

Lorenzo's oil

Rarely has an [interview](#) created so much of a furore than that between Giovanni di Lorenzo (Chief Editor of "DIE ZEIT") and Karl Theodor zu Guttenberg (the Defence Minister recently fallen from the firmament of government) in the dossier of DIE ZEIT of 24th November 2011 (Issue 48).

The entire dossier – under the heading: "There was no deceit" – at first sight full of advertising and justification to gloss over the actions of Mr. zu Guttenberg, who plagiarised almost his entire thesis for reasons of fatigue and stress, yes, even had to. And all this because a 100–page little book was to be published a few days later by the Herder–Verlag – which contained more self–pity, self–adulation and self–criticism – DIE ZEIT called it: A collection of interviews.

This step by the Chief Editor is notable, which by its advance printing poured much calming oil on the souls of German academics, who are predominantly ZEIT–readers, and are mostly likely to have written their theses, Bachelor theses, dissertations, or even habilitations themselves, bordered a little on comradeship, a little on hubris, and a little on journalistic interest. And as di Lorenzo has now repeatedly stated, it was exactly this interest which prompted him to accept the offer of the [Herder–Verlag](#), to publish the book and to print an exclusive extract from the book in advance in DIE ZEIT.

The interview reads as if the "di" and the "zu" had not known each other for very long, because otherwise the questions would probably have been different; it reads as if the interest in the origination of the Guttenberg dissertation were excessive. This may be so for him as a journalist; as a reader, one thing is clear: Such an indiscretion, even if it cannot be legally classified as fraudulent, is above all irreparable. And with all the interest over how "Gutti" had fared since his swan song, that should have been emphasised; and would have prompted some readers to sullen complaints, without turning them into revolutionaries. For this aberration we award half of this "bombshell of the week" to Giovanni di Lorenzo, who [failed](#) to recognise how perceptive his readers really are!

Anyway, the Chief Editor, one week after the publication of Issue 51, had some readers' opinions printed, and answered all [letters](#) with a [circular](#), which addressed the question: What was the purpose of this interview, and how did it come to the conclusion that Guttenberg wanted by this means to explore whether he could (already) return to the political stage in Germany.

With all the attention that this interview aroused, because it dealt only with an error of Guttenberg's, rather than to tell readers how "Gutti" lives, where he buys his socks, if at all, how he lives in the United States, what is the subject of his new thesis, how he wants to manage to continue his political work, what he believes in, how he met his wife, why he is so keen on having an academic title, because he already has another and better one, what he was like at school, what subjects he liked, whether he was good at handicrafts, whether he

can play football, whether he likes thinner or larger women, whether he calls his parents regularly, what Guttenberg does on Sundays, and... and..., or an article that explains how in Germany an orthopaedist can become Economics Minister for example, and how Gutti managed to get into politics, and since when and why he wanted to become a politician at all.

Other politicians have already lost their [“Doctor”](#) title, which is not surprising. That fact that someone to whom this happens strives for rehabilitation, so as not to suffer from social phobia, is somehow also understandable, but why precisely such a fortunate, well-educated little chap like Karl Theodor can commit such a giant blunder remains unanswered. Or perhaps not: The interview reveals that Karl Theodor had difficulties in sorting and collating the chapters, and also wrote far too much, and then had difficulties in separating the superfluous from the essential. This raises the question of whether such things are not taught during academic training or even earlier – DIE ZEIT could also have reported on this aspect.

If we consider only this part of the text, then we must be grateful to Mr. di Lorenzo, for protecting us from others who are only in politics for the money. And it appears as a mockery when Mr. Guttenberg receives for his non-fraud a fine of only € 20,000, which he is supposed to pay to the Campaign against Children’s Cancer (whether he will ever do this?), and the District Court of Hof only used this verdict to pacify politically favourably-minded people. This may be due to the State Prosecutor’s Office being bound by instructions, which then only dealt with the so-called plagiarism affair with absolutely necessary bounds, instead of catering to people with a wider sense of justice. For them a sum of between € 150,000 to € 200,000 would have been appropriate. And it also seems to be a mockery when zu Guttenberg declares that he is not available for any office in Germany. For this action we award the other half of this “bombshell of the week” to KTG, for his underestimation that voters also have some brains.

The Alliance for Democracy hopes that Karl Theodor zu Guttenberg also fails in his role as a [consultant in Brussels](#), as to “How Internet users, bloggers and cyber-activists in authoritarian countries can be supported in the long term”. A person such as he should not be granted any career! For what will become of the project if he is once more unable to distinguish the essential from the superfluous?

The Alliance for Democracy would like to express its thanks to their reader who provided us with his exchange of correspondence with DIE ZEIT!