivation also saved our lives in times of need during the Second World War.

However, the mainstream of international agricultural industry keeps on moving in the opposite direction. Labour productivity is maximised at the expense of land productivity, diversity and natural soil fertility. The tone is set by the large farms in North and South America, Australia and New Zealand¹. Furthermore, big business, recognising the untenability of the current world financial order, is fleeing into land purchase, and exploiting large corporations and states such as China purchase fertile land abroad thus driving away the farmers. All this leads to *remote agricultural management*, in which the intimate personal contact with the soil, plants and animals is lost. Digitisation, seen as a mantra for the future, supports this pattern.

A soulless agricultural management is gaining more and more space forgetting that the only economic sector that contains the word “culture” is agriculture. *L.C.I. Columella* (died around 70 A.D.) already pointed out this danger in the foreword to his 12 books on agriculture.² He wrote: “Moreover, I believe that this³ does not happen to us due to disfavour of the climate, but due to our own failure, since we have handed over land management to the most miserable slaves like executioners for mistreating the soil, while in times of our ancestors land management was done by the best men with utmost art and love.” Count *Hartig*⁴ refers to the opposite in his “Brief Historical Reflections on the Reception and Decay of Farming by Different Nations”, Vienna and Prague 1786, with regard to Japan: “Unlike China, Japan gives its inhabitants, a fertile soil to culti-

vate; sandy soil, stony regions and mountains are natural obstacles to agriculture here But the mountains are covered with grain, and the hardworking Japanese even pulls the plough in those steep mountains where draught cattle can no longer be used for work. By the use of the richest and most elaborate artificial fertilisation, the sandy soil is transformed into the most fertile field; old implements and clothes, oysters and shells, everything is used by them to force gifts out of earth, through multiplication of the fertilizer.” The small *Iseki* and *Kubota* all-wheel-drive tractors currently driving around our city gardens and parks are the modern descendants of this small-scale agriculture that is now being destroyed by opening up to cheap US imports.

We can put it in a nutshell: If direct contact with soil, plants and animals is lost, and if large technology and cheap imports cause the abandoning of difficult small scale cultivation, and the latter is praised as “natural, state-of-the-art structural adjustment and modernisation”, then the adaptive nature management, the agriculture, gets lost and thus also the food security of the coming generations.

The call of the IAASTD⁵ and the recent resolution of the United Nations General Assembly from 17 December 2018 on the rights of farmers and other persons working in rural areas, which was not signed by Austria, should bring about a rethinking.

If about 6 small farmers per day give up in Austria, the alarm bells should be ringing. Because only farmers who master the tools of the trade and difficult terrain can intensify horticulturalism and ensure local basic services in the event of a crisis – which can not be ruled out.

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Sovereignty at the service of peoples

Samir Amin – Perspectives for Africa's independent development



rt. The development economist *Samir Amin*, who died in August 2018, makes a plea for the “national sovereignty” aiming for efficiency and shareholder values. On the

basis of a Marxist orientation, but still open to other approaches, Samir looks for alternatives for a marginalised “Third World” from a global perspective and drawing from a broad historical knowledge. The idea for a German translation of three essays by Amin in “Souveränität im Dienst der Völker. Plädoyer für eine antikapitalistische nationale Entwicklung” (Sovereignty in the Service of Peoples. A plea for an anti-capitalist national development)¹ from French was born in October 2017 in a workshop in Vienna.

Samir Amin – a leading development theorist

Andrea Komlosy writes in her introduction about the personality of Samir Amin: “Amin was 85 years old when he wrote these texts. He can look back on an extraordinary life span, allowing him to experience colonialism, decolonisation, a spirit of optimism in post-colonial states and socialist experiments as well as a series of setbacks” (p. 8). Amin is regarded as one of the leading development theorists for the Third World. He was head of several internationally renowned institutes in Africa dealing with the development of the continent in an international context, including the *Institut Africain de Développement Économique et de Planification* (IDEP) in Dakar.

Demand for national sovereignty

In the three essays in “Sovereignty in the Service of Peoples” Amin analyses the

global political and economic situation from a viewpoint of African states and develops perspectives for the people in African countries. A central demand in those analyses is national sovereignty, linked to the food sovereignty of these states. Food sovereignty would enable them to become independent, but also to build up an independent economy and get their population into work and bread. He ties food sovereignty to the equal right to cultivable land and thus to far-reaching rights of self-determination for the population, a thought that clearly sets him apart from many Marxist theorists.

Africa – a slum planet

His analysis of the situation in Africa is shocking, yet cannot be dismissed, even if the successes of the UN Millennium Goals give us a different impression: Our current global economic system leads to the rapid impoverishment of billions (!) of people in the South who still live in a self-sustaining subsistence economy – just because they have been and will be expelled from their land. Amin incorporates global developments in agribusiness as well as land grabbing and the cultivation of “bio” fuels into his analyses. “The only perspective it [capitalism, note *rt*] offers is that of a slum planet with billions of ‘supernumerary’ people” (p. 76).

Families as basis for food sovereignty

In order to stop the threatening development and to comply with the goal of self-determination of the peoples, he demands national sovereignty on the basis of a secure food situation for the entire

population. For this purpose, he designs various development models and repeatedly falls back on historical or current developments. In his unbiased view, he sees farming families as a meaningful basis for an agriculture making food sovereignty possible. Within the framework of his Marxist way of thinking, he explores various possibilities. The fact that he judges the example of China very mildly does not diminish his courageous analyses, as *Andrea Komlosy* points out.

Alternative to Western fatalism

The reading has a liberating effect. Amin goes beyond the leaden thinking of Western economism limited to profit maximisation and “development cooperation” and so far offers no convincing alternatives for a third of humanity. If, when reading the report, one draws connections to the approaches of the UN World Agricultural Report of 2008, which was wrongly pushed out of the discussion, one can discover sensible common factors.

The publication of this translation by *Promedia-Verlag* Vienna can only be welcomed. The reader is glad about the helpful introduction by *Andrea Komlosy*. An in-depth discussion of global developments will thus receive new impulses in German-speaking countries. •

¹ Amin, Samir. *Souveränität im Dienst der Völker. Plädoyer für eine antikapitalistische nationale Entwicklung*. Promedia Verlag 2018. 978-3-85371-453-9. Original: *La souveraineté au service des peuples, l'agriculture paysanne, la voie de l'avenir!* Editions du CETIM. Geneva 2017

“Not only agriculture ends ...”

continued from page 5

Rural management views nature as an entrusted good with which it interacts. It is a culture of dealing with the living. They know their fields, their plants and their cattle and feel connected to them. My late host father, the farmer *Franz Steindl*, looked at the soil when taking a sample with a spade and smelled at it, then he said: “My boy, the ground is just fine.” All his animals had a name and answered to it. He noticed signs of illness at once.

With intimate contact, the right hemisphere of the brain can spontaneously recognise the state of complex systems and thus help to intervene appropriately. This cannot be guaranteed by predefined programmes.

The farmers as designers, guardians and outposts of the cultural landscape can

intervene quickly and appropriately even in the case of natural hazards (for example, water drainage and fire fighting). If they are no longer on site, damages are only noticed when the damage is already extensive. Unfortunately, this is the case internationally.

But there is more to it: It is about a culture of life that is carried within and that we are currently eradicating. We are no longer speaking of the “farmer” but of the BFU (rural family business) and the management of natural resources. Agriculture no longer appears in the official title of the responsible ministry ...

The Servite Father, Father *Bonfilius (Franz) Wagner*, who, after the fall of the Iron Curtain, was sent back to his old hometown Gratzen (now Nové Hradky) in southern Bohemia at the age of 65, and who rescued and revived the monastery Gratzen and the place of pilgrimage Brünnl (now

Dobrá Voda), and revitalised the youth to a new beginning, he said before his death in 2005: “The end of the world will come when the very last peasant and very last monk or nun will die, when there will be no one left who would till the land and pray for the world. Peasants and pastors seem to die hand in hand unless we wake up and take countermeasure.” •

¹ New Zealand sheep from intensive animal husbandry underprice the local sheep farmers and is praised to be ‘green’ although the feed business is conducted with herbicide distribution and fertilisation from the air.

² *De re rustica libri duodecim*. Tusculum-Bücherei, Artemis Verlag München 1981

³ The bemoaned decreasing natural soil fertility.

⁴ He travelled widely and was a member of the Royal Academy in Marseille and the Academic Museum in Paris.

⁵ In which Austria, unlike Switzerland, did not participate.

⁶ As a child, I grew up in a farmer's family.

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

Tremendous effects of the EU internal market?

Bertelsmann policy paper confirms: The gap between EU countries is becoming ever wider

Dr iur. Marianne Wüthrich

Shortly before the EU elections, the “Bertelsmann Stiftung” has published a policy paper (a “study”, according to the German summary) that presents the effects of the EU’s internal market on the incomes of residents in the EU and EEA states, as well as in Switzerland, and comes to astonishing conclusions¹, namely that, thanks to the internal market, per capita incomes are said to be rising considerably every year in all countries – admittedly not everywhere and equally strongly for everyone, but even so: “The EU internal market has not only led to the dismantling of border controls, but also basically brings Europeans a plus in their wallets. On average, EU citizens’ per capita welfare gains from the SM amount to 840 euros per year. For Germany, the annual increase in income per person amounts to 1,046 euros.”²

For many an unemployed Spaniard, a Greek pensioner or a German Hartz IV recipient, who can barely cover their mini-

imum subsistence needs with their meagre monthly allowance, let alone take care of their families, such statements present a downright cynicism. The Bertelsmann strategy paper could therefore appear counterproductive to its hoped-for appeal to many EU voters.

In addition to the EU electorate, the study is particularly aimed at the Swiss and the British. Of all people, these two – who do not want to join the EU at all or who want to leave it again – are allegedly among the greatest profiteers of the EU’s internal market. What well-chosen bait dangled in front of us by Brussels so as to persuade us Swiss to approve the institutional framework agreement! And to make the British revoke their withdrawal decision.

What the financial blessings of participating in the EU’s internal market are all about, is to be examined here from a political point of view.

The Swiss mainstream media, at any rate, have been delighted to jump at this bait. The “St. Galler Tagblatt”, which belongs to the NZZ Group, warns under the title “We Swiss profiteers”: “Those political forces that cast doubt on our participation in the EU internal market [...] must know that they are destroying prosperity. That is the price we pay when we dream of greater independence.”³

The British, on the other hand, were warned by *Bertelsmann* project manager and co-author of the strategy paper, *Dominic Ponattu* himself: “A complete withdrawal of the British from the internal market would have a severe impact, not only on Greater London but also on industrial and innovative regions in the south of the country.”⁴ With a focus on Great Britain, the British economist Professor *Dr Giordano Mion*, University of Sussex, who is also a member of the Centre for Economic Policy Research (CEPR), UK, was commissioned as the second author.⁵

In this context there is no place to itemise the economic model – that is difficult for laypersons to understand, or deliberately presented in a complicated manner? – used by Mion and Ponattu to “prove” the supposed, truly impressive income gains brought about by the EU single market. Let us leave aside the applied “gravity model” and the related simulation calculations, as well as estimates of how strongly the EU internal market, or its disappearance, could affect trade.⁶

Attempt at explaining the model to laypersons – and critical deliberations

Essentially, it is not so difficult: the authors assume that trade between companies in the internal market (e.g. an Italian and a Polish company) is financially more advantageous because of lower trade costs (elimination of customs duties and non-

tariff barriers⁷). This has a positive effect on prices and production (consumers can afford more because of lower prices = increasing demand; therefore more can be produced = increasing supply). “On the one hand, this ensures more competition for the best products and the lowest prices; on the other hand, the internal market facilitates investment by companies within Europe [...]”

Entrepreneurs on the high-price island of Switzerland, for example, are forced to stand the pace in the competition for the best products, and they often can, but they would have no chance in the struggle for low prices. More competition would, in turn, lead to further price reductions and, as a consequence, to more economic growth, so the authors. “The stronger trade integration caused by the single market will ultimately lead to a shift in economic resources (labour and capital) from the less productive to the most productive firms and to a stronger increase in overall economic productivity.”⁸

In plain language this means that, for example, the production of tomatoes is transferred from farmers in the Mediterranean countries (= less productive companies) to Dutch conglomerates (= most productive companies), because the latter firms’ CEOs have more practice with pro-competitive tactics. From there the tomatoes are then transported to a low-cost country in the southeast of the EU to be processed into canned food, and finally back to the Mediterranean or elsewhere for sale. It is true that this back and forth movement of raw materials, individual parts, semi-finished and finished products across the continent does pollute the air and produce congestion and noise, yet in turn it creates many low-wage jobs for truck drivers and correspondingly higher profits for large logistics groups (= the

overall economic productivity can grow more strongly). This whole network of production chains in the EU’s internal market is causing prices to fall further, “which can increase consumer welfare”. Or rather the welfare or the profits of the major shareholders and managers of the multinationals? For the welfare of tomato farmers and their families, as well as of those unemployed for whom jobs could be created in potential canneries in the Mediterranean, would be many times greater if they could produce, process and consume locally (as recommended by the World Agricultural Report TAASTD).

For welfare does not necessarily mean financial prosperity, but rather the well-being of people in their families and at work, as well as an autonomous coexistence in the larger community, their physical and mental well-being, a good educational and health care system, and all the other things necessary for a decent life. The EU internal market construct has led people far away from such a life model. In a Europe of free and equal sovereign states, living and working together for the good of all could be much better organised.

EU internal market does not contribute to more justice – quite the contrary

The Bertelsmann strategy paper is not about this kind of welfare of people in the local working world and in their life together, it is about money, and this is highly unfairly distributed in the well-organised market economy of the EU’s internal market. According to *Aart de Geus*, Chairman of the Bertelsmann Stiftung Executive Board: “The EU internal market is one of the biggest driving factors of our prosperity and works in a way similar

“Tremendous effects of ...”

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to that of the market economy: not everyone benefits equally, but everyone wins.”⁹ Really everyone?

The study first compares the “economic effects of the domestic market at the country level” and comes to a less surprising conclusion: Within the countries there are large differences in the development of per capita income. According to the study, “Switzerland leads with 2,914 euros per capita in income gains, followed by Luxembourg (2,834 euros) and Ireland (1,894 euros)”. Germany and France are also among the top ten, with income gains of a good 1000 euros per capita, while Bulgaria and Romania are at the bottom of the list with 242 and 193 euros respectively, and Greece and Portugal also record small increases.

At the regional level, Zurich ranks at the top, ahead of Luxembourg, Vorarlberg and Salzburg, allegedly because of its proximity to Germany (lower costs due to short distances to major trading partners) – an absurd explanation in a time of cheap flights and when the cheapest products come from Africa, despite long distances. – The financial centre of London as well as other British economic centres are also far to the front.

From this, the study draws two by no means new conclusions: “These results show that small, open economies with a strong trade orientation and high competitiveness gain most from the internal market”. And: “... that countries in the geographical centre of Europe benefit more [...]”¹⁰.

Nothing new under the sun – only that in the strategy paper, increasing per capita income is recorded as a success of the EU internal market. One could also start from the other side: Obviously, despite all levelling down by an all-pervading bureaucracy, it has not been possible to achieve more justice than this in the “Peace Project Europe” – nor is that the goal. “Not everyone benefits equally ...”.

Questionable corrections of inequalities – cui bono?

We take the main findings of the Bertelsmann Strategy Paper from the English original (the German summary does not get to the heart of the matter quite so clearly): “Our results suggest that gains from the SM may further reinforce pre-existing regional differences, this way adding to the core-periphery pattern and inequality more generally.”¹¹ We have been able to see only too well, how many people’s former hopes that accession to the EU would make them and their country enjoy more prosperity were shattered, in Greece and other countries living under the dictates of the IMF/ECB/Brussels triad.

The countermeasures proposed by the strategy paper: “Productivity-inhancing measures” in the regions concerned, i.e. “investment in (digital) infrastructure and upskilling” within the framework of the EU cohesion policy. This brings to mind all sorts of ideas: which large companies are making these investments in order to generate further profits? What are the benefits for the “recipient” states? Further debts? Wouldn’t it be to their greater advantage if they could decide for them-

selves, what resources they need to get their economies back on track? So that they could very pleasurably be active themselves in cooperative farms and family businesses ...

“Moreover, promoting competition is vital to make sure that all countries and regions reap the benefits of the SM with respect to both higher productivity as well as lower prices.”¹² Though thousandfold repeated, this construct does not work, at least not for the lower income regions: Competition is primarily of benefit to large companies, and those are already well out in front.

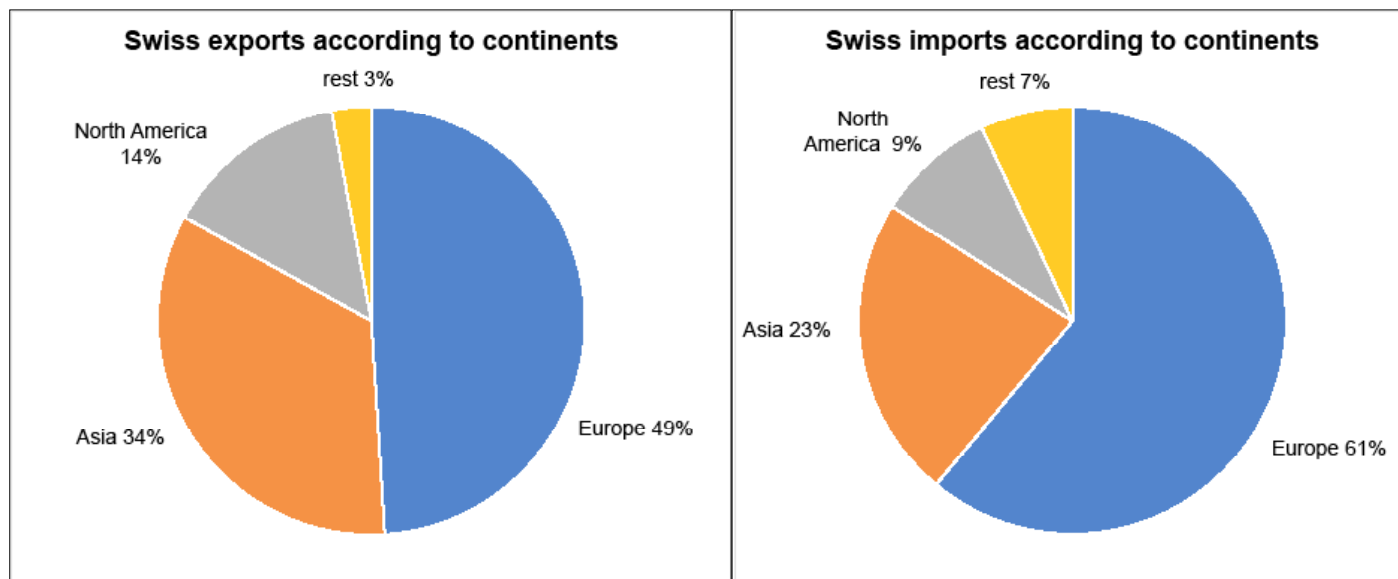
Finally, the strategy paper targets the services market: “Almost 75 % of EU-wide value added are based on services, yet, only about a third of all EU exports are services. Better regulation on services trade could thus allow for an even greater size of the economic pie to be achieved through the SM.”¹³

So should all services be entrusted to the borderless EU market? Education, health, energy, environment, as well as several other fields? No way!

Stability of Swiss economy is not EU merit

As far as Switzerland is concerned, it had a place among the three countries with the highest per capita income (worldwide) long before the bilateral agreements with the EU. Small economies have always had to be “open” in order to prosper, i.e. to trade with all countries and peoples and to cultivate cultural exchange. This is es-

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Imports and exports Switzerland/EU: deficit for Switzerland

Switzerland’s foreign trade balance has been positive for decades, i.e. the value of exports in Swiss francs is greater than the value of imports (export surplus). However, this does not apply to trade with the EU states: Switzerland imports significantly more goods from the European states (the EU and some other states that are not significant in terms of numbers) than it exports. 61 % of imports in 2017 came from Europe, but only 49 % of exports went to European countries. On the other hand, exports to Asia and North America have increased in recent years.

Source: Federal Statistical Office. Switzerland’s foreign trade in 2017. The most important partners.

"Tremendous effects of ..."

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pecially the case if, like Switzerland, they have few raw materials of their own. The good condition of Switzerland as a business location is by no means due solely to its financial centre, which generates only a small share of GDP (6–8 per cent) and has moreover been under pressure for years from its more powerful competitors – including the EU! On the contrary, around 99 per cent of companies based in Switzerland are SMEs active in a wide variety of sectors, many of them training apprentices and doing business primarily in Switzerland.

Another internal factor is Switzerland's dual vocational training. In addition to grammar schools and universities, it is of central importance for the well-being of the Swiss population and for the low unemployment rate, especially among the younger generation. It requires a good primary school education, a high level of motivation and reliability, as well as the ability to cooperate – "many hands make light work". (A warning to the school reformers who are unfortunately in control today: beware of sawing off the branch we are all sitting on!)

But the fact that the Swiss are doing well also has to do with the fact that they "keep order in their own house": thanks to their direct democratic rights, their small-

scale economy and the rights of the cantons, which are still strong in the federalist state, and – this is particularly important! – thanks to their armed neutrality. Countries that do not wage wars and need their army only for defence not only save a lot of money, but have energy left to utilise for much more meaningful things in the world.¹⁴

The prosperity of Switzerland or any other country has little to do with its participation in the EU internal market, as Bertelsmann confirm in the above conclusion of their study. We have been doing business with companies in other European countries for a long time, long before there was an EU, and will hopefully continue to do so for a long time to come. Tailor-made free trade agreements, such as the 1972 one still in force today between Switzerland (and the other EFTA states) and the EC, are far more suitable instruments for a sovereign state than political integration into a centralist bureaucracy colossus. •

¹ "Estimating economic benefits of the Single Market for European countries and regions. Policy Paper". Bertelsmann Stiftung 2019. German short version: "Ökonomische Effekte des EU-Binnenmarktes in Europas Ländern und Regionen. Zusammenfassung der Studie" (www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/fileadmin/files/BSt/Publikationen/GrauePublikationen/EZ_Study_SingleMarket.pdf)

² Title page Bertelsmann Stiftung of 8 May 2019 (www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/de/themen/aktuelle-meldungen/2019/mai/eu-binnenmarkt-er

[tuelle-meldungen/2019/mai/eu-binnenmarkt-er-hoeht-pro-kopf-einkommen-der-deutschen-um-1000-euro-jaehrlich/](http://www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/de/themen/aktuelle-meldungen/2019/mai/eu-binnenmarkt-er-hoeht-pro-kopf-einkommen-der-deutschen-um-1000-euro-jaehrlich/)) (in German)

³ *St. Galler Tagblatt* of 8 May 2019

⁴ Title page Bertelsmann Stiftung of 8 May 2019 (www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/de/themen/aktuelle-meldungen/2019/mai/eu-binnenmarkt-er-hoeht-pro-kopf-einkommen-der-deutschen-um-1000-euro-jaehrlich/) (in German)

⁵ According to *wikipedia* the CEPR has no connection with the US-American Center for Economic and Policy Research, which uses the same abbreviation.

⁶ "Estimating economic benefits of the Single Market for European countries and regions. Policy Paper". Bertelsmann Stiftung 2019. German short version, p. 7. According to the footnote on p. 3, a detailed theoretical derivation of the model is available on demand.

⁷ Tariff barriers to trade are primarily tariffs. Non-tariff trade barriers are all other measures to protect domestic production and make imports more difficult, for example technical regulations, registration formalities for imports, quality requirements for products, import bans or restrictions, etc. (German version taken from *Gabler Wirtschaftslexikon*. wirtschaftslexikon.gabler.de/definition/non-tarifaere-Trade-Barriers-37062)

⁸ "Economic effects of the EU internal market in Europe's countries and regions. Summary of the study", p. 4

⁹ Cover page Bertelsmann Stiftung, 8 May 2019

¹⁰ "Economic effects of the EU internal market in Europe's countries and regions. Summary of the study", p. 4

¹¹ Estimating economic benefits of the Single Market for European countries and regions. Policy Paper". Bertelsmann Foundation 2019 Conclusion, p. 23

¹² Conclusion, p. 23

¹³ Conclusion, p. 23

¹⁴ Thus the Swiss offer of good services is more likely to be used, if the Federal Council behaves absolutely impartially in conflicts: For this reason, Switzerland was recently asked once again by the US government to assume its consular representation in its dealings with Venezuela.

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Building a residence with processing room and farm shop Closer to Queen and Bear

by Max Hugentobler

Queen and Bear. These are the names of the favourite cows of four-year-old Lena and three-year-old Andri. Every day the two siblings visit the stable. Soon they no longer have to walk through half the village.

At first glance, the old farmhouse in the centre of the village of Tschierschen looks like the perfect home. So cosy and quaint. But the residents, *Kaspar* and *Maja Zumbrunn* with the two children *Lena* and *Andri*, can hardly wait to move out. The house is not only old and too small for the family. It's draughty in there, too, and on cold winter days you can't feed the wood stove in the kitchen fast enough to keep all the rooms warm.

Suddenly it became more expensive

"When we took over my parents' farm a good year ago, it was already clear that we didn't want to stay in this house," says *Maja*. Because their present residence in the middle of the village is not part of the business. Instead of investing a lot of money in buying and renovating their house, the young mountain farmers decided to build a new one right next to the main stable, which is situated on the edge of the village. Because they had consistently saved money before taking over the business, it was financially affordable. But when it turned out after the start of construction that the excavation had to be additionally secured in the steep terrain and almost the same day the van packed up,



The date of move can't come fast enough for Zumbrunns. Only because warm rooms are finally waiting for them in the new house. The previous house could hardly be heated in winter. (picture www.berghilfe.ch)

Zumbrunns were suddenly in financial trouble. "It took a load off our mind when Swiss Mountain Aid assured support," says *Kaspar*.

In the meantime, the building shell has been completed and the family goes to the construction site almost every day. *Kaspar* is often there anyway, because he helps a lot in building the house. Today *Lena* and *Andri* enjoy the newly installed windows in their future rooms, but only for a few minutes. Then, they go next door to their favourite cows in the stable. From their new home they can walk there easily. •

Source: *Berghilf-Zeitig*, No. 103, Spring 2019
Schweizer Berghilfe: www.berghilfe.ch

Schweizer Berghilfe (Swiss Mountain Aid) is a non-profit-organisation exclusively financed through donations and has the goal of improving the foundation of existence and living conditions in the Swiss Mountain region. It promotes the self-help of the mountain population and thus contributes to the development of economic and living spaces, the preservation of regional culture, the maintenance of the cultural landscape and the counteraction of migration. Support from Swiss Mountain Aid triggers a multiple of investments that primarily create added value and jobs for local businesses.

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

Young people in Berne are championing the mountain villages



25 young people from mountain communes throughout Switzerland met on 11 May in Berne for the "SAB Youth Forum" to discuss the future of their villages. Together with their home communes, they have declared war on emigration and have been awarded the title of "Youth-friendly mountain villages" by the *Swiss Association for Mountain Areas (SAB)*. In Berne, the young people discussed successes, solution strategies and prospects for the future.

The situation in mountain communes worries young people throughout Switzerland: schools are closing, the number of meeting places and restaurants is decreasing, and business is relocating to larger centres. But the communes do not remain inactive.

Effective measures such as youth work, night buses and housing promotion

The "Youth-Friendly Mountain Villages" have initiated a variety of measures in a constant exchange with the young people in their commune: better transport connections for young people (for example for going out in the evenings), childcare for working parents, youth clubs as meeting places, improvement of job opportunities, conversion of old buildings into youth-friendly apartments, etc. "The commitment of the communes is extraordinary",

says *Thomas Egger*, Director of the SAB, "with the label we make this commitment visible and strengthen it in the long term".

Exchange of solution strategies

The Youth Forum does not focus on the challenges, but on the solutions of the different communes. "I think it's great that the young people in Safiental GR were able to convince the local council for a youth club", *Joël Abgottsporn* from Stalden VS praises, "such examples inspire and encourage us". The exchange between young people from mountain villages in various parts of Switzerland is otherwise rare. "Because of the long travel distances, many young people from Graubünden do not know other mountain regions in Switzerland – we often face the same prob-

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Freedom of expression in Germany is endangered

Observations after 70 years of German Basic Law

by Karl Müller

Observations after 70 years of German Basic Law lead to the conclusion that today's "fight against the right" usually has nothing to do with securing democracy, nothing to do with a democracy that is able to defend itself against political extremism, but much to do with plans for a world order that remains unipolar.

Sunday night, 12 May, 8:15 p.m., ZDF, prime time. The German television film, which is referred to as "Romantic Comedy", also views itself as a contribution by public service television against "xenophobia". Among the main characters are a very sympathetic, sensitive and committed young woman and a Turkish family whose father runs a small, unfortunately poorly functioning garage. This garage has burned down, and some in the village, especially a regulars' table around a rather unappealing "right-wing" local councillor, suspect the Turkish father of the family of being the arsonist and cheating on the insurance company. The family, so far reasonably well integrated in the Bavarian village, feels increasingly isolated. Unknown people smeared their house with "foreigners out!" The daughter of the house is desperate and even attempts suicide. But in the end, everything turns for the better. All families and couples portrayed in the movie have a number of interpersonal problems – all of which aren't solved

at the end of the movie either. But the above-mentioned young woman organises a protest march "against right-wing agitation". Many villagers participate in the protest baring the messages "against the right" and "tolerance". After sundown they protest with a kind of chain of lights. In the meantime, it turned out that it was not a case of arson at all.

No one wants to argue against this anymore.

Fiction and reality

One may ask, however, whether German reality has been truthfully portrayed here since summer 2015.

The former president of the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution – dismissed by his employer because he insisted that events in Chemnitz in eastern Germany were misrepresented – has now made several public statements regarding the German "fight against the right", most recently in an interview with the "Neue Zürcher Zeitung" on 8 May. *Hans-Georg Maassen* said there, among other things:

"I see considerable risks for the security and cohesion of the state in the essentially unchanged migration policy since September 2015. It is necessary that migrants are turned away at the border. We must close the doors to those who are not politically persecuted, and we must immediately deport the approximately 240,000 foreigners who are obligated to leave the

country and not let their countries of origin playing us up. We have not yet taken any precautions to stop a new, huge wave of immigrants."

"Poison for democracy"

And, Maassen continues: "People who do not swim in the political-medial mainstream have a hard time. They are sometimes stigmatised as right-wing or right-wing populists. This is intimidating and frightening. I have repeatedly heard that people would rather say nothing than be publicly pilloried. [...] It is poison for democracy, because it makes certain political positions that are not extremist taboo and remove them from democratic discourse."

And even: "Politicians are often more loyal to their party than to the people. For example, I spoke with SPD politicians about the so-called refugee crisis. They admitted to me that asylum policy in 2015 and 2016 was a serious mistake by the government and a disaster for Germany. But this could not be said publicly, because the SPD could not once again position itself more conservatively than the Union Party, as it had done with Agenda 2010 at that time."

Keep silent if you have a different opinion!

We do not know how Hans-Georg Maassen would judge this ZDF film, but it is certainly not an invitation to publicly criticise the migration policy of the federal government since 2015. Rather, this ZDF film is just one of countless examples of how the atmosphere in Germany is constructed. Often not with a sledgehammer, but professionally suggestive. And this is repeated again and again with a central thrust: resulting in a position that nobody can contradict. This is what happens to people at public events, at work and in their leisure time. One could also call it propaganda. Or better still, an appeal: "You'd better keep quiet if you have a different opinion!"

The power of a complex of media and NGOs ...

One must start by taking the statements of a former president of the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution seriously. A country in which politically moderate citizens and politicians can no longer frankly and freely say what they think, is a country without freedom

"Young people in Berne ..."

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lems and can learn from each other," says *Moreno Donato* (GR), President of the Youth Forum.

After the Youth Forum, members return to their villages with new ideas and motivation. The successful examples from other communes encourage them to commit themselves to concrete measures in their home communes – and soon to benefit from the quality of life they have gained.

About the label

"Youth-friendly mountain villages"

The label "Jugendfreundliche Bergdörfer" distinguishes mountain communes that are committed to supporting young people in mountain areas. The young people from these communes help shape their own future in the Youth Forum of the Swiss Association for Mountain Areas (SAB). In

this way, they support the mountain region and can counteract migration in the long term.

The SAB is committed to the development of mountain and rural areas in Switzerland, with a focus on political representation. Further information: www.sab.ch.

Communes with the label "Youth-Friendly Mountain Village": Andermatt (UR), Ernen (VS), Flüeli-Sörenberg (LU), Gampel-Bratsch (VS), Hergiswil near Willisau (LU), Leukerbad (VS), Lumnezia (GR), Stalden region (VS): Stalden, Staldenried, Töbel, Embd, Eisten, Saas-Grund (VS), Safiental (GR), Veysonnaz (VS)

Swiss Association for Mountain Areas (SAB) 3001 Bern, Seilerstrasse 4, Tel.: +41 31 382 10 10 info@sab.ch

For questions: Thomas Egger, Director of the SAB and National Councillor, Tel.: 141 79 429 12 55, Andrea Koch, Contact person for the label "Youth-Friendly Mountain Villages", Tel.: +41 76 216 11 20

Further information: www.jugend-im-berggebiet.ch; www.jeunesse-enregion-de-montagne.ch www.gioventu-e-regione-di-montagna.ch

Source: www.sab.ch from 11.5.2019

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

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"Freedom of expression in ..."

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of expression – even if it is guaranteed in the constitution. As of today, official state sanctions still be the exception. A complex of media and NGOs, a new kind of "national community", have taken over the role of issuing sanctions.

It is embarrassing for the country when almost without exception only people such as the former president of the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution have taken a public stand and openly maintain their opinion. But he, too, is marginalised as a "right-wing" extremist. Because those who marginalise, know that it is easy to do.

However, anyone who values democracy should sound the alarm.

... against the freedom of expression

German Basic Law, which has been in force just a few days short of 70 years, specifies in Article 5 very precisely what freedom of expression means and what the limits are.

Article 5 of the Basic Law for the Federal Republic of Germany

(1) Every person shall have the right freely to express and disseminate

his opinions in speech, writing and pictures, and to inform himself without hindrance from generally accessible sources. Freedom of the press and freedom of reporting by means of broadcasts and films shall be guaranteed. There shall be no censorship.

(2) These rights shall find their limits in the provisions of general laws, in provisions for the protection of young persons, and in the right to personal honour.

(3) Arts and sciences, research and teaching shall be free. The freedom of teaching shall not release any person from allegiance to the constitution.

Nowhere does it say here that the publicly expressed opinions must be "politically correct". Every citizen is called upon to correct prejudices, including of course those against foreigners living in Germany. This presupposes equivalence in dealing with and objectivity in the debate.

Expressing oneself when democracy is in danger

But every citizen is also called upon to express himself publicly when democracy is in danger. To express yourself is

very important, to discourage social exclusion motivated by interests and power politics.

Like any other country, Germany would do better to discuss and master the country's actual tasks (to build peace without weapons, to fix the economy and the finances, to solve social problems, to improve political culture, etc.).

Demand for an open and honest discourse

What would it be like if those who are counting on the dissolution of states, the erosion of freedom, the erosion of the rule of law and democracy, an even more powerful EU or even global governance – all in all: an again unipolar world order – openly and honestly argue their position instead of discrediting their opponents as "right-extremists" and talking about the "fight against the right"; when they mean something completely different. There are enemies of democracy not only in the extreme left and right spectrum (see box), not only on the side of violent Islamism. Unfortunately, enemies of democracy today there are also forces that already have a great deal of power and influence and pretend that they alone can determine how we should live together. •

How the "anti-totalitarian consensus" continually to disappears

km. In the 1950s, the German Federal Constitutional Court in its decisions on the prohibition of the left-wing extremist *Communist Party of Germany* (KPD) and the right-wing extremist *Socialist Reich Party* (SRP) formulated clear criteria as to what is the core substance of the German constitution, the liberal-democratic basic order, and when a political party is therefore unconstitutional. In 1952 the Court had thus defined: "The free democratic order in the sense of article 21 II German constitution can be defined as an order, which excludes any form of tyranny or arbitrariness and represents a governmental system under a rule of law, based upon self-determination of the people as expressed by the will of the existing majority and upon freedom and equality. The fundamental principles of this order include at least:

respect for the human rights given concrete form in the Basic Law, in particular for the right of a person to life and free development; popular sovereignty; separation of powers; responsibility of government; lawfulness of administration; independence of the judiciary; the multi-party principle; and equality of opportunities for all political parties including the right of constitutional formation and performance of an opposition." (BVerfGE 2, 1 (Leitsatz 2, pp. 12 – Federal Constitutional Court 2, 1 guiding principle 2, pp. 12)

These strict criteria are unknown to most in today's political-polemic struggle.

In an interview with the "Neue Zürcher Zeitung" on 8 May, *Hans-Georg Maassen* also pointed out that both left-wing extremists and, more recent-

ly, right-wing extremist political forces receive support from non-extremist circles in Germany: "There never existed a clear distinction between left-wing extremism and the left-wing or left-liberal spectrum among the left. There has always been a bridge between left-wing and left-wing extremism. Since the Second World War, right-wing extremism has clearly distinguished between right-wing and right-wing extremists. This separation has increasingly disappeared in recent years. As with left-wing extremism, there now can be seen a bridge between the bourgeois spectrum and the extremists." (Translated by *Current Concerns*) The "anti-totalitarian consensus" expressed in the Basic Law of 1949 is thus disappearing. The political dangers of this blurring of distinctions are great.

How realistic was Merkel's "We can do it"?

Field report of a volunteer refugee helper

by Jürgen Siegenthaler*

With her "Wir schaffen das!" (We can do it) the German Chancellor Angela Merkel has called for a so-called welcome culture, which was initially readily implemented in Germany by many citizens. Many people volunteer to care for refugees and migrants. In the following report, one of these many helpers demonstrates what the care provided by a volunteer has looked like in practice from 2015 to the present and which concrete problems have arisen and still arise.

Among other things, I look after a Syrian family with three children. Their flight from Syria to Germany began at the beginning of June 2015 and lasted 28 days. Mr L.** is now 41 and Ms L. 35 years old. The wife was pregnant in 2015 (6th month – birth of the third child at the end of February 2016), the other children were 4 and 6 years old. Both parents went to school in their home country only up to the 6th grade. From then on, Mr L. worked for his parents as a farmer, and his wife worked as a sewer at the time.

They had fled because of bomb droppings and poison gas, used in the war. They were also unable to stay in their village. From the north of Syria they drove from their hometown by car to the border of Turkey, then by boat to Greece. From there they went to Northern Macedonia, 70% on foot, 30 % by bus. In Serbia they had to walk a lot at night so as not to be picked up by the police until they finally arrived in Hungary. Then they went six hours by taxi through Austria to Germany. On 18 July 2015 they arrived in Ellwangen, on 24 July 2015 they were transferred to an asylum centre in a medium-sized south-western German town. Since the end of January 2016 they have been living in a small southwest German town, now in a two-room apartment with bathroom and kitchen. Everyone sleeps in the "bedroom", which is equipped with a bunk bed.

At the end of August 2015 I welcomed the family, which was still four-person at the time. A verbal communication was not possible over 1½ years, which would have been actually urgently necessary, so that the family can integrate itself. It is not possible to describe everything in detail, so I will only mention a few tasks and problems which made a daily exchange necessary and for which a translator was always needed: for example, when buying the furniture, registering with the municipality, re-registering from the job centre, requesting various forms (and these always only in German!), the application for child benefit, the school search for the father, for a

kindergarten place, the registration at the special needs centre (the 6-year-old son is handicapped), the search for a doctor, paediatrician and gynaecologist, the opening of a bank account, the making of various photocopies, complex appointments with the eye and an ENT specialist for the handicapped child, the application to classify the care level of the handicapped child with the health insurance and the registration at the special school.

In the beginning, the parents did not agree with the latter because they did not consider their child handicapped, and this was eventually only possible thanks to the efforts of the translating compatriot. In the meantime, after thorough medical examination and questioning, care level 3 was approved by the health insurance company. In addition, speech therapy and occupational therapy are necessary. The child now wears hearing aids, right and left and glasses (for three quarters of a year he had to wear an eye patch to correct his strabismus). For all this it took many appointments, meetings, requests, telephone calls, arrangements, considerations ...

All the help based entirely on my own initiative and was only possible with the help of a translator. Many necessary steps dragged on for hours and days, with many queries. Volunteering was only possible because I was not tied-down professionally, and I was able to help in a competent and committed way thanks to my previous professional experience.

The second son had school problems right from the start and are still apparent today (risk of promotion to the 2nd grade) and can only be solved – if at all – through clarification with a counselling centre. Both parents have meanwhile completed the A2 language exams with not particularly good grades, despite the fact that my wife, who was also a volunteer, gave two extra lessons a week.

In Syria, everything happened in the extended family (the father has 5, the mother 9 siblings). The communication of values takes place within this framework. However, in the new environment this family background is missing. The parents assert no influence on the behaviour of their children. If the children are frustrated or in a bad mood, sweets are handed out straight away. At home, when children cannot play on the street, they are only busy with their smartphones. They do not learn at home for school either, despite my repeated hints. Sure, each family has its own problems, but to associate themselves with us and to reflect on our suggestions they hard-

ly consider at all. And they don't understand this either.

The Migration Office for Refugees offers many training courses and workshops, which are often not possible to attend for families with children. All these offers are voluntary. The basic problem is that they will only take profit if a refugee is willing to advance his integration, especially his professional integration. Those who do not make use of the offers for various reasons retain their financial support from the job centre. At school, for example, they try to give the children an education. However, the framework conditions are difficult: in classes (of 20–25 pupils) with an average proportion of 80% foreigners, it is extremely difficult to facilitate integration. Many children come from different educational backgrounds, which makes integration even more difficult. It is somewhat easier for those who already have a certain level of education in their country (high school certificates, university students, university graduates ...).

The knowledgeable reader can see from this how much – apart from human effort – must be spent financially, as *Hannes Hofbauer* has stated: "The German economist *Konrad Schuler* estimates that the German budget will be burdened with 47 billion euros annually in the next four or five years due to this migration in 2015/2016. That is 15 % of the German budget, and this is of course reflected in other places where expenditures will be cut as a result of this" (*Current Concerns* from 6 December 2018). These figures have certainly prompted Finance Minister *Scholz* to make cuts in refugee aid because the costs continue to rocket.

One more thing to mention is that voluntary helpers receive no financial support from any parts for their selfless commitment in all matters. Thus, it is not surprising that also committed volunteers have withdrawn, not because of the financial strain, but rather from lacking public recognition and support.

Ms Merkel said in 2015: "We can do it!"

In view of the situation I have described, German politicians must finally stop supporting wars predominantly sparked off by the USA, producing the streams of refugees, but to do everything in their power to ensure that the people can return to their country and utilise the skills they have acquired so far to build up their own country. •

*For reasons of data protection a pseudonym was chosen.

**The abbreviations of the names are changed.

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

A more direct democracy in Germany (Part 2)

Elections and party rule

by Christian Fischer

This article is the second instalment of “A more direct democracy in Germany” (Current Concerns No 8 from 2 April). Also in this part, the focus is not primarily on the concrete abuse of democracy in Germany, but on the institutions available to the sovereign, the citizenship, as well as on the possibilities of their development towards more direct democracy. The focus is on what many people living in dictatorships see as the core of a democracy: free and secret elections. In our country, many see elections as a decayed form of democracy, based on the emergence of a professional class of politicians and a de facto exclusive representation of the citizens by parties. Is that true? What are the perspectives?

Reality

In every democracy, the parliament as a legislative power is elected directly by the citizens, in federal systems on both levels, the federal and the state level. Here, the deputies of the citizens determine the business of legislation. Even when supplemented by direct voting opportunities for citizens, a self-reliant parliament is always necessary, even in Switzerland.

It would be nice if the executive authority, too, would be elected by this political institution and if it would be responsible to the parliament – this is partly the case in Germany, unlike in other democracies. In France and in the USA, the president is indeed dependent on the parliament, but is not elected by it. In Great Britain, the ministers (executive power) likewise remain parliamentarians (legislative power). Different countries, different customs. It would also be nice if the judiciary power would be designated by the parliament, the central democratic institution, – his is not the case in Germany, unlike in many other democracies, such as Spain and Italy. In our country the judges are under the ministers’ (executive power) supervision and they are also appointed by them.

The right to vote for the “German Bundestag” (and for some state parliaments), which gave the voter a first and a second vote, could have opened doors for the election of a candidate beyond party affiliation. Because with the first vote the voter can directly elect a candidate of his constituency by majority vote. Half of the members of the “Bundestag” are thus directly designated by the voters. The counterweight to the majority vote in the constituency, which is supposed to protect minorities – the percentage distribution of seats for the parties according to their percentage share in the second votes – would not have changed anything in principle. A first vote for a person of one’s

choice in the local constituency could have been a good corrective to an oligarchy of political parties.

Unfortunately, in the course of the German Federal Republic’s history, the parties have nevertheless been granted the right to an almost exclusive representation of the citizens’ will. *Gerhard Leibholz*, a disciple of *Carl Schmitt*, was instrumental in this process. He spent 20 years at the Federal Constitutional Court, where his judgments directed German democracy from citizen sovereignty to a party representation system.¹ By the way, the Basic Law does not mention the term “representation” at any point.

Today, the candidates for the first vote are almost exclusively party candidates, being secured on their national lists for the party vote. In any case, they come into parliament if the party comes into parliament. The composition of the “Bundestag” and of many state parliaments is based exclusively on the proportional representation of the second vote. “Überhangsmandate (Overhang seats)”² are smoothed by additional balancing mandates for other parties. The direct election of candidates is thus effectively bypassed, because the candidates are nominated by the parties. At present, due to this smoothing, we do not have 598 MPs for the 299 constituencies in the “Bundestag”, but 709. These regulations are not derived from the Basic Law, but from later decisions on the right to vote.

There are initiatives for the establishment of non-partisan citizen candidates.³ Even our electoral law permits this quite simply: A candidate needs 200 signatures from his constituency. But there is no further official support for this, while the parties enjoy massive official support through official funding, privileged status in the parliaments due to a parliamentary party status, preferential treatment in nominations for important public offices, etc. Although, there have always been direct candidates independent of political parties, no one has been elected since 1950. In the 2017 “Bundestag” elections, the most successful non-partisan direct candidate won respectable 9% of the votes in his constituency. Others remained below 1%.⁴

The parties do not only finance themselves through membership fees and donations. For each euro of contribution or donation, they receive additional 0.38 euros from the state. If they achieve at least 0.5% of the votes in elections, they receive 0.70 euros per vote from the state.⁵ The parties must disclose their income, what they actually do; after all, they get additional money

from tax money for it! With some effort the citizen can even track the party financing. In the parliaments, the parties form parliamentary groups if they have three deputies, which gives them better access to information and decision-making bodies. These are all privileges unknown in the Basic Law knows. Nothing at all is known about a “parliamentary group obligation”; it does not exist (Article 38 of the Basic Law), even though for career reasons most members of parliament behave as if it existed.

Some perspectives

These brief descriptions provide starting points for supporting non-party candidates and restricting party power to what is intended by the Basic Law: “Parties participate in the political decision-making of the people.” (Article 21 Basic Law) That is all. No thought of the usurpation of all state functions by parties.

Undoubtedly parties have a right to exist as bundled representation of various interest groups. The distribution of mandates according to the proportional representation of the parties also makes it possible to protect minorities, which is hardly possible if there are only majority decisions. However, undoubtedly, the entire political process cannot be placed exclusively in the hands of political parties, which practically means in the hands of some party leaders. This is unworthy of sovereign citizenship and not wanted by the Basic Law. So what should we do?

Why add tax money on top of membership fees and donations, which by all means have to remain transparent (!). Yes, without tax money the parties would be poorer. Maybe they would not be able to stick square kilometres of meaningless posters during election campaigns and place similar meaningless advertising spots on television and radio. The world would not be poorer. Why should not such waste be dried up financially or simply be banned? Tobacco advertising had also be banned.

With the money saved, the state could support what our electoral law actually wants: a direct candidate election on equal terms to party election. One could at least temporarily set up an office in each constituency in which candidates who are independent of political parties or who can prove that they have a minimum number of supporters could present themselves personally and answer questions from fellow citizens and voters. One could set up an official nationwide platform on which these candidates could

“Louise of Baden – the forgotten mother of the Red Cross”

Little attention for contributions of German culture

by Moritz Nestor

The Luisenstreet in Baden-Baden, named after Grand Duchess *Louise of Baden*, leads along the narrow river Oos to the city centre of Baden-Baden. In the sixties of the last century it belonged to my daily way to school from the west town to the actual Baden-Baden. “Mer gehe in d’Schdad” [“we are going to town”] as was said of this cosmopolitan spa city, which we know from *Dostoyevsky’s* novella *The Gambler*. Already the Romans appreciated the hot springs of the Oos valley coming from 2000 metres deep. Here, about 70 AD, they established the military base *Aquae* with a pronounced bathing culture. This is where *Trajan* and *Hadrian* bathed. Above the ancient ruins, the 19th century created magnificent baths in the style of the time. Among others the *Augusta-Bath*, named after Louise’s mother, *Augusta von Sachsen-Weimar-Eisenach*. At the *Augustaplatz*, named after her, we got off to get to the *Markgraf-Ludwig-Grammar School*.

We “westerners”, however, lived in a different world from those “in dr’Schdad” (“in town”). In the fifties it still had a semi-rural character with three farms. At the time, I



Postcard from 19th century

knew neither the Grand Duchess Louise of Baden through whose street, named after her, I cycled daily, nor the Baden Women’s Association, founded by her in 1859.

Today, the historiography of the *Red Cross* no longer mentions the Grand Duchy Baden, the *Baden Women’s Association* and the Grand Ducal couple *Frederick I. Grand Duke of*

Baden and *Luise of Prussia* neither their contribution to the founding of the *Red Cross*. The *Baden Red Cross*, however, upholds the memory of Louise and awards the “Order of Merit Grand Duchess Louise of Baden” as the highest award. In numerous rooms of state and district associa-

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present themselves and their political ideas in a way that is visible to everyone.

Above all, it should be forbidden for first-vote candidates to be included on a party list; for the success of the party there is indeed the second vote. The personality should be convincing, not the cell of a party body. Yes, party candidates can still be elected with the first vote and thus strengthen the weight of the larger parties, if at the same time the balancing mandates are abolished. One could also create negative balancing mandates and reduce party votes by the extent that party-bound first-vote candidates were elected! Why not? These considerations also apply to the “Bundestag” as well as to the similarly structured state parliaments, if they decide to do so. Or if a referendum (see *Current Concerns* No 8 from 2 April) would enforce this.

After all, there would be a chance that, with state support for the first-vote candidates and a reduction in tax revenues for the parties, more committed, objective-oriented citizens would be elected. They would then not have to take on the hard way to the top (coined “Ochsentour” in German) in a party where their former orientation on objectives often falls by the wayside or is “straightened out” by party politics. Further suggestions: There must be no fraction privilege in

the parliaments. Each individual Member of Parliament must have equal access to all information and decision-making levels. And: the arbitrary 5% clause should be lowered. Millions of votes for smaller parties are thus lost. A first-vote candidate represents around 200,000 citizens in his constituency. If we take this figure as a yardstick, a 0.5% clause would be democratically fair. The “truth” may lie in between.

Parliament must once again become the place for debates on legislation in the public interest. There are many obstacles, but certainly not the Basic Law. One obstacle, for example, is the self-disempowerment of members of the “Bundestag” in favour of the EU executive by Article 23 of the Basic Law, as amended after reunification.⁶ This would be a topic on its own. Another obstacle is a fundamental party consensus, which often permits only pushed up sham debates on minor issues. And not the smallest obstacle is the practice of coalition agreements introduced in the 1990s, in which government action with regard to legislation is laid down for four years. Thanks to the parliamentary majorities loyal to the government, parliamentary debates thus become a secondary matter.

But for all that: Parliament must be the democratically elected place of debate on sovereign legislation and must not be left to party leaders and ultimately to the executive. This must be supplemented by facil-

itating referendums on all topics the sovereign or a significant part of it wishes to put to a legislative vote, see Part 1 (*Current Concerns* No 8 from 2 April).

One might object: Who should decide that? The decision-making bodies are firmly in the hands of the parties. That is right. But what is the alternative? Stay in the bush? Make a revolution? You have to throw out some ideas! Better ideas are always welcome.

The basic idea remains: institutional structures facilitating the participation of citizens in political life will also promote this involvement. And more direct participation of the citizens in the political life will make it more difficult for political actors who are not oriented towards the common good and the honest communication of different interests. That is the perspective for a sustainable democracy. •

¹ Schachtschneider, Karl Albrecht. *Die nationale Option*, Rottenburg 2017, pp. 72.

² “Überhangsmandate (Overhang seats)” are additional mandates for a fraction. They arrive because one party has won more direct mandates than they would be entitled to in proportional representation.

³ <http://buergerkandidaten.de/> und <http://buergerkandidaten.de/bewerbungen/472>

⁴ *ibid.*

⁵ Rudzio, Wolfgang. *Das politische System der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, Wiesbaden 2019, pp. 142.

⁶ Fischer, Christian: <https://zeitgeist-online.de/exklusivonline/reflection-and-schoengeistiges/1040-demokratie-braucht-nation.html>

“Louise of Baden – the forgotten ...”

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tions of the German Red Cross her picture still hangs next to *Henry Dunants*.

In 2012, with his book “Louise of Baden. The Forgotten Mother of the Red Cross”, *Kurt Bickel* has earned the great merit of having rescued the humane work of Grand Duchess Louise from oblivion. Reading it is a wonderful private lesson that allows one to get to know another, unjustly forgotten side not only of my hometown, but also of Prussia and the Red Cross.

Reading Bickel’s book, Louise’s Baden Women’s Association turned out to be the oldest Red Cross sorority in Germany. In 1862 Dunant writes, “A memory of Solferino”. The Red Cross is founded in 1864. The Baden Women’s Association, founded already in 1859 by Louise of Baden, can thus be regarded the oldest Red Cross institution in the world.

In 1838, Louise was born as a Prussian princess of the House of Hohenzollern in Berlin. Her father *William* is the “Prince of Grapeshot”, who is still hated by Baden historians and who in 1848/49 bloodily suppressed the Baden revolution with the conquest of Rastatt near Baden-Baden. In 1871, he is crowned Prussian King and further more in 1871, in the conquered Versailles, he is crowned Emperor William I of the newly founded second German Empire.

Alfred Krupp, the armorer of the German Empire, the cannon king with the double range steel guns, the prince of the newly emerging industrial nobility and general of an army of thousands of workers, was closer to the imperial “Prince of Grapeshot” than Henry Dunant with the likewise new ‘invention’ of humanity,” reports Bickel. To William the Red Cross ideas of his daughter always remained alien.

Louise’s mother *Augusta*, however, the later German Empress, a born princess of Saxony-Weimar, had grown up in the Weimar of German classicism and cultivated active contact with *Goethe* as a child and young woman. Louise’s grandmother was the Russian Grand Duchess *Maria Pavlovna*, Grand Duchess of Saxony-Weimar. She “had what we call the ‘Russian soul’ or the ‘big heart’, at least character traits that were contrary to Prussian discipline. [...] Grandmother, mother and granddaughter were of high classical education and influenced by the ancient Greek ideal of the incorporation of beauty and the Good [...]. Throughout their lives they felt obliged to the idea of benefaction, charity, Christian charity in practice, and the Samaritan work incumbent upon women.”

Already in 1814 *Maria Pavlovna*, Louise’s model, founded the first German women’s association to alleviate the adversities of war: the *Weimar Patriotic Women’s Institute*. In 1817 it expanded into the *Patriotic Institute of Women’s As-*

sociations in the Grand Duchy of Saxony-Weimar-Eisenach, a forerunner of the later German Red Cross foundations. Louise’s mother *Augusta* becomes the pioneer of social welfare institutions, nursing and public health care. “The women’s associations of Pavlovna and above all the outstanding social commitment of *Augusta* have decisively shaped the social history of the 19th century”, Bickel judges and quotes *Henry Dunant*: “Queen *Augusta* had given a powerful stimulus through her personal activity [...]. She was the first international Samaritan in Germany”.

When Louise was 10 years old, she moves to Koblenz, where she lives until the age of 18. Her father is Prussian Governor General for the Rhine Province, Rhineland and Westphalia. Mother *Augusta* is in opposition to militaristic Prussian politics and gathers “a large number of progressive and clerical spirits around her in Koblenz”. She introduces her daughter Louise to the task of caring for the poor and the sick. *Augusta* is a follower of the religious peace movement of the 19th century and is close to the liberal ideas of the Enlightenment. She rejects the military armament of Prussia. She rightly sees in it the preparations for the 1864 war against Denmark and 1866 against Austria. *Augusta* also wants a German nation state, but only with “moral conquests”. She abhors *Bismarck’s* policy of “blood and iron”, for which he publicly scolds her an “old frigate”.

Since 1850 Louise and mother *Augusta* have been staying in Baden-Baden every summer. Here, in 1855, the 18-year-old falls in love with the later Grand Duke *Frederick of Baden*. They married in 1856. Louise shares government affairs with her liberal-minded husband. The Prussian Louise slowly gains the recognition of the Baden population through her social and charitable commitment. In 1870, after 13 years of social commitment, a secret cabinet is set up for 31-year-old Louise, which is part of the government apparatus and with which she administers an aid fund.

Louise’ humane life’s oeuvre is the founding of the Baden Women’s Association in 1859. From 1853 to 1856, one of the most horrific wars that Europe has ever experienced rages: the Crimean War. “For the first time, the war showed itself in its new, industrial form” and Europe experienced its “first Verdun”.¹ All of Europe is shaken at the horror of the press reports. The mortality rate is over 40%! But one is touched though by the English nurse *Florence Nightingale*, who with 38 nurses is fighting the misery in 4 large military hospitals.

In May 1859, touched by this, 18 citizens of Fribourg and Karlsruhe suggest the establishment of an aid fund, and Louise makes herself available. In June, she writes a memorandum to the state government in support of “persons in need” because of war. The ex-

isting women’s associations in Karlsruhe merged with all other women’s associations in Baden to form the newly founded women’s association of Baden. It is assigned the patriotic task of “being able to help people in need in the event of war as well as wounded and sick military personnel”. The statute reads: “The association serves to support those in need as a result of war threats or war as well as the provision for wounded and sick military personnel”. The core of Dunant’s later Red Cross idea is pre-formulated here.

On 24 June 1859, two weeks after the founding of the Baden Women’s Association, *Henry Dunant* witnessed the horrific battle of Solferino, and the history of the founding of the Red Cross took its familiar course.

In times of peace, the Baden Women’s Association subsequently assumed extensive social responsibilities. In 1870 there were 2.1 per cent and in 1909, 15.3 of all adult Baden women organised in it.

In 1863 *Frederick I.* of Baden was one of the first princes in Europe to receive Dunant’s memorandum *A Memory of Solferino*. In September 1863 Dunant meets Louise and her mother, Queen *Augusta*, in Baden-Baden. Most likely it was about the mentioned core purpose of the association of the Baden Women’s Association, which was presented *Henry Dunant’s* “Committee of Five” for its planning of the Red Cross. *Augusta* must have worked energetically on the Prussian Minister of War, whereupon Dunant’s idea of making the planned Red Cross helpers neutral in wartime, was received enthusiastically.

Like me, other Germans may be taken back by the forgotten pages of history of it’s own “specific German culture”. It is worthwhile to rediscover and preserve the other sides of one’s own people and its history, despite the cannon thunder of contemporary historical clashes. For the urgent questions about a more peaceful future for our descendants, there are still many unearthed treasures in the history of our people. •

¹ Fesser, Gerd. Europe’s first Verdun. In: *Die Zeit* from 7 August 2003



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