

The Other

A Novel

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The „Hummingbird“ bar was almost empty. When I entered, I saw Eugen Anderegg pushing himself with difficulty onto a barstool. His limited mobility had already become evident when I followed him. I took a seat at a small table in the rear, my back to the wall, ordered a tonic, which I paid for immediately, and watched him.

Anderegg looked around, briefly surveyed the group of silent drinkers in the far corner, and eyed me suspiciously. I stared back, whereupon he lost interest and turned away. His face brightened when a newcomer sat down next to him. Instead of a handshake, the two greeted each other with a pat on the back. In front of Anderegg stood a bulbous cocktail glass. By the look of it, it contained a margarita. The newcomer ordered a beer. Anderegg pulled a piece of paper from his jacket, unfolded it and placed it on the counter. The two men seemed to be discussing something, talking engagedly, with serious expressions. Anderegg's counterpart looked familiar. Then I remembered. I had once seen him at a press conference as head of operations for the fire department.

It was the first day of the observation. Observation! I'm already talking like my old friend Stucki, who hunts criminals at a high level as a detective with the cantonal police.

Anderegg was a self-employed engineer. His office was located near the main train station, in the neighborhood north of the tracks, where rents were still affordable for small businesses. I had waited in a café across the street from his office, which was located in a building from the middle of the last century. A building without any charm. The curse of architects: Either they put up an unconventional building, which is not practical at all. The residents are happy for a while because they can show off the exquisite style. Then everyday life takes over. They become annoyed by inconveniences and realize that the maintenance is not affordable. Or the building is functional, in which case it looks average, faceless, and is doomed to oblivion.

The September day was mild, but dull, the daylight subdued, nothing of the atmosphere possessed intensity. At noon, for a short time, the sun's disk appeared milky in the high fog. Then everything became gray again. I sipped my coffee, which had grown cold, and thought: gray like my life, which has lost its color.

Outside the panoramic window of the café, people were going about their business. It was five o'clock in the evening. There was no traffic jam yet. I noticed a group of younger people coming out of the office building and hanging out next to the ash-tray at the entrance, enjoying a smoke. Addicts. The

smokers, however, seemed to be in the best of moods. No trace of guilt. The mood was obviously relaxed, I noticed smiling faces. I could imagine what they said: „Nowadays we are not allowed to smoke indoors, but the fresh air is good for us, too. Well, but what's fresh in this exhaust-filled air?“ Then Anderegg appeared in the entrance to the foyer, stopped, also lit a cigarette and joined the smokers happily.

Anderegg was a smoker! The first item on the list I began to keep for old Küng. A grave negative item. Küng thinks that smoking should be completely banned in public. The harmful molecules, he believes, spread in the air we breathe and cause cancer. „Those who smoke around their fellow human beings act immorally,“ Küng likes to exclaim, adding, „Moreover, these addicts wreck themselves and cause high health care costs.“

Anderegg smoked, and I would have liked to light a cigarette. But I gave up six years ago on urgent medical advice. I was only thirty-seven at the time, but the pump was becoming prone to failure. I took stock of myself. I'm not crazy about life, but I said to myself, maybe something good will come of it after all. So I gave up looking at the world through the blue haze.

After a few puffs, Anderegg stubbed out the cigarette in the ashtray and marched off. It was the end of the day, so I could follow him in the crowd at a short distance. At first he walked leisurely. Then he glanced at his wristwatch and quickened his pace.

And as he did so, he began to limp. He obviously could not take big steps with his right leg. The man had a hip problem! I am familiar with that. Not because of myself. But in my family, corpulence is rampant. I cannot exclude myself from it. It may be that the same fate will befall me. Anderegg, on the other hand, was slim. He must have caught his affliction in another way.

The man I observed could not be mistaken. Being tall, his head hovered above the crowd. Limping slightly, he strode forward and deftly weaved his way through the people. I noticed there was energy in him. Anderegg is sixty, but seems to be in enviable physical shape despite his disability. His pace certainly made me – an untrained, overweight journalist with a professionally high alcohol consumption – sweat.

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Since Anderegg had purposefully visited the bar at the end of the day, I wondered whether I had to report to K ung that his nephew was not only a smoker, but also an alcoholic. But he did not allow himself a second drink this evening. Anderegg asked for the bill. When his counterpart pulled out his wallet, he waved it off. He paid, and presumably gave a considerable tip, because the barman grinned broadly. The two men slid off their barstools, which seemed awkward for Anderegg, and took their leave. I followed them outside.

Anderegg was no longer in a hurry. He strolled back to his office, which was on the same street as the bar. Because he had spotted me in the bar, I kept a careful distance this time. Arriving at the office building, I saw him enter the elevator to the garage in the foyer. Shortly afterwards, he drove up the ramp in a Jeep Cherokee. That gave me a second item on the list for Küng. Anderegg lived on the northern edge of town, so he could easily have taken the streetcar. Küng got upset when someone in such a situation used a car to get to work. And he insisted that in times of climate change, even people with walking difficulties should be expected to use public transport.

For today, the observation was over. It had already shown that Anderegg was not willing to adapt to social requirements. I felt provoked by his selfish behavior and strongly expected that the negative list would continue to fill up.

Anderegg seems to be an inveterate loner. This is a provisional finding. I observed the man during the next two weeks. For this purpose I asked for unpaid leave and got it immediately. Our newspaper was doing so badly that editor-in-chief Steinemann virtually came to life when I submitted my request to him. Küng compensates me for my work, and in comparison with my journalist's salary, the payment is princely.

Since I was shadowing Anderegg single-handedly, there were periods of time about which I knew nothing, since I had to devote myself to my own needs – eating, sleeping. However, I strove to get as complete a picture as possible. I parked in front of his apartment at six in the morning, registered how he drove to work shortly afterwards and followed him through the morning traffic. In accordance with Stucki's advice, I kept a suitable distance. Anderegg as an attentive person could have discovered me. But since I knew his destination, it didn't matter if I lost sight of him – which happened a few times. I parked my old car – much more modest than Anderegg's Cherokee – in a nearby parking garage and placed myself in the café opposite his office.

Here, I occupied a window table and took care of various journalistic tasks on my laptop. Again and again, I peered over at the business premises

and kept an eye on the foyer and the entrance to the parking garage. Luckily, the young man who shuffled through the dingy restaurant and served the guests unwillingly didn't care about anything. Apparently he didn't give a damn that I sat here all day, consumed only little and wrote my texts. When I saw Anderegg leave in the evening, I got my car and followed him.

Anderegg lives in a modern, elegant building. I had done some research and knew that the apartment belonged to him. „Considerable living space, not quite cheap,“ my informant at the tax office had stated. By comparison, my own accommodation is modest. But I am not complaining. Especially because the rent in the municipal property is very cheap and the administration allowed me to keep the place after my divorce. In such cases, connections are invaluable.

Arriving in front of his house, Anderegg's car disappeared into the driveway of the parking garage. In the urban avenue lined with young trees, I always found a parking space from which I could observe Anderegg's apartment. After a short time, I saw the windows being opened on the third floor. Anderegg used to air the apartment as soon as he came home. I sat in my car until ten in the evening, listening to music, chewing on a sandwich that I had bought at lunchtime together with a liter bottle of mineral water, and cursing the job. The autumn evenings were getting chilly, but in order not to attract attention I did not

dare run the engine from time to time to heat the interior of the car. I would like to mention that, true to the advice of Detective Stucki, which he likes to announce after the third beer, I drank very little – because there was no public toilet in the vicinity of Anderegg's apartment, and I did not trust myself to piss into the empty water bottle.

So, during these two weeks Anderegg went home in the evening and did not go out. No participation in club meetings, no regulars' table, no visits to the cinema, theater, musical performances. He was not invited and he did not entertain guests. A girlfriend or boyfriend – I still had no clue about his sexual preference – was not in sight.

Stop. I must correct that. I don't like to admit it and will suppress it in the report to Küng. I lost him one Friday evening and didn't see him again until Sunday evening when he returned to his apartment. Maybe he wasn't the stubborn loner after all that he had initially appeared to me to be.

At lunchtime, he left his office, bought a sandwich at a nearby takeaway – I had a view of everything from my window seat – and returned to eat the meager haul in his office, probably while working.

His work consisted mainly in writing expert opinions. According to his website, Anderegg specialized in the security of technical systems. And it looked like he didn't have to fight for contracts.

During the observation, he left the office twice on foot and, followed by me, went once to the

chemical institute of the university and once to the cantonal police. The third time he took the car and visited a plumbing company in the suburbs.

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As soon as Anderegg had left the police headquarters, I called Stucki and wanted to know what dealings Anderegg had with the law enforcement officers. „And save the crap about 'confidential, ongoing proceedings' and so on,“ I said.

„You're not standing downstairs, are you? And have just seen him walk away? I want an explanation from you. And why do you want to know anyway?“ he asked, not expecting an honest answer.

„Journalistic research in the interest of the nation,“ I said, as usual.

„All right, it's not a secret. Anderegg is investigating the fire in a villa on the Zürichberg.“

„I thought you guys had your own experts?“

„We have, the fire department has too, but it's the vacation season, everyone in attendance is booked.“

„This isn't about the Kuhnert case, is it?“

„Nothing can be hidden from you. That's what it's all about.“

Our newspaper had also reported about the case. So far, only the facts the police had announced at a press conference. But this was certainly not the end of the matter. „Affaire à suivre!“ Steinemann

had remarked at the editorial conference. Because the fire case was discussed in public. A classic drama involving three people: Grandmother Lydia Kuhnert, who owned the villa and played a role as a patron in the fine arts scene. Son Silvio, successful entrepreneur, also considerably well-off, at times a liberal cantonal parliamentarian. He lived on the Gold Coast in Küsnacht. Finally, his daughter Tamira. She was supposedly studying journalism, but in reality was pretty rotten and had certainly not seen the inside of a lecture hall for a long time. She lived with her grandmother and regularly held wild parties in the villa.

Then it turned out that son Silvio had planned to move his mother to a retirement home and put up luxury apartments on the grounds of the villa. A tabloid newspaper had found out that the old lady refused to leave the villa. Instead, she had started renovating the kitchen and bathroom. The newspaper had written that the fire „came in handy“ to son Silvio. If they had worded it less carefully, a charge of defamation would probably have ensued. Of course, Silvio the liberal politician and entrepreneur was an ideal bogeyman for many of us.

The public prosecutor's office also began to probe and discovered various family tensions. Evidence began to accumulate that the villa was indeed supposed to have been torched. Although the fire was quickly extinguished, the old lady was killed. She died of smoke inhalation.

„And Anderegg is to investigate the cause of the fire and the course of events?“ I speculated.

„If you say so.“

I hung up.

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The fact that the police used Anderegg as an expert spoke rather for the man I was spying on.

Should I record this as a plus in my report? No. I'm reluctant to give a positive rating to technical expertise. On the other hand, I noted the lack of social contacts as a negative point. Social only in professional life, otherwise a loner like an old bear. Perhaps my client didn't see it that way, but he had decreed that everything that attached my attention belonged in the report.

After two weeks, I found the observation not only unproductive, but downright boring. What's more, my unpaid vacation was over. I had to go back to the newsroom. So I contacted KÜng and said, „We need to talk.“

The old man chuckled. He enjoys it when you come at him with phrases he knows from TV movies. He ordered me to come to his place the next morning.

Norbert Küng had become rich as a wholesaler of smoking products. Actually, outrageously rich. I mean, you only get that rich when you take money out of people's pockets with inflated prices. My ex-wife and I sometimes argued about this point. Nicole thought that if someone could hold his own in the market with skill, then he deserved to be rich. The rich played an important role as a social driving force. She accused me of being simply envious; of feeling sorry for myself for having come up short. Perhaps – she said – I might indeed have come up short in life. But one can do something about it, she said. You have to be active and not wait for the government to take care of you. After my studies, she argued, I had done everything I could to lie down in a comfortable nest and had never made any attempt to climb out of it and start to fly. I had shied away from any risk, she said. On hearing this declaration, I left and slammed the apartment door behind me. And I went to the nearest bar to get hammered, bursting with feelings of protest.

By the way, Nicole knows what she's talking about. Like me she comes from a humble background. We met as members of the Labor Party. But then she moved on, and today she heads the marketing department of a successful medium-sized pharmaceutical company. Of course, she left

the party, and I think she now earns two or three times my journalist's salary.

Many of my acquaintances have improved themselves. Küng, too. At seventy-five – ten years ago – Norbert sold his business and retired. This was preceded by a stay of several weeks during wintertime in a Moroccan luxury resort, nestled in a reddish desert outside Marrakech at the foot of the Atlas Mountains. Here Norbert had reflected on the meaning of his – for the most part elapsed – life. To me he said, „I heard the call of the muzzedin in time!“ I interjected, „muezzin.“ Norbert looked at me in wonder and continued unperturbed, „Riding on a camel through the empty desert, just the guide and me, was like a dream. And during visits to the oasis village, I saw how little people need to live. We should take that as an example. But what touched me most was the call of the muzzedin at sunrise. That brought me to my senses.“

As a result, he reinvented himself. From one day to the next, he refused to smoke the expensive Havanas that had accompanied him all his life. Not only did he resign all his positions in the tobacco industry. He founded a movement dedicated to improving people's lifestyles in terms of public health and environmental protection.

He had, Norbert explained, wanted to integrate this movement in his party, the Liberals. But the stubborn dogs, who sat in the party committees then as now, had not wanted to hear about it. So he resigned from the party.

He called the movement the „Forum of Responsible Citizens“. It was organized as an association. The association was run on membership fees. But as was to be expected, these barely covered a thirty percent secretarial position. It goes without saying that K ung financed the main costs of the Forum, to whose presidency for life his faithful followers had elected him.

The Forum soon attracted attention through elaborate campaigns in the media. The editors of our paper viewed the movement with favor because they were hostile towards industry and condemned excessive consumption. Steinemann delegated me to a meeting of the Forum to report on it. At his suggestion – and after he declared he would pay my membership fee – I joined the Forum.

I was required to report regularly on the activities in our newspaper. However, this proved to be extremely tedious. The meetings were exceedingly boring. The agenda did not interest me one bit. Its items, and what the attendees – all well-meaning people – brought up with zeal but in a very loquacious manner, corresponded to today's trends, which our newspaper reported on in a page-filling way anyway. For my reports, therefore, I used to make up a few banalities. And, from time to time, when he had started another campaign, I published an interview with Norbert. In it I always packed the same message: The rich are to blame for everything. Rich people are selfish,

exploitative, ruthless slave drivers and so on, but sometimes such a person vows to mend his ways and become socially active in the right direction – prime example Norbert Küng, a convert to humanism.

Out of sheer boredom, I gave a few combative votes at a particularly viscous meeting – all I had to do was pull open a drawer of my professional memory. This pleased Küng. In addition, intelligence was so thin in this circle that even my limited abilities stood out.

„The Forum needs people like you,“ exclaimed Küng, who immediately accepted me into his circle of friends. And only the reference to my professional demands saved me from being elected to the board of the Forum. What I couldn't avoid was Küng appointing me as the person in charge of the fight against smoking.

I did not seek this job, but submitted to Norbert's request. I, too, think it is necessary to fight smoking. It simply contradicts public health. After I had given up smoking myself, I became a militant opponent for a while. In the meantime, my passion on this subject has cooled, but I lack the energy to withdraw from my function in Küng's Forum.

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Norbert owns an elegant commercial building in the middle of the city with four floors full with

offices of well-known lawyers. And on the two top floors there is a luxurious penthouse apartment – lots of marble and glass – which he calls „my modest penthouse“. The term „modest“ simply doesn't apply here. In addition to the living quarters, there is a fitness room with an indoor pool (unfortunately limited in size for structural reasons, Norbert sighs), social rooms, and a state-of-the-art kitchen with an air-conditioned wine cellar. From the roof terrace, the guest enviously enjoys a sweeping view over the city and the wooded hills, and on a clear day, the snowcapped Alps in the far distance.

I think a considerable number of the people living in the Moroccan village Norbert admires would find room in these chambers.

At ten o'clock in the morning, when I pressed the bell button next to the elevator that leads directly to K ng's apartment and presented my face to the camera, I heard from the loudspeaker: „Bonjour, Monsieur Rohr, come on up.“ It was the voice of the butler named James, who always appears extremely dignified. James comes from French-speaking Switzerland, and a few years in the service of a real lord at a country estate on Lake Geneva have left their mark on him. He speaks German with a charming accent. I estimate his age to be around fifty, but since Norbert says he works out daily at the in-house fitness center, he could be older. James is probably a professional name he has adopted.

In addition to James, Norbert also employs a Thai chef who learned his art in Marseille and has now found his fortune in Norbert's fully automated kitchen.

James led me into the salon, which is separated from the terrace by a glass front. The area of the salon corresponds to the area of my apartment. The floor is made of expensive marble, and the furniture is best characterized by the materials used: Chrome, glass, leather and a few exotic timbers from Africa.

Norbert had introduced me to the interior designer in charge at one of his parties. He was a talkative Romand who liked to drink and had apparently been recruited by James. Jean-François was a notorious smoker, and Küng had introduced me as a living spearhead against smoking. Nevertheless, we got along splendidly. By the way, the decorator was the only one of Norbert's guests who was allowed to smoke in the farthest corner of the roof terrace. I expressed my surprise to James about this. James explained that Jean-François had threatened to quit the job if he was not allowed to smoke in the penthouse. And Norbert had decided that he could not do without the brilliant architect, and on this basis had established the personalized smoking zone.

In the salon, Küng sat in a leather chair by the panorama window. He was engrossed in the „Liberal Gazette“. When I arrived, he folded up the paper and said, shaking his head: „Everything

from a conservative-bourgeois point of view. But you have to read the business section, even if you're no longer part of the club. James, why don't you bring Mr. Rohr some coffee?"

„Very well," said James, and to me, „Large cup with a drop of milk and a lump of sugar, if I am not mistaken."

„You are never wrong, James," I said, and to Küng, „Why don't you read the paper I work for?"

„Would fit me better ideologically, but the articles are of insufficient quality – contributions from those present excluded, of course."

I reported my findings to Norbert. The negative list impressed him. „I suspected Eugen to be one-sided, but I did not expect him to be so antisocial. However, I want to be sure of my case. After all, we are talking about a big responsibility and a lot of money. Keep watching him."

„I can't. Steinemann wants me back in the newsroom."

Küng thought for a while. To this end, he rose and began pacing back and forth in the salon. And again I noticed how extraordinarily tall he was, long and lean, bony and with a small, round head that had run out of hair. Finally he said, „Then you should find a way to contact Eugen professionally. Can't you do a series of interviews with him? I'm sure you can think of a reason, shrewd as you are."

The opportunity came about by itself. I went to Steinemann's glass cube, from which he can spy on all of us plodding in the newsroom. Steinemann seemed to be in a bad mood. He kept me waiting and continued to stare at his screen. Finally, he growled, „What's up?“

I said that the Kuhnert case interested me. I had learned that a security expert by the name of Anderegg had been commissioned by the police to clarify the circumstances of the fire. I would like to get in touch with him and find out straight from the horse's mouth what his findings were.

Steinemann reacted gruffly.

„Don't do that. I've ordered Spiess to investigate the Kuhnert case. I'm sure he'll come up with a juicy story.“

It seemed as if Steinemann also wanted to take a swipe at the entrepreneur and son of the victim, Silvio Kuhnert. Spiess is known for socially combative, brilliantly written articles, but I don't like him. I revealed this to Steinemann during an intimate conversation over a beer. At least once a year, the editor-in-chief takes any one of his scribblers to task and takes him out for a beer. He calls it an „employee-dialogue“, and the rule is that nothing that is said during this meeting gets out. Steinemann had wanted to know the reason for my reluctance.

„There are several reasons. Because he knows he writes well, he behaves pompously. In addition, he gets carried away by moods and doesn't do thorough research. And finally, he annoys me because he is a smoker and soothes his guilty conscience by explaining that it would actually be the duty of the pharmaceutical industry to develop a cure for tobacco addiction. But under pressure from the tobacco industry, they didn't do that.“

Steinemann had grinned. „Sounds pretty stupid, I admit. But at least the statement allows us to disqualify two industries that are unpopular with our editorial team. Needless to tell you, the two industries play practically no role in our advertising budget.“

Now Steinemann continued: „And tell Spiess about this expert opinion. Maybe he can use it to pep up his text a bit. But he won't find out anything from the expert. An expert only talks to his client.“

„All right, but what if I were to use this expert to investigate a general question? Like whether it's true that the industry, profit-driven as it is, is cutting corners on safety because it doesn't give a damn about people?“

Steinemann thought about it and said, „All right. We've said this many times before. But if you manage to land this expert and he confirms our statement, that would be quite exclusive. Go to the archives and get a list of industrial accidents for the last ten years. And then write me a nice article about it. You have two weeks.“

Now it was a matter of catching Anderegg. I called him and introduced myself as Max Rohr, a journalist for the „Daily News“. Anderegg asked what I wanted. When I mentioned the interview he said I should send him a well-founded request in writing and hung up.

So I wrote an e-mail to Anderegg's office address and stated that I knew that he was currently working as a security expert in the Kuhnert case. I was well aware that he could not say anything about this. However, I was interested in the general question of whether the industry was acting responsibly in terms of safety from his, Anderegg's, point of view. For this purpose, I had compiled a list of accidents of the past years, which I would like to go through with him.

Anderegg did not respond at all to the allusion to the Kuhnert case – well, I had mentioned it only in order to introduce myself. He replied by e-mail that the press had reported exhaustively on all industrial accidents of the past ten years, and that he could not add to this. I should study the existing articles, which contained enough statements from safety experts.

I wrote back, thanking him for the constructive suggestion and promising that I would do so. But the newspaper, its readers and I would like to know more about the general attitude of the industry to safety issues, because it seemed that ac-

cidents were becoming more frequent. Couldn't he, as an experienced expert, comment on this?

Anderegg briefly mailed that he did not think much of such generalizations. As an expert, he thought it was necessary to look at each case separately. Even in the same industry, every company was different. Only if accidents with certain products or processes occurred in the same or very similar way, could conclusions be drawn.

I persisted and asked whether there existed something like a safety culture? And whether this should not be assessed by an expert?

Now Anderegg called me. The fact that he didn't answer by e-mail anymore, I counted as a success. Even if he perhaps thought he could get rid of me better this way, I was convinced that I had him now. He explained that for my research there were experts who were more suitable than he. Such general questions were a matter of theory and teaching, not of practice. Answers to them were most likely to be found at universities. He advised me to contact Professor Krüger. As an alternative he mentioned Professor Gubler.

I was prepared for this. I had asked around among my contacts. The insurance company guys had indeed said that when it came to safety issues, Professors Krüger and Gubler would be the first to be considered, along with the independent expert Anderegg. At the university, I was told that Krüger was a lazy dog. He was only interested in producing himself in front of an au-

dience. He took every opportunity to get into the media. If I was serious about the subject, I should keep my hands off him. An interview with Krüger would be full of bombastic, indignantly uttered platitudes, and the poor quality of the statement would fall back on me. And I wouldn't stand a chance with Gubler. He was competent and hard-working and therefore busy with research assignments and expert reports, so he would probably not have time. But even more important: he didn't like the media.

So I lied to Anderegg on the phone that I had tried both without success. I feigned despair and said that at the insurance companies, I had only been given his name along with the professors. I would never have thought that there were so few suitable experts in this important subject. But that was the way it was, and that meant he was my last hope.

Anderegg hesitated. My request sounded logical. I realized that I was still annoying him, but that my tactics had unsettled him. And indeed, he took a step toward me. He wanted to know how much time I was counting on. I told him that, in my experience, we should be able to deal with the issue seriously in four to five meetings. In addition, he might peruse what I had written and correct it if necessary.

Anderegg promised to think about the matter, but first he wanted to meet me. He wanted to see – „excuse me“ – whether I was a suitable partner.

I was relieved and we agreed to meet. He suggested the „Hummingbird“ Bar as a meeting place, and I hypocritically let him describe the way there.

I have conducted countless interviews in my journalistic career. The first ten were exciting, but then it became routine. What happened was that someone in the editorial meeting thought that this or that person could also say something on this or that topic that would fit in with the orientation of our paper. And sometimes Steinemann would just say, „Max, this is something for you.“ So I went to one of our posh hotels and interviewed the chosen personality. The person had been coached, of course, and made the usual statements, exactly what was to be expected. Sometimes I cornered the victim a bit with an unexpected or probing question, but that was part of the game – readers want to be entertained. In short, it's been a long time since I looked forward to an interview.

But I was looking forward to the meeting with Anderegg. I arrived fifteen minutes early, and when Anderegg turned up, I immediately told him that I recognized him from a picture on his website. As he eyed me, a recognition flashed. But he had seen me only once, fleetingly, in the bar, and obviously could not remember.

We sat down at one of the little tables. Anderegg struggled with his limited mobility, but I decided not to ask him for the reason until we were more familiar. After he was seated, he went on the attack and explained that he was not a reg-

ular reader of our newspaper but had leafed through two issues in the last few days. And in doing so, he still found our well-known hostility towards economy. He therefore refused to cooperate.

I replied that we had, however, often shown sympathy for the economy. As a precaution, I had brought along an older issue with a two-page feature devoted to the Swiss textile machine industry. The tone was generally favorable and only spiced with some lame socio-political criticism, which we owe to our readership.

What I didn't tell him was that the whole thing had been fixed. This branch of industry had introduced a new collective labor agreement, which accommodated the unions. Because of the flourishing international market at the time, the unions had been in the pleasant position of being able to blackmail the employers a bit, so that the latter had grudgingly made concessions. As part of the deal, the union boss in charge had promised the industry association boss in charge a consolation deal, namely to do something to raise the industry's profile. He proposed a meeting of three, the two bosses with Steinemann, the „editor-in-chief of a respected paper“. On this occasion they would concoct positive messages for Steinemann to spread among the people. The president of the Association of Textile Machine Factories was very taken with this free marketing and happily agreed. The trade unionist then invited the other

two to an expensive meal in an upscale restaurant frequented by progressive circles. Steinemann listened carefully, told me everything in brief, and I was allowed to write the article.

When I pulled the paper out of my briefcase, the latest issue of the „Spiegel“ also appeared. No sooner had Anderegg noticed this than he asked whether I also belonged to the devout community of „Spiegel“ readers. I replied that I had to read the magazine for professional reasons. From the „Spiegel“, I said, we had all learned to package the messages we wanted to get across in an attractive way. Anderegg commented that, as a skeptical person, he had no use for messages. I said that was up to him, but it was still a magazine with a high journalistic standard. That made Anderegg laugh. He asked if I was talking about the literary level. He mentioned with relish that some of the articles in this journal had to be classified as fiction rather than reporting. I protested. I argued that he alluded to the case of a single journalist who had lied in his reports. And it had been the editorial staff itself that had recognized this.

Anderegg said that it was clear to him that these editors shaped the newspaper according to their world view. They wrote what fitted their creed. Which was fine, actually, since this corresponded obviously also to the creed of the readership. However, he himself didn't like the magazine. It didn't provide reporting or analysis, but rather mood-mongering from a specifically

German point of view, in which he was not interested. And what was more, the magazine's moral chauvinism unnerved him.

He got up from the table and said that it was obvious we were not on the same wavelength. As a consequence, he would not take part in an interview. At that, he took out his wallet, threw a twenty-franc bill on the table, and left the bar.

I was left somewhat dumbfounded. In our circles, anyone who rejects the „Spiegel“ is a reactionary. I immediately added Anderegg's attitude to the negative list in the report for Küng.

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However, the development was not helpful for my assignment, and I wondered whether I now had to sidle up to Küng and admit to him that I had failed. That was not possible for me for personal reasons. I loved this assignment! It brought the first change in years to my professional life. I used to research, analyze and write out of conviction, but in recent years my professional fire had been extinguished because – and I have no trouble admitting this – there were hundreds of journalists who wrote in a way similar to me, with the same topics over and over again – all adopted from leading papers like the „Spiegel“, with the same socio-political thrust. At most, the writing style was slightly different.

So I sent Anderegg a letter, and a blunt one at

that. In it, I admitted that our paper was critical of the economy – I said I found the word „hostile“ too strong. We would prefer a well-functioning state economy, an economy without the profit motive, but this was known to be inefficient. We also knew that only a social market economy was possible, but because of the greed of the economy leaders, strong state controls were necessary, and he should understand that because of his work as an expert. Then I asked him to reconsider whether he would participate. I promised him to avoid any kind of propaganda in the interview and committed myself to sober reporting. If he didn't like the discussion of specific industrial accidents, I would certainly be interested in a general assessment of the safety culture. He could choose the concrete topics himself. And to underline my willingness to cooperate, I granted Anderegg a right of veto before publication.