

Current Concerns

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The Future Belongs to Lean Organizations like EFTA

Respect for the dignity and independence of all member states has paid off

by Dr rer publ Werner Wüthrich, Switzerland

EFTA celebrated its 50th anniversary on 4 January, 2010. However, too little is known about its history and its way of contributing to economic co-operation in Europe, while at the same time respecting both dignity and independence of its member states. The following article shows why EFTA's substantial contribution to European peace should be common knowledge, and why it does not need to hide its light behind a bushel – quite the contrary when comparing it with the EU!

The catastrophe of the World War II had estranged the people of the whole world from each other like never before. It seemed uncertain if and when the former wartime enemies would join again for close co-operation on a close and equal footing. It happened sooner than many expected. In 1948, the *Organization for European Economic Cooperation* (OEEC) was founded by 17 European states based in Paris. These included former wartime enemies and neutral states like Switzerland. The US supported the project from the outside with 13 billion Dollars, which soon made history as the *Marshall Plan aid*. Success soon materialized. With a lot of initiative and self-help, civil production was wound up again. Trade barriers were removed in Western Europe and mutual separation of national economies was gradually abandoned. International financial flow was restarted and encouraged, until in 1958 currencies became freely convertible. In 1949, the OEEC started to decrease protective import restrictions. In 1950, a trade liberalization codex for industrial products was agreed upon and customs duties were lowered. Economy boomed in Western Europe. As a consequence of this co-operation, industrial production increased by 120% between 1947 and 1957, and exports by 180%. Trade figures within Europe tripled. Living standards of the population improved considerably. Politicians started to talk about an actual "economic miracle", which the OEEC contributed to significantly.

Switzerland actively supported this development. She was OEEC member from the beginning and urged for the removal of trade barriers and decrease of customs duties. The goal of a Free Trade zone seemed to be within Europe's grasp. But things went differently.

The six unilateralists

Starting in the mid fifties it became more and more apparent, that six European states – Belgium, Italy, the Federal Republic of Germany, France, Luxembourg and The Netherlands – were planning a separatist move towards an organization of their own and leaving the European integration process of the OEEC. An economic and tariff union with common borders was planned including supranational bodies pursuing common trade and agricultural policies. Further steps towards political union were supposed to follow soon.

At the *Messina Conference* of 1955, the following was agreed upon: national economies of the six countries should be merged by means of centralized supranational agencies. This was meant to be the cornerstone of a future political union. Firstly, the six governments aimed at the complete abolition of tariffs within 10 years. This move corresponded in substance with plans of the OEEC to reduce tariffs within all of Europe.



The EFTA Foundation meeting on 4 January 1960 in Stockholm – "The EU turns out to be a rather bulky colossus today, which absorbs more and more national competence. EFTA on the other hand is vivid, does not cost a lot and is much more able to appreciate the needs of its members and negotiating partners." (picture keystone)

How could a division of Europe have been prevented?

This would only be possible if a foundation for concerted abolition of tariffs within the whole OEEC area was found. Therefore, Switzerland suggested that all the 17 member states should reduce their customs duties according to the reductions planned in the EEC states, at the ministerial OEEC conference in February 1956. That way, a European free trade zone could have been developed, integrating both groups of the six EEC states and that one of the remaining 11 states not willing to be subject to the EEC superstructures and political streamlining. Switzerland took part in the expert workgroup who discussed this project and considered it doable. The OEEC ministerial conference approved it unanimously on 13 February 1957.

Rejection by the EEC

On 25 March 1957, the six countries signed their foundation treaty of the *European Economic Community* (EEC). Its 248 articles and numerous protocols contained the principles of a future economic union with the perspective to build a political union. Centralized bodies were to be entitled to more and more power over time, based on majority votes. That way, they would become increasingly independent of agencies and parliaments of member states.

Negotiations towards a common free trade zone of all 17 West European states were continued after the founding of the EEC. At first things looked promising. On 20 October 1958, the Council of Ministers of the EEC unanimously approved the project of a free trade zone for all OEEC members. This was

supposed to take effect in parallel to the treaty of Rome and should start already on 1 January 1959. However, less than 4 weeks later, on 14 November 1958, the rejection of the French government came as a total surprise. Later the EEC distanced itself from any co-operation within a free trade zone and suggested to the 11 non-EEC member states to either join the union or negotiate bilateral treaties.

Who was responsible for the division of Western Europe?

Who was the brain behind this abrupt u-turn? The *de Gaulle* era had not started yet. *Jean Monnet* is considered the «father of the EU» today. He was the architect of supranational EEC structures and had huge influence on the French government. There are strong hints that he demanded this veto and that priority status be given to the supranational EEC integration model. The excellent opportunity to combine both integration models, and develop them in parallel, was forfeited. Why that? Had not all European countries already agreed to the project in the ministerial councils of both OEEC and EEC?

Jean Monnet had close relations with the USA. He had spent half of his life in the USA and had founded a bank there (*Monnet, Murnane & Co*). In World War II he had served in a leading position in the American war economy. His network of contacts to financial and government circles of the USA is said to have been closer and more widespread than to the European governments. It has been claimed that the USA controlled the course of European integration via this network (see A. Bracher, *Europa im amerikanischen Weltsystem*. Basel 2007).

The EEC (and today's EU) is referred to as a «peace model» today. The rejected free trade project would have been at least as peaceful and would have provided more opportunities for cultural diversity than the supranational and centralized structures of the EEC.

For Switzerland, the terminated negotiations meant a severe setback. Already then, her economy was strongly export-oriented and amounted to as much as 40% of all Swiss products and services. 39% of the exports went to EEC member states and 61% to the rest of the world, almost 60% of the imports came from EEC states.

Should Switzerland join the EEC?

Finding an answer to this question had top priority on the Swiss Federal Council's (i.e. the Swiss Government's) agenda. Reports about discussions within the Federal government as well as documents of diplomatic correspondence are declassified today (see *Diplomatische Dokumente der Schweiz*, Bd. 21, 1958–61, Zürich 2007). Opinions within the Federal Council differed in some details. However, in general a consensus was reached that joining the EEC was not an option for legal and commercial reasons and that a different approach had to be found.

Already in 1947, Switzerland had defined three minimal principles, which had been accepted by the other OEEC founding members as her condition to join the organization:

1. Swiss co-operation had to be compatible with the statute of neutrality.
2. Switzerland had only to be subject to decisions approved by herself.

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3. Switzerland claimed the right to continue trade policies of her own, i.e. to sign commercial treaties with other states.

In 1960, the Swiss Federal Council summarized its thoughts and deliberations about a possible accession to the EEC in a big report, which was published in the *Bundesblatt* (1960, S. 841ff.), the official platform of the government. This report bore the signature of *Hans Schaffner* and explained the politics of the OEEC and the Swiss contributions to it. It also contained a critical analysis of Swiss relations to the EEC of that time. Hans Schaffner, who would later be elected member of the Federal Council, was a delegate of the Federal Council then, and responsible for trade agreements. The above considerations are mainly derived from this report. Some citations shall illustrate the standpoint of the Swiss government concerning accession into the EEC:

«[...] The EEC aims at the creation of a Supranational European state. For that reason and according to the *Treaty of Rome*, autonomous decisions of member states in important economic areas are planned to be reduced over time and replaced by the activities of supranational bodies.»

– «The EEC states view their community not only as a platform to achieve common political objectives in Europe and the world. Though political merger or global aspirations have not been laid down explicitly in the Treaty of Rome owing to the political atmosphere of that time however, both goals are factors which exert heavy influence on EEC policies and the structure of its future bodies. [...] Joining an organization with such a clear political profile as the EEC [...] is bound to result in partial surrender of our independence and would be the starting point of an erosion process undermining our determination to self-rule and neutrality.»

– «Moreover Switzerland would have to face severe problems concerning her politics of neutrality should she join the EEC with its planned development into a political alliance or union.»

– «Accepting the EEC customs tariffs is precondition to a membership. These high tariffs would jeopardize Switzerland's position in world trade.»

– «EEC member states are subject to a common agricultural policy, which would restrict opportunities for self-sufficiency.»

– «The determination of the Swiss people to preserve its independence stands against accession to the EEC. A nation which is not defined by uniformity of language, culture and ethnicity but rather by a political voluntary act, cannot risk a gradual undermining of its political independence.»

Alternatives to joining the EEC

The Federal Council emphasized its will to create a free trade zone to which the EEC member states as well as the other 11 OEEC states, not willing to be subject to political EEC superstructures, should belong. A division of Europe was to be prevented by all means. To that end, the non-EEC-states should found another small free trade zone of their own – the EFTA. In this zone, all measures to abolish trade barriers as suggested by the Treaty of Rome should be performed in parallel in order to synchronize economic development in Western Europe and to prevent economic conflicts. Unity of Europe remained the ultimate goal.

The Federal Council recommended its suggestion to join the EFTA as follows:

«[...] Joining the EFTA does not interfere with our independence. Our independent commercial policies remain intact. We can still sign bilateral agreements with other states. [...] Only by active contribution can Switzerland shape her own future. [...] The EFTA aims at becoming an open community. Its member states are connected by a common tradition of commercial commitment.

In that capacity they are used to dealing with complex partners in Europe and the world. Accepting this diversity they make their contributions to European economic integration. That is why they have chosen an integration model which may be less com-

prehensive than that of the EEC. It is exactly for that reason more suitable for complex countries.»

In public the question of joining the EEC was rarely discussed, since Switzerland was well established in the OEEC integration process.

Foundation of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA)

On 4 January 1960, the Stockholm Convention was signed by Switzerland, Austria, Sweden, Denmark, Great Britain, Ireland and Portugal, which laid the foundation for the *European Free Trade Association* (EFTA). Art. 3 contained the obligation to abolish all tariffs and quantitative import restrictions within the next 10 years. Similar to the GATT agreements of 1947, the convention allowed exceptions for the case that a member state might get into financial difficulties. In general, the convention focused on industrial products. Art. 21 emphasized the peculiarity of agriculture. Its products were excluded from tariff abolition.

In the preamble of the treaty, the seven signing states declare their determination to do whatever they could in order to avoid another division of Europe. The association was meant to be a step towards an agreement between all OEEC member states. Its successful work which had started with the liberalization of trade and financial transactions was to continue.

Immediately after the foundation of the EFTA, the OEEC was dissolved and transformed into the OECD, which exists to this day. The USA and Canada joined it – later more countries outside Europe were accepted. Today the OECD is a special interest group of 30 Western industrialized countries and has tasks totally different from those of the OEEC.

Differences between EEC and EFTA soon became apparent. Among other things a striking dissimilarity in the number of staff was notable – while even then about 5,000 people were employed at the Brussels EEC headquarters (today there are about 40,000) merely some dozens were working in the EFTA secretariat in Geneva.

According to plan, tariffs and trade barriers had been removed 10 years later, synchronically in the EEC and in EFTA. A combined free trade zone of both organizations therefore seemed only logical. In 1972, unity was re-established and the great free trade agreement between the *European Community* (EC) and the EFTA countries was signed. This successful body of treaties solidified the achievements and co-operation within Europe for decades – to this day.

Consequences

On the whole, the EFTA treaty and the free trade agreement with the European Community proved favorable for Western Europe. However, not entirely: The production of lorries had been protected by quotas after the war. Lorries, cars, post vans and many military vehicles – all made by the *Saurer Company* in Arbon – belonged to the Swiss street scenes in those days. Their production had to be discontinued mainly due to competition from German car manufacturers. They had been able to deliver more cost effectively thanks to larger series numbers. *Saurer* vehicles may be spotted now and again as old timers on the streets or marveled at in exhibitions as items of Swiss industrial history.

EFTA today

Over the years, additional countries joined the EFTA – Iceland in 1971, Finland in 1986 and in 1991 Liechtenstein. Today Denmark, Great Britain, Austria, Portugal, Sweden and Finland are no longer EFTA members, since they joined the European Union.

In 2001, the EFTA convention was entirely revised. Legal relations similar to the bilateral treaties between Switzerland and the EU are established by the new convention between the remaining EFTA states of Switzerland, Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein. This includes freedom of movement and residence. Rules concerning the trade of services, financial transactions and copyright have also been added to the convention. Since then the convention has been updated on a regular basis,

especially to reflect bilateral agreements between Switzerland and the EU. Meanwhile the other three EFTA states have joined the European Economic Area (EEA).

Since the 1990s, free trade agreements have gained importance in world economy. This tendency has even become stronger since the stagnation of the global WTO process at *Doha* whose final agreement may be a highly doubtful affair. The EFTA states started to expand their free trade policies to potential partners outside Europe. Today EFTA has a network of 18 free trade agreements. Additional negotiations are under way.

How are EFTA negotiations carried out?

First, the EFTA partners focus their interests in preliminary talks. One member state assumes the role of speaker, but the others contribute to the negotiation process, too. After its completion, each member state ratifies the agreement according to its own constitutional laws. Agricultural questions are negotiated separately by the partners, since EFTA states still do not pursue common agricultural policies due to the dissimilarity of their respective agricultural systems. This approach is successful, unlike that of the WTO, which keeps trying to ignore the agricultural diversity of its 151 member countries.

Outlook and comparison

The development of EFTA is actually a success story. Some countries have switched to the EU though. Why? Because power is exercised in Brussels and because there the «important» questions are decided on? Because billions are spent there as subsidies? I would like to leave the question unanswered, as to whether the decision of these countries was so prudent after all. The citizens of all countries have to answer that for themselves.

The EFTA network has increased in size due to the numerous free trade agreements with Asian and other countries. Still co-operation keeps functioning without growing bureaucracy. Merely 150 people are working in Geneva. EU style scandals are unheard of with EFTA – 10 years ago, the entire EU commission had to resign in Brussels, charged with corruption and mismanagement.

The EU turns out to be a rather bulky colossus today, which absorbs more and more national competence. *EFTA on the other hand is vivid, does not cost a lot and is much more able to appreciate the needs of its members and negotiating partners.* Switzerland, Norway and Liechtenstein seem to be better off in today's crisis than most EU states – could the fact that they are all EFTA members hint at some advantages of this model?

The ever-growing EFTA network does have a future, precisely because the unwieldy WTO is put into question in its current form. Globalization enthusiasm of the 1990s has vanished. The vision of exchanging all goods and services without regimentation – anywhere, with anything, with anybody and without control – proved to be a dead herring.

The EU developed into a political union – as planned in 1955 already – which introduced majority decisions and maintains an inefficient power centre in Brussels. It does play a role in world politics, but can never be a match for the USA. One might speculate that this is exactly the state of affairs which US administrations had in mind when they urged for the division of the European integration process and favored the separatist EEC project.

Since the EU presents as an ineffective colossus today, most of whose members are struggling with financial problems, one can only hope *that future belongs to lean organizations like EFTA.* As the successor organization to OEEC, it has proven its usefulness for 50 years now. It was the OEEC, not the EEC, which laid the foundations for integration and peaceful co-operation on an equal footing in Europe. Switzerland has been part of it from the beginning.

Unlike the EU, the EFTA does not employ a Commissioner of Communication today, who would spend all day propagating the message of the EU being the sine qua non of economic development and peace in Europe, with the help of dozens of public relations experts. Without it, the nations of Europe would start slaughtering each other – a myth.

Politics ignoring the people is harmful

How has the relationship between Switzerland and the EU developed? This relationship proves to be increasingly problematic today and it is critically challenged by various sides. Some want to urge joining. Others criticize the bilateral treaties of recent years and want to re-negotiate them with the EU. How come this unease with the so-called bilateral approach that the EEC had already proposed to Switzerland in 1958? How come there is so much dissatisfaction with the bilateral treaties signed in recent years?

Even before the Swiss people voted 'No' regarding the European Economic Area (EEA) in 1992, the Federal Council had declared joining to be their strategic goal and had submitted – bypassing the people – a petition of accession in Brussels. Former State Secretary *Franz Blankart* had been negotiating with the EU for many years as head of the Swiss delegation. He used to chair the integration office and had negotiated the EEA treaty. Today he openly admits what witnesses have claimed for a long time (while the Federal Council claimed the contrary): «The [bilateral] treaties with the EU had always been negotiated under the implicit pretext of Switzerland soon becoming an EU member, and that is why not too many efforts were made to actively shape their content.» The high-ranking diplomat added that this was a difference between today's bilateral treaties and those 135 agreements with the EU made before the vote on EEA.

Unlike recent ones, the older treaties contained elements of contribution, in other words, Switzerland actively contributed its issues and interests to the text. Today Swiss negotiators restrict themselves to more or less passively copy EU directives, a process euphemistically termed «autonomous translation» (*Neue Zürcher Zeitung am Sonntag*, 25 October 2009)

In 2001 the people's initiative «Yes to Europe», which had demanded to start accession negotiations with the EU, had been rejected with a clear majority of 76,9% negative votes. Therefore, the Federal Council no longer talks about a strategic goal of joining but favors the bilateral approach in public statements. How can both Franz Blankart's rather clear statement and the Federal Council's continuous claims to allegedly stick to the bilateral approach be true at the same time, though? In any case, it is a fact that both the Federal Council and some members of parliament always worked towards joining the EU – today as a mere option. The sovereign, on the other hand, i.e. the people and the Council of States, have so far always clearly rejected it.

Politics ignoring the Swiss people will harm Switzerland in the end! She will have to continue pursuing her way – without bypassing the people. •

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“Be Grounded in Deep Soil, where no Frost of the World can Touch your Roots”

An encouragement to upright gait in threatened situations –
about a brochure* by Rudolf Burger on the current situation of Switzerland

ts. Currently, Switzerland sees itself exposed to curtain attacks fired by groups of the high finance and their speaking trumpets such as the *Financial Times* and *Wallstreet Journal* seconded by German Social Democratic Party members that recently were punished at the polls and seconded by the desert dictator Gaddafi, some dubious Italian cabinet members or the colorful figure of *Daniel Cohn-Bendit*. In addition, they are seconded by a fifth column of Swiss people who are tired of their homeland and kept in leading-strings by the above-mentioned foreign circles. In these hard times, a small but all the more mighty little brochure was published just in time with the title “Grandfather, is’t true?” Its author has been publisher of the magazine *media.watch.ch* for many years, *Rudolf Burger* from Burg, and the brochure was edited by the association *Medien Panoptikum*.

Opposing feudalistic demonstrations of power

Even the well-chosen title shows, in what kind of delicate situation our country finds itself at present as the title leans on the famous question of another Swiss in a threatening situation. It was *William Tell’s* son *Walter*, who in the third scene of the third act¹ of *Friedrich Schiller’s* “*William Tell*” asks his father a number of questions on the famous meadow near Altdorf. Starting with “Father, is’t true, that on the mountain there the trees, if wounded with a hatchet, bleed?” a whole set of further questions follow culminating in the final question, “And are there countries with no mountains, father?” For the German national poet Schiller, mountains as symbols of freedom were the combat symbol against the domestic feudal absolutism of that time. The volatile nature of the mentioned scene with the question “Father, is’t true?” can only be understood, however, against the background of Schiller’s famous stage direction saying “A meadow near Altdorf. Trees in the foreground. At the back of the stage a cap upon a pole. The prospect is bounded by the Bannberg, which is surmounted by a snow-capped mountain. [...] Tell enters with his cross-bow, leading his son Walter by the hand. They pass the hat without noticing it, and advance to the front of the stage.” Shortly after that follows the famous short dialogue between father and son. Walter: “See, father, see the cap on yonder pole!” Tell: “What is the cap to us? Come, let’s begone.”

Each child in Switzerland knows how this scene continues and what the cap on the pole means: Tell is arrested by the henchmen of the power who wants to stifle freedom in Switzerland; but he resists, and in a common effort the administrator *Gessler’s* tyranny, whose power symbol was the hat on the bar, is swept away.

This freedom and the threat by today’s “hat on the bar” is Rudolf Burger’s concern in his brochure, in which he deals with the European Union’s hostile takeover plans for our country, the removing of customers’ money administered in Switzerland, and the integration of our youth into murderous aggressive armies. His brochure also deals with the greed of those fellow citizens that – according to Schiller – “vie for the prince’s favor”, as for instance *Rudenz* does for his worshipped *Berta’s* love, thus a symbol for the inner attitude of the Swiss people.

Against the mockers in the TV tower

Burger himself puts it as follows: “Switzerland where to? – an urgent question. Is our country to become freeloader of a Europe forced into line, which becomes increasingly alienated from its occidental and liberal roots? Is it to become a little star in the European flag or should it continue to hold up the cross in the red field?”

Burger’s answer reads point blank:

“Switzerland can probably contribute best for the future of Europe if it remains what it is: the model of a small state, which possess-



“Why do we let it happen, that paid mockers invade into our living-rooms and with their brazen hand tear from the wall picture and cross of the homeland?” (picture mt)

es the power to unite different cultures and languages, owing to its fundamental federal structure and a democracy based on real participation.”

With his brochure, Burger would like “to jolt the people and visualize where the adjustment politics lead to and how we can oppose them.”

By taking the reader on a trip to the year 2050 and by making a granddaughter ask Walter’s question to her grandfather again, Burger makes clear to the 21st century Swiss people – soft-boiled by the “mockers in the TV tower” and brought into line and alienated from their actual nature – how important it is to appreciate what we have got in our country and why we should put every effort into defending its liberties and its peace and social commitment. Thus he raises the questions of direct democracy, of the nation created by its own will, an own currency, political stability, the state based on the rule of law and the question of security. In addition, he raises the questions of an orientation towards values like mutual attention and respect, honesty, empathy, mutual assistance and addressing each other – questions of highest topicality today, not only in Switzerland.

“Round your head a tangling net is wound” – spin-doctors

Thus in the surrounding countries and even in the more distant Islamic states, people sympathize with the Swiss population’s commitments to the peaceful living together, the integration into a host country and about political extremism. According to the Swiss Ambassador at the UN, *Peter Maurer*, on Radio DRS of 5 November, these concerns were confirmed accordingly, especially by diplomats of Islamic countries, which are confronted with an increasing influence of the Wahabites. This is an extreme form of the political Islam, instrumentalized by the USA in a power game that *Robert Dreyfuss* in his book “*Devil’s Game: How the United States Helped Unleash Fundamentalist Islam*” described with utmost accuracy.²

Furthermore, the grandfather in Burger’s brochure explains his granddaughter why the consensus in Switzerland is crumbling. The greed of a minority is moved into the center, not only the greed for money but also for power, or at least the greed for serving the mighty ones – just like Schiller’s figure *Rudenz*, who in his megalomania almost betrayed his country. He would have done so had not his beloved *Berta* raised her voice and spoken words which are still valid today if we replace Austria, thus Habsburg, by the

centralistic, undemocratic and trust-reigned Lisbon EU:

Rudenz:

*Is not my country’s welfare all my wish?
What seek I for her, but to purchase peace
‘Neath Austria’s potent sceptre?*

Bertha:

*Bondage, rather!
You would drive Freedom from the last
stronghold
That yet remains for her upon the earth.
The people know their own true int’rests
better:
Their simple natures are not warp’d by
show.
But round your head a tangling net is
wound.*

“Round your head a tangling net is wound”: If Schiller lived today, he would probably speak of the spin-doctors’ propaganda tricks, of dependencies of any kind, which degrade the Swiss to puppets at the threads of internationalist and transnational networks in the background.

“With a man’s resolve – firm by thy people stand!”

It is Burger’s concern to enable a process of realizing this and freeing oneself at the same time. Thus *Berta* answers *Rudenz’s* question “Yet, how to free myself; to loosen the coils which I have madly twined around my head?” with a sentence that we should write in each feeble-minded and tired Swiss person’s album: “Tear them asunder with a man’s resolve. What’er ensue, firm by thy people stand! It is thy post by birth.”

Would it not be appropriate to send all those native faultfinders, mockers, and knowalls abroad for some time so that with their return they might have learned again to really appreciate Switzerland as an island of peace? In order to support this notion, Burger quotes the great Swiss actor *Walter Roderer*, who once justified his commitment to the independence of Switzerland as follows “Because I simply love Switzerland, because I travelled around in the world and saw that Switzerland, with all its inadequacies grants more freedom, participation and quality of life to the individual than any other country.” Burger continues that it is the same with freedom as with health; we only then realize its value when we have lost it.

Why do we let it happen ...?

Following his razor-sharp analysis, Burger reaches for the readers’ hearts with a set of poems. He succeeds in linking tradition with

modern trends. So for example in the poem “*Bitter Rain*”. The last stanza runs:

*“High in the TV tower,
where the mockers sit,
clearly clink the glasses.
Down however withers at the tree
Hope, honor and dream.”*

By his commitment in the publication *mediawatch.ch*, Burger accordingly castigates the medial stultification and manipulation and calls for resistance, e.g. in the poem “*Mockers in our living rooms*”:

*“Why do we let it happen,
that paid mockers
invade into our living-rooms
and with their brazen hand
tear from the wall
picture and cross of the homeland?”*

We stand by the white cross, the red Cross, Christ’s cross

Burger requests us all to stand by our values, to practice the “upright gait” as the actively serving generation did in times of heaviest distress: “The sign of the cross has been hovering above Switzerland since its foundation. Why do we not adhere to this cross in our flag, to the white cross in the red field, to the red cross in the white field, to Christ’s cross which as a mysterious power has accompanied and protected us for more than 700 years?”

Obviously, the Swiss population still has this power; or how else should we interpret the result of the vote on the minaret initiative? Was that not the calm stop signal of the population realizing that for a long time their opinion has not been represented in the public? A people that feel no longer represented by the higher party cadres and observe the party members’ slavish obedience? Who see themselves betrayed in their request for peace? It was a stop signal, a call for a public debate with the media, with the politicians, with all the people in our country; an invitation to discuss how we can ensure the peaceful life in a self-determined state on the basis of its own culture. Everyone is challenged, because the economic crisis, rising unemployment, violence in the streets, the decay of the currency, inflation etc concern all citizens. So far, Switzerland has been well taken care to peacefully and in solidarity solve these problems. That was the signal of the referendum, and so it was received in the Muslim world and by the peoples of Europe apart from some spiteful propaganda. The peoples of Europe would probably have voted similarly, and expressed even more clearly their uneasiness about an internationalist politician caste if they had been allowed to do so.

Preserving tradition, language, songs, religion and history

Thus, we return to Burger’s commitment: This gem of direct democracy, where the people must always be asked and make the final decision, is absolutely necessary to be preserved. Especially for Europe that will not last as a giant structure.

Burger gives all those living under foreign rule with a prospect when he describes the example of Latvia. Latvia, the small country in the Baltic, was occupied by German armies in 1940. After the battle of Stalingrad the advancing Red Army took over the role of the Germans – Latvia was submitted to the hard yoke of the Soviets, which continued for nearly 50 years.

It was exactly this Latvia, which congratulated Switzerland to the 650th anniversary of the confederation in 1941. This happened despite or perhaps because of the country being under foreign rule by an occupying power. Describing the example of Latvia, Burger points out what people need in order to be able to survive a foreign rule and become independent again on day X and con-

“Wolli in Winterland”

A small Valais Blacknose sheep conquers hearts

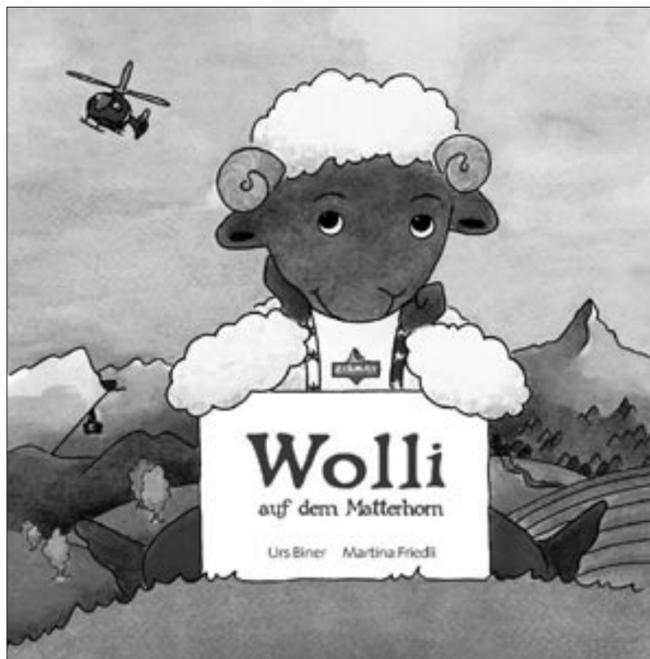
es. Being the author of the children's books “Wolli on the Matterhorn” and “Wolli in Winterland”, the artist and musician *Urs Briner*, alias *Dan Daniell*, who is well-known way beyond *Zermatt*, has created an authentic and highly symbolic story. As *Wolli* says himself, he is a special sheep; in so much as he dares to love himself. He is looking for freedom and wants to make a difference. In the process, he even dares asking for help. He experiences the love and care of shepherd *Heini*, who shows him with great care when he has done something wrong. In this way, he is able to feel secure and to experience the beauty of the world. “Heini realizes *Wolli*'s great desire to make more experiences and to indulge in his yearning. That is why he grants him the freedom to experience the great things that we all have in our minds. It is the freedom to improve ourselves.”

Together with the detailed colourful drawings, lovingly designed and arranged by the graphic artist *Martina Friedli*, both these children's books are a true treasure trove for parents, educators, and children of the ages from 4 to 11 years.

Wolli, the smart woollen ball, delights with his naivety and his positive presence. The flock of sheep with their shepherd form a symbolic backdrop mirroring many aspects of human coexistence. In a truly refreshing way, the stories convey our need for friendship and mutual assistance. When *Wolli* and his mates



This and the following pictures of the present edition are taken from the book “Wolli in Winterland” by Dan Daniell and Martina Friedli.



frolic joyfully in the first snow, we swiftly recognise our children building a snowman equally enthusiastic about the white splendour of winter. They would be as disappointed as *Wolli* having to discover that the snowman's nose – a fine large carrot – has been stolen. In the person of the shepherd *Heini* we find a caring adult able to encourage his protégé, who is sad about this loss, with loving composure.

Wolli and *Timy*, the squirrel that has eaten up the carrot while looking for his hidden nuts at night, learn how friends can solve a conflict if they take each other seriously. “Oh *Wolli*, I'm so sorry, and I'll look for another nose at once,” promises *Timy* when he realizes how upset *Wolli* is about the missing nose. Then there is silence between the two for a moment, until *Wolli* answers, “*Timy*, it's all right, but you must promise that next time, you won't just take something that doesn't belong to you!”

When some ewes get their little lambs in the winter, the bigger ones are allowed to organize a nursery school for the small ones.

When, one day, the photographer *Anna*, who writes stories about Valais Blacknose, arrives, the shepherd *Heini* gives her the enterprising little *Wolli* to take with her as her companion. On their way to the *Gornergrat* they pass the *Riffelalp*, *Wolli*'s place of birth. Like so many parents who see their own child as unique, the shepherd *Heini* has told the photographer what it was like when *Wolli* was born. *Wolli*'s question, “Isn't this the most beautiful place on earth?” expresses the sense of security that the little sheep has been able to experience when he was young.

And then, when hundreds of people come to the *Gornergrat* at the *Matterhorn* to admire the unique Alpine panorama, we feel united with *Wolli* and with the whole world. So the little Blacknose speaks for all of us when he says to the photographer at the chapel, “Dear *Anna*, let's take a moment and thank God for all the good and beautiful things in this world. Let's light a candle so that its light may brighten up everybody's heart!”

The book “*Wolli on the Matterhorn*” is the first adventure of the small black-nosed sheep in the wonderful mountain world of Valais. It is available in English at a price of 29.– Swiss Franks at: Weber AG Verlag, Gwattstrasse 125, 3645 Gwatt, Switzerland ISBN 978-3-909532-46-9

“Be Grounded in Deep Soil ...” continued from page 3

continue to exist by relying on dear traditions: “The Latvian people of only 3.5 million endured a foreign rule for over 50 years without losing its identity. Its cultural values of tradition, language, song, religion and history, were a never-ending source of strength and they were incessantly cultivated even under most difficult conditions.”

In the poem *Latvia 1994*, Burger that in today's new freedom new dangers lie in waiting: “Latvia, do not permit the spirit of modern times to bewilder your hearts and minds. Remain true to your principles. Be grounded in the deep soil, where no frost of the world can reach you.”

A plea for humanitarian Switzerland

Burger emphasizes that the victims of the Hungarian freedom fight of 1956 or of the crushed down Prague Spring of 1968 were not in vain and he asks for perseverance. “We must dare it, against all hope, and if success is missing, we must persist nevertheless. Only God knows how everything will end. We, however, have to keep to his commandments and make use of our life spans and the gift of our skills.”

At the end of his brochure, Burger lets *Gustav Naville* from *Zumikon* (CH) express wherein the skills of the Swiss lie:

“What can Switzerland do and be for the world?”

A global competence center for humanitarian affairs with a Red Cross, which is again supported by Switzerland, a nation created by its own will, with powerful Swiss disaster auxiliary troops, with a diplomacy of the Good Services earning all people's trust, and with a Swiss army, which is the solid foundation of armed neutrality and which only fights in the utmost emergency, however also serves as a personnel reserve for humanitarian employments.”

This statement in its clarity, its dedication for the homeland and at the same time openness to the world needs no addition. •

¹ All quotations taken from www.readbookonline.net/read/26285/62377/

² Robert Dreyfuss. *Devil's Game. How the United States Helped Unleash Fundamentalist Islam*. New York 2005. ISBN 0-8050-8137-2. www.Robert-Dreyfuss.com

* The brochure can be ordered at *Vereinigung “Medien Panoptikum”*, CH-5736 Burg, or at info@mediawatch.ch

Back then, all went well ...

“Yes, it was on this road ...

It was early in the morning that we had left D. When we arrived in K., it was already lunchtime. We fed the horses and gave them a little rest.

Evening was closing in. We were driving [...]. No one was to see, neither in front of us nor behind us. I was the wagoner guiding both horses between the shafts. Mother was sitting in the covered wagon.

Suddenly, I caught sight of a weird grey dog, sitting alone not far from the road we were rolling along. He pricked his ears, eyeing up our wagon that was moving towards him.

I said, “Mommy, mommy, look, a dog is sitting there!”

Mother straightened up, stared at the animal for a long time and said, “No, a dog does not look like this.”

“But what could it be then?” I asked curiously.

“This is a wolf!” she said.

I was not shocked at all. “How exciting! A wolf, just sitting there watching at us.” We were passing him. Suddenly, the wolf disappeared.

A little bit later – after about five or six kilometers the wolf was sitting there again, on the same side of the road.

Then our horses smelled the trouble. They began to snort and started running. However, they were not able to keep up for long.

The wolf repeatedly appeared at the roadside, completely unexpected. I could not believe that he came back again and accompanied us nearly the whole stretch of road.

My mother was very frightened and started to cry. “What will happen to us now? Other wolves may appear. Wolves are used to attacking in packs.”

Maybe this was a lonely wolf without a pack. Back then, all went well ...

When we arrived in S. in the late evening, we told our relatives about the incident with the wolf. They listened to us their eyes wide open.

We ground our grain at the mill and stayed one more day so that the horses could take a break. On the return journey, two horsemen escorted us to K.

This was my first encounter with a wolf. The second was more dramatic than the first ...”

In which part of Germany did or does this happen? (Answer on page 6)

Future for Sheep and Goat – and for our Compatriots in the Mountains



National Councilor Roberto Schmidt (picture thk)

For several years, initiated by WWF and other animal rights groups, activities have been under way in different European countries to resettle predators like lynx, wolves and bears in civilised areas. Especially in densely populated areas

like Switzerland stock breeding farmers face enormous problems. Wolves present a great threat to sheep and goat breeders, as we mainly find them in the Swiss alpine regions. As Switzerland is a member of the Berne Convention, which declared the wolf an animal worth protecting, it is almost impossible to defang the wolf by targeted killing. Therefore, sheep and goat breeders demand a change in the 'wolf concept' of the Swiss government, which would mean to be allowed to earlier shoot the wolves.

The resettlement of predators is not about animal protection, which becomes clear by the fact that the goats and sheep killed by wolves are excluded from this protection, as a wolf is allowed to kill up to 50 sheep before he may be defanged. This whole affair seems to be more about depopulating unprofitable alpine valleys. These are proceedings by which traditions and cultural achievements are destroyed which form an essential fundament of Swiss direct democracy. In the following we publish an interview with the Swiss National Councilor Roberto Schmidt which deals with the different aspects of resettling predators.

Mr National Councilor Schmidt, at the demonstration two weeks ago you said: "The wolf lacks a place in Switzerland." What do you mean by that? Why should the wolf find no place in Switzerland?

Roberto Schmidt: In contrary to Italy and France, but above all in comparison to Russia and the Eastern European countries, space in the Swiss Alps is very small and relatively densely populated. Due to this fact a cohabitation of wild animals, livestock and big predators is very difficult because of today's preconditions, and therefore, I take the view that under these conditions the wolf lacks space. I have no objections against the wolf as an animal but it can only establish itself where the space to live is wide enough, and this is not the case in Switzerland.

Couldn't a better guarding of the livestock make this coexistence of livestock and wolf possible?

The livestock guarding has certainly contributed to a certain calming of the situation. There has been some success with such measures of livestock guarding, but it does not function properly. First of all it becomes more difficult as soon as wolf packs have been built up. And there are signs that wolf packs will soon emerge in Switzerland as well, because there are already some females. And when great wolf packs have built up, it cannot be helped any longer.

Secondly, in the mountain regions there are many small herds of livestock, and for these livestock guards are much too complicated and expensive.

And thirdly, the Valais Alp sheep is used to pasture at night, and it would not be species-appropriate at all to squeeze the animals into a fold yard where they could not pasture any during nights. This would be unnatural. Furthermore, there are Alps which are completely inappropriate for livestock guarding because of their topography.

Because of all these circumstances I have come to the conclusion that the livestock guard is not possible with all those animals and much less with smaller flocks. Here in Switzerland we always hear the argument that livestock guarding works in Germany. This is only true as long as no wolf packs have developed. You can easily handle one single animal, but if a pack has developed, even livestock guard dogs have no longer a chance. These experiences have been made especially in France, but in Germany as well.

Which measures of livestock guarding do exist?

As far as it is planned by the Federation, they consist of shepherds and specially trained dogs which can serve as defence against big predators. We have had the experience that we can hardly cope with the training of the necessary amount of dogs, because all trained dogs are already on duty, and it takes a long time until more will be trained. In the area of tourism there are further difficulties coming up as well, because the dogs are very aggressive. They are especially bred for this purpose, and this is of course very disadvantageous for a tourist canton as is the case with the canton Valais. The tourists, the hikers are afraid of these dogs. If they attack or do not attack, they are frightened, nevertheless, and this is a problem for the development of tourism.

But isn't this a problem for all the other cantons, as well?

Yes, of course, but the cantons with a lot of tourism are especially concerned, as in these regions tourism is based very much on hiking possibilities in the respective areas. The hiker wants to become acquainted with the Alps, the mountains and this is where the problems are worst.

How does the population react to the resettlement of the wolf?

The media continuously present the beautiful image of the wolf to the population which, lit by the moonlight, shining over the valleys. Everything is kind and gentle, everything nicely peaceful. Also in kid's movies the wolf is represented as the gentle animal. And because of this the population has no strong rejection against the wolf at first sight. But as soon as big packs will have developed, a big fright will be spreading, as we experienced it 60 years ago. In the mountainous regions people are more realistic, they have a critical position regarding the wolf.

The Berne Convention prohibits the shooting of wolves. How binding is this convention for Switzerland?

In my opinion, the Berne Convention has to be kept. Switzerland should keep to international contracts, even more so as this convention about the protection of the species was concluded in Switzerland. Obviously, there are countries which do not keep to it, but this is not my philosophy. If we do not want to apply the Berne Convention any longer, we should have the courage to abandon it, to denounce it and maybe to renew it including the respective reservations.

There have been various attempts regarding the wolf and the wolf concept of the Federation. What is the situation like and which ones are pendant?

The Federal Council recommended a motion presented by Mr Lustenberger, member of the National Council and me, treating the regulation of the amount of wolves, i.e. more possibilities for regulations. I assume that it will appear on the list of motions at the end of this



session, and if nobody attacks it, it will be agreed upon tacitly. But I expect that it will be opposed by the Green party and then there will be a debate about it somewhere in 2010. The other motions have been presented by the member of the National Council, Mr Freysinger. He is asking for a suspension of the Berne Convention; two motions have been presented by myself, the concept of cultivation of the Alps and the reduction of the protection status of the wolf, were recommended by the Federation to be rejected. The member of the National Council, Mr Freysinger and I have demanded a discussion about this in the parliament, which should take place in 2010.

In this context, I have something to say concerning the livestock guarding which is very important to me. I have submitted a motion. Because of the topography of Switzerland there is a limit to livestock guarding. There are areas where livestock guarding is just not possible. Therefore, I have claimed in my motion which the Federal Council does not want to accept that the Alps in which a livestock guard is not possible because of the steepness of the terrain or because of its vast extent or its ruggedness, should be denominated and that shooting should be allowed in these regions. The Federal Council is opposing these motions, and I want to have it voted on in Parliament.

What is your opinion? What has to be urgently changed about the Federation's wolf concept?

The aim of the wolf concept consisted in generally resettling the wolf. The Federation wanted to find a compromise between the protection of species and livestock protection. But at the moment, with the growing number of big predators, we must recognise that the wolf concept is uniquely oriented towards the protection of big predators and by contrast the procedures for the protection of livestock are much too complicated. Genetic tests have to be made which prove that 50 animals were can be killed by the wolf before a shooting permission is given. Expensive protection measures must be taken; you need costly laboratory analysis etc. 'The concept costs hundreds of thousands of Francs each year, which is completely out of relation. Therefore a change of the concept is necessary.

We need a more immediate shooting permission shortly after a few animals have been killed; we want less analysis and less protective measures as presupposition for a shooting permission. The concept today is too much orientated towards the wolf and too little towards the livestock. The equilibrium has to be re-established in order to avoid the protection of sheep, goats and wild animals which are all very important, having a lower standard than the protection of predators. This has to be changed about the wolf concept, if it is not possible to abolish it at all. Let's not forget: The wolf is no longer under the threat of extinction.

Thank you very much, Mr National Councilor, for the interview.

The Race against the Wolves

"At that time, I was scarcely fourteen years old.

Two old men, a horseman and a cartier, would accompany me. Being the third person in the team, I would be responsible for the freight documents.

My mother had issued these documents by order of ..., the ... chairman had signed them. I was to produce them in proper form when handing over the pigs.

We were ready to leave at daybreak. The pigs yelled, squealed, and whimpered while being loaded. Their legs had been tied up, and they had been heaved into the carts and covered with hay. The horses were quite frisky.

We chose the Small Canyon for our route. There are two canyons in our region. Coming from D., you reach the ... valley through the Great Canyon. That route is longer than the one through the Small Canyon, which leads directly to our villages.

[...]

Up to the Small Canyon, you cross the foothills. We only reached the Canyon in the evening. It just so happened that the road was bad – it was a narrow mountainous route with deep ruts. Next to it there was a small mountain brook. [...]

At last we had reached the end of the Small Canyon. [...]

My two companions knew the place as little as I did. I only knew which direction to take. If we complied with that direction, we would certainly arrive at G. We kept steadily on the country road.

Now the moon lit up our way. It was that very moment when we realized the flashing eyes. Quite nearby, flamelets were moving in the dark.

A few wolves had edged up quite near to us.

Suddenly the horses gave a snort, began to neigh, and started running off frantically.

The pigs under the hay on the cart were yelling blue murder.

I do not know how the pigs had been able to sense that wolves had turned up. Anyway, they were yelling and whimpering terribly. And the more the pigs yelled and squeaked, the nearer the wolves came.

The wolves were running alongside us, parallel to the horses which were flying along panic-struck.

The old men were squawking like crazy, shouting at the horses, and barely keeping hold of the reins.

I was afraid of falling off the cart. Then, suddenly, I got hold of a stick and started striking at the pigs. But, surely enough, this only made them yell even more dreadfully.

The race against the wolves took long, very long.

The sky was brightening up.

Who wants to say today whether the dear Lord had mercy on us or whether we were just lucky?

Anyway, the wolves could not make up their minds to attack us. On the contrary: they fell back bit by bit. After all, there were two carts. And people! And a tremendous screaming!

At long last, the wolves let up on us completely.

At dawn, we entered the village G., which was so well-known to me.

Our carts rolled into the village along the central main road. Not a single body to be seen far and wide. We rolled in as if we came back from a victorious battle."

Switzerland, of course!

by Reinhard Konradi, Dietlikon

Recollections come alive: In 1941, a symbol with a crossbow and the text "Swiss product" was created to mark Swiss products, signaling quality. The goal was to foster sale of products produced in Switzerland and to protect and develop Switzerland as a production location and also the jobs connected with it. The crossbow has taken hold as a seal of quality and represented companies having a reputation for being model employers. The combination of product quality and the quality of the employer met high acceptance in the Swiss population. For a long time, the logical consequence that the quality of products is tightly connected with the quality of the employees has formed the Swiss education system, especially the vocational education, as well as the employment and personnel policy of Swiss companies.

In the early 1970s we had the first oil crisis leading to an economic crisis with job losses. In Switzerland, the unemployment rate rose to 4%. (Today, the rate is back at 4% and will probably rise to 5%). At the time, the population was encouraged by retail trade to preferably buy products from Switzerland. Challenged by the current crisis, we are facing, at the beginning of the 21st century, the same question: Are we able to and do we want to protect the workplace Switzerland and give it a future? This is an important question which arises, by the way, in any national economy – given it still has the necessary freedom to shape an economic policy close to the citizens.

Are open borders a threat?

So far, direct appeals on behalf of local products are generally taboo. After all, liberalization generally has prevailed, favoring a free market economy. Free traffic of industrial goods may have some positive effects for developed economies. In agriculture, in passenger traffic and in most branches of services (education, health, infrastructure, energy, water, transportation etc), national interests should be valued higher than the supposed advantages of the so-called market freedoms. Led by the WTO, but also within multinational blocks (EU, NAFTA, etc), borders are more and more blurred. With a large amount of propaganda and substantial political pressure, a process of harmonization and liberalization is pushed, fostering monopolies, but threatening the variety of companies in their various forms. Contrary to what is generally claimed, this process will lead to losses in purchasing power and reduce competition in favor of uniformity and leveling. Regardless if we talk about food, appliances, electronic goods, cars, toys or detergents: products are getting more and more similar and differ only by the packaging. Genuine competition, however, is cre-

ated by variety, differentiation, uniqueness and creativity. Monopolization and harmonization, on the other hand, paralyze these catalysts of good competition and lead it to a disastrous price competition with severe economic damages.

Especially small and growing economies cannot compete in price with capital-intensive industrial mass production. To escape from the market power of the trusts, small and medium-sized companies need to strive for a unique profile. They need to be different from the big transnational trusts controlling the market. Small national states also need this uniqueness if they do not want to sink into insignificance and lose their attraction for the population and the industry with respect to the quality of life, the natural environment as well as their political rights and duties. Hence, the chances of small and medium-sized companies and similarly for small and medium-sized economies rest in a comprehensive competition for quality, in connection with a strive for uniqueness. For states, this uniqueness strategy is to be understood as an integrated approach affecting all aspects of politics, including society, state, social, education, culture, economy and trade politics. The strategy creates first-rate conditions and the usage of best and sound resources, from humans to natural resources including raw goods, to the infrastructure and the means for production. Uniqueness requires a long-term perspective and hence needs protection, care and fostering at the same time. A policy violating these preconditions by submission or even self-abandonment will gradually lead to insignificance. Hence it is more than legitimate if sovereign states and independent companies reject these influences from outside when they touch on their uniqueness.

A false promise

The promise to overcome poverty and hunger by the free market persuades countries to open their borders within the framework of WTO trade agreements. Border protection like import tax, quantitative restrictions and technical regulations (e.g. quality requirements) are to be abolished. The argument is that open borders would foster prosperity in less developed countries. But [in reality,] open borders endanger local production and, hence, valuable jobs. Practical experience with exchange of goods without any borders, however, shakes up the creed in free trade increasingly. In too many cases, the opening of markets has been misused. Local markets are flooded with products from outside sold at dumping prices. These cheap imports destroy future perspectives for an independent production. They create unwanted dependencies and thwart the buildup of important production sites and, hence, the development towards a self-controlled economy of independent states.

Claim for a radical change in agriculture

Especially with respect to agriculture, voices are getting louder demanding a radical reversal of the paradigm of trade politics. Apart from the World Agriculture Report it is also the World Hunger Report which confirms the necessity to free the food production from free trade and to foster local-regional food production and food supply with all available means. The primary goal is to handle resources carefully, to stop environmental destruction and to foster the variety of species. The industrial production of food and the usage of pesticides and chemical fertilizers are to be succeeded by a targeted establishment of small-scale structures matched to the needs of the local population.

In countries with hunger, it is necessary to provide a stable basis for comprehensive and sufficient food supply with local solution-oriented development projects. Many small and medium-sized family farms should be allowed to use their knowledge, in combination with new ideas coming from a practice-oriented research, to plant, to care and to harvest the necessary crops for the local population. Through free access to seeds, soil, water and knowledge on ecological agriculture, the

hunger issue could be solved world-wide. The fact that many jobs are created by this type of small-scale subsistence-oriented agriculture should not be underestimated. These jobs generate income and purchasing power for the local population. A first-rate approach if fighting poverty and opening new perspectives for people is really the goal.

The duty of the rich towards natural resources

The most difficult problem with natural resources is their limitation. Precisely in the developed industrialized countries, resources are depleted irresponsibly in a style that seriously endangers our future. We still believe that we can undo the offences against nature with money, e.g. with environment taxes or with emission allowance trading, etc. A market for pollution rights is to fix it all and is propagandized as a market-economical tool in the fight against pollution and, hence, against the destruction of the natural living conditions. And when the soil and the agricultural land are destroyed in our climes, we can still resort to those in the developing countries. The people in the South will have to produce our food or sell their land to rich investors.

But, in contrast to money, nature sets limits and cannot be reproduced at will. The destructive economy in the western industrial countries has to be stopped. Quantitative growth at the expense of the southern hemisphere has no future. Those still worshipping a growth economy have to be confronted with the realities of their deception and put in their place. A paradigm shift is needed. Highest priority is the acceptance of the limits imposed by nature, the careful handling of natural resources in one's own sphere. Instead of relocating, outsourcing and covering-up, personal contribution, personal responsibility, renunciation and transparency are in high demand.

Natural Swissness

It took a long time until it became clear to everyone in Switzerland that now the conservation of the soil and the carefulness in dealing with fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides bear fruit. The soil and its products are of high ecological quality as a whole – not only in the organic agriculture sector. And we should stand by it. The Swiss Federal Office of Agriculture (BLW) urge for a quality strategy for the Swiss agriculture. The "Switzerland" brand should be backed

up and confidence for Swiss products should be built up world-wide. With indications like "From the region for the region" at Migros or with campaigns like the "Swiss week" at Coop and McDonald's, the relation of the customers to the regional agriculture is reinforced. For products with Swiss appeal like Emmi or Valserwasser, Switzerland as the country of origin is an excellent selling advantage. This is good, but it is not sufficient to secure the subsistence of domestic farmers with fair prices covering the production costs. As long as all these promotion campaigns are just "accompanying measures" to gain access to products at world market prices by the WTO or to obtain, by devious means, approval of introducing the free trade in agricultural goods with the EU, the commitment for the production location Switzerland is merely lukewarm

Providing Clarity

In a special party conference in Wauwil, over 600 delegates and guests of the SVP expressed their willingness to fight for a domestic and productive agriculture. A large degree of self-sufficiency with high-quality agricultural goods is emphasized as an important pillar of Swiss sovereignty. The current WTO negotiations and particularly the agreement on free trade in agricultural goods with the EU which the Bundesrat is heading for do not only endanger the subsistence of numerous farming families in Switzerland, but contradict the interests of our country, as well. Also the Swiss farmers' union (SBV) is talking straight, demanding the suspension of negotiations on free trade in agricultural goods with the EU. Its president, Hansjörg Walter, said "this kind of political kamikaze operations are currently inappropriate, because agricultural incomes would virtually be cut in half by such an agreement."

Even in the party of Federal Councilor (Bundesrat) Doris Leuthart, there is a serious resistance against further steps towards liberalization in the agricultural sector.

Now it is up to the Bundesrat and the Swiss parliament to provide clarity in a special meeting on agriculture in the winter period. The discussion is not just about the conservation of a domestic productive agriculture, but about fulfilling a constitutional obligation and hence about the interests of our country.

Corresponding framework conditions have to guarantee that the Swiss agricul-

continued on page 7

Where the wolves were ...

cc. The described scenes on page 4 and 5 are not set in one of the Eastern Federal Lands – or not yet. They are extracts from Chinghiz Aitmatov's book "Kindheit in Kirgisien" (Childhood in Kirgizstan). The issue of wolf packs in Germany should not only concern the sheep and goat breeders, but also all of Chinghiz Aitmatov's numerous friends. Apart from these two they also know more examples, which give every citizen food for thought in our world shattered by globalization: "Abschied von Gülsary" (Farewell to Gülsary), telling the story of a herd of horses caught in the snowy mountains and panicking to death by the attacking packs of wolves. And "Frühe Kraniche" (Early Cranes) whose concluding passage raises the existential situation of an individual human being in an unprotected world.



“In my View the Doha Round Failed”

Interview with Hansjörg Walter, member of the National Council and President of the Swiss Farmers' Association



National Councillor Hansjörg Walter
(picture pad)

Current Concerns: How do you assess the results of the Sondersession (=special parliamentary session of the National Council) with regard to the agricultural issues?

National Councillor Hansjörg Walter: There had been various proposals, all in all 40, but only 26 were dealt with. The Bundesrat (Federal Council) rejected all proposals; nevertheless 15 were accepted by the parliament. This is a no-confidence vote towards the Federal Council. The issue of agricultural free trade with the EU is controversial within the National Council. The numerous negative votes made that obvious.

Various issues which were accepted by the National Council seem to be underpinning measures of the free trade contracts; is this sufficient or do we need anything more basic?

We had votes that wanted to exclude the food sector from the WTO, but they did not succeed. We have to remain realistic; Switzerland plays an insignificant part within the WTO. Nevertheless, it has become clear that food sovereignty and the degree of self-sufficiency are held in high esteem in Switzerland. A majority is of the opinion that food supply

security is of great importance, also for developing countries.

How should agriculture look like in the future?

It is important that our agriculture produces for the local and national market. Superfluous exports of food products do not make sense. We certainly need some agricultural trade. Farmers must not be the losers, and agricultural firms which act globally must not be the winners.

You said farmers must not be the losers; at the same time we can observe a decline in farmers' incomes. How can this be prevented?

In Switzerland we have a nominal decline in comparison with other employees. Otherwise incomes have remained relatively steady. However, the gap to the comparable incomes becomes wider. As independent entrepreneurs, farmers are challenged to expand their production potential and to optimise their operation procedures. Further education is inevitable.

What effects will the WTO agreement and the EU Free Trade Agreement have on Swiss agriculture?

If you calculated with today's premises, the WTO agreement would have a more aggravating effect than the agricultural Free Trade Agreement with the EU. But you have to take into account how the world market prices develop. During the last negotiating round (Uruguay-round) the pressure from import had not been as high as expected. An agricultural Free Trade Agreement with the EU would lead to totally open borders, which means no longer any borders, and in that case we certainly would suffer very much from the EU's farm surpluses. Due to its spending power Switzerland would be very suitable for those farm surpluses. Our agriculture would be plunged into ruin, the same way as the European agriculture was.

Our production costs will remain high compared to international standards, because we have higher salaries and nobody is interested in lowering them. In the negotiations about agriculture with the WTO we have to fight for exemptions for sensitive products such as milk, meat, vegetables and fruit. Our food sovereignty must not be infringed. Every country should have the right to have their own agriculture and thus to meet the individual needs of their inhabitants.

Could you please say a few sentences about the Uruguay round; what was decided there?

The Uruguay round closed in the late 90s. Agriculture was taken into account for the first time: downsizing customs and subsidies during market supports.

The World Agricultural Report emphasizes that small-sized, locally anchored farmers would secure mankind's food supply. Switzerland has always acted this way, or else – what is your view?

As you say, this is not really a problem of Switzerland but rather a problem of the developing countries, because their agriculture is mainly operated by huge agricultural companies that employ a mass of agricultural workers. Worldwide there are only few that practice the form of business we have here in Switzerland or in some parts of Europe, namely family enterprises. Those big agricultural companies are downsizing their agricultural employees, which leads to migration into cities. Already today more than half of the world's population lives in cities and agglomerations, and this leads to enormous social costs.

Federal Councillor Doris Leuthard supports the strengthening of family enterprises and at the same time she pushes the opening of free trade. The Farmers' Association pointed out the contradictions of this approach. The Federal Councillor does not seem to see that or does not want to. Do we not need to completely abandon free trade in the field of agriculture?

By free trade we understand the opening via WTO and agricultural free trade with the EU. We have to state clearly that Switzerland has different structures. We have small sized-areas, urbanity, we have our own topography and different climatic conditions. Therefore, Switzerland would act sensibly if it stuck to its strengths and accept only a mutual opening where we have an adequate chance. In the Bilateral I Agreement we did exactly this with regard to the cheese agreement. This agreement is not bad. We sell cheese, probably more than without an agreement, but the import pressure is enormous.

However, we can more or less hold our ground. The attitude of the Farmers' Association is to abandon negotiations about a comprehensive agreement with the EU and to concentrate on the evolution clause of

Bilateral I, and to open mutually where it makes sense: with milk products, processed meat, charcuterie and processed food. A general opening leads to enormous income losses for farmers and loss of workplaces within the food industry. This has to be prevented.

Would Efta, which excludes sensitive areas from free trade, be a practicable alternative?

Bilateral Free Trade Agreements outside WTO are pushed by Switzerland, but also by other countries, especially the USA. However, also there we have to make concessions when it comes to agriculture, namely within the WTO's customs contingents. This leads to an enormous pressure on the part of WTO to raise customs contingents. It is wrong to grant import concessions which cannot be met, such as with new potatoes from the Mediterranean states.

How shall we proceed with the WTO, or do we need an alternative?

In my view the Doha round failed. It was opened in Qatar in 2001. Now we have 2010, this means almost 10 years without success. They negotiated but no agreements were attained. Switzerland is able to participate in a customs reduction, but the great reduction, as it is planned, does not make any sense to us. It is necessary to integrate local agriculture into local society, so that the latter can participate in regional economic growth and we do not develop poverty in rural areas.

What is your vision of Switzerland's future agriculture?

Swiss agriculture does have a future. We have critical consumers who demand good quality products. There is a low degree of 60 % self-sufficient economy, so that we have better chances to offer our products. Compared to international standards our consumers' spending power is high. We have to position ourselves within the domestic market and focus here. Exports are possible with specialties; this is where we are strong. It is important that we do not forget our domestic market and put the focus there.

Mr National Councillor, thank you for this interview.

“Switzerland, of course!”

continued from page 6

ture can fulfill the commission, translated into constitutional law through the people, to provide a safe supply of food for the population, to conserve the natural living conditions, to conserve our cultural landscape and the decentralized population of the country. But once again, Berne is on the course for free trade.

Instead of reflecting seriously about exit strategies regarding the international agricultural agreements and an effective support for the less developed countries to overcome hunger and poverty, the hymns of free trade and perpetual economic growth were sung.

Central Importance of Agriculture

Based on the current economic situation, all states need to redefine the orientation of their economies. Economic measures are to be implemented to embrace their responsibility in the fields of national and social politics. This will include, however, that states need to reclaim their economic competencies. They need to be able to organize their basic services, their social, tariff, employment, tax, currency and trade policies on their own.

As far as the safety of livelihood is concerned, the national agriculture policy requires high priority. To increase food security, the current answers will not be sufficient.

Safety mechanisms need to be developed and implemented to fulfill the interests of the population. In this process, neither abandoning negotiations on a free trade agreement on agricultural goods with the EU (regarding Switzerland) nor the claim to decouple agricultural trade from the WTO negotiations (regarding all states) can be a taboo.

We must not permit that the legitimate concern to provide safety of livelihood with sufficient and healthy food on a national level is brought into disrepute by false allegations. Rather we want to state, is: Those who take the welfare of the population seriously, face their responsibility to protect the natural and economic resources and to use them so that the legitimate concern of guaranteeing food security and sovereignty is satisfied in each country. The right to food for all people – independent of their country of residence – cannot be sacrificed to the free market any more. Hence, all countries should be supported in their efforts to achieve food security. Protectionism in favor of a sufficient supply of healthy, natural food and the conservation of natural resources is necessary for each state to protect its independence and cannot be disparaged any longer. Let us approach the food question in an impartial way – we will notice quickly that the resources of food production are not freely tradable goods and hence cannot be the subject of international agreements on free trade.



Book review

“Swiss Cheese”

ew./as. Perhaps you have also noticed that the topic “cheese” has received a lot of media coverage, lately. For example, a roadmap for cheese-lovers was put on the market. It shows the production regions of the most important cheese specialties with exhibiting cheese dairies, a description of the respective cheese types and their production (ISBN 978-3-8283-0685). Reports state that the Swiss Mountain Aid supports a cheese maker in *Girenbad* in the *Zürcher Oberland*, (a region near Zurich), who took the courage to found an own goat cheese business. On the Internet you also find hundreds of cheese recipes.

A great pleasure is the recently published book by *Daniel Flammer* with photographs by *Fabian Scheffold*.

You can read about the primal (raw milk) cheese, from the Swiss traditional cheeses up to the newer creations, which individual cheese makers produce with great care and

commitment. The portraits of our country’s most famous cheese makers are a fascinating read. These cheese makers have contributed a lot during the last years to the fact that due to top quality Swiss Cheese has a future. The future is in raw milk cheese, according to the authors, for this cheese is characterized by a pure flavour, a strong cheese, an unforgettable delicacy: natural milk from an Alp region together with a great handicraft skill. We indulged in our first raw milk cheese, the *Andeer Organic Mountain Cheese*, owing to this book’s recommendation. This cheese really was an experience for our gums, incomparable with the evacuated triangles from the discounter’s shelves.

You become aware that cheese production, in particular that of raw milk cheese, is one of the best of Switzerland’s traditions. The book was published under the patronage of *Slow Food*. Its representatives aptly describe the fact that the genuine raw milk cheese is at risk of extinction although so much raw milk cheese is being produced: “Ever more cheese is not generated in a small-scale local production but in an anonymous, standardised frame. [...] That is why the variety and the very nature of the raw milk cheese as a reflection of the unique *terroir* is getting lost by the increasing abandonment of ever more regionally anchored handicraft enterprises.”

However, to produce cheese is something that is deeply rooted in our culture. Not only is cheese a culinary delicacy but also an art as well as an expression of vitality, joy of living, of a healthy nature in a wonderful landscape. This culinary heritage is identity-establishing for Switzerland and has to be preserved for the coming generations.

The fact that the raw milk culture suffered was above all due to the pressure on the export-oriented cheese makers, who had to shift the production method to thermisation in order to meet EU requirements. Highest quality of flavour, however, is reached in the production of raw milk cheese the impeccably hygienic quality of which is guaranteed by the high standard of Swiss milk and cheese production.

Another problem is the fact that the cheese is not being stored long enough and is being sold too young. This has been the case with the Emmental Cheese for many years. The production of artificial cheese – already practised in Holland – from vegetable oils, fibrous material and synthetic ingredients are warning signals of a decline of quality.

Only very few of us know that what we call “cheese”, is a product of the pre-industrial times. During the Middle Ages, mainly a sour milk cheese made from goat and sheep milk was produced in the Swiss Alps. One of

these sorts of cheese is known as *Bloderkäse*, another kind as *Ziger*. It was not before the end of the Middle Ages and after the Plague, famines and wars, that the population was forced – under altered climatic conditions – to shift from labour-intensive arable farming to stock farming. After the cheese dairies on the Alps, cheese dairies also developed in the valleys. Now a kind of hard cheese was produced that required the adding of rennet. This cheese was easier to be transported and to be kept fresh. These interesting historical facts fill a larger part of the book.

Even today, 11 years after the breakdown of the *Cheese Union*, which guaranteed the sales of *Emmentaler*, *Gruyere* and *Sbrinz*, but was felt to be a constricting corselet by many, we again have to meet a great challenge. A mass-exodus of cheese makers like at the times of *Gotthelf* and the first cheese glut will not solve the problem of today. As is the case in many other fields, new ideas are required. The carefully and appealingly written portraits of the cheese makers are encouraging. Our first suggestion for a recipe is cheese in its most original and unaltered form, the cheese-plate.

Reading this beautiful work will give you more than one stimulus. Moreover, this book is a particularly appealing and informative present.

Raclette Cheese

Did you know that 8652 tons of Raclette Cheese were eaten in 2008? In comparison, consumption rose by 4,4 per cent or 361 tons in the year before. Export as well rose by 31 per cent. (*Le Menu* 11/09)



Swiss cheese. Origins, traditional kinds and new creations. ISBN 978-3-03800-474-5

“Of Cold and Hot Cheese Sandwiches”

ew. “Of cold and hot cheese sandwiches” was the title of a small brochure which the home economics teachers could buy from the *Käseunion* (Cheese Association) for only little money. A piece of cheese, together with an apple or some other veggie makes a complete meal containing all the necessary nutrients. Cheese is an important provider of highly valuable protein. Moreover, it contains fat, calcium, phosphor and several minerals. Let us have a look at the “hot cheese sandwich-

es”: unless otherwise indicated, the recipes serve four people.

Cheese Golden Toast

- 200 g flour
- 2 eggs
- a pinch of salt
- 1 tbsp oil
- 200 ml water or cider
- mix to a batter until smooth
- add 100 g Emmental cheese
- 8 slices of bread
- a bit of white wine

Sprinkle the slices of bread. Dip the wetted slices until completely covered with the batter.

Let the slices drain and then deep fry until golden brown.

Serve with heaps of salad.

You can use a mixture of Gruyere or Emmental cheese.

Appenzell Pear Toast

A variation of the famous “Toast Hawaii”

- a slice of farmhouse bread per person
- sprinkle with a bit of apple juice or white wine
- cover with a slice of Appenzell cheese
- put ½ pear, cut face down, on top
- add some more cheese if desired, then cover with two slices of bacon crosswise. Preheat the oven to 200 degrees Celsius and bake in the upper part of the oven for 5 to 10 minutes until the cheese has melted.

Ticino Toast

- heat 1 tbsp of olive oil. Add
 - 1 onion, finely chopped and
 - 1 clove of garlic, finely chopped and
 - 1 bell pepper, cut in small cubes and
 - 2 tomatoes, finely chopped. Stew until it makes a smooth peperonata mixture, then
 - season with salt, pepper and oregano.
 - 8 slices of farmhouse bread
- Sauté the bread in a pan, turn and cover with a spoonful of peperonata mixture. Cover with a slice of Raclette cheese, turn down the hotplate and put a lid on the pan until the cheese has melted. Serve with a bit of peperonata or a tomato slice sprinkled with oregano.

Cheese Cushion
Bernese Oberland Style

- 2 eggs, whisked
- a pinch of white pepper
- 150 g grated Emmental cheese
- 1 tbsp flour
- some cherry brandy if desired
- 8 slices of toast

Mix the eggs with the cheese, flour and spices and spread on the toast. Heat some oil in a pan. Deep-fry the toast with the spread upside down until it has nicely risen, then turn the toasts and finish the other side. These cheese toasts are ready within 2 or 3 minutes.

Separating the egg yolk and beating the egg white, folding it in carefully can vary the recipe. Of course, other kinds of cheese can be used, or even a mixture of them. Serve with lots of salads.

Reading the recipe, the one or other might be worried by the amount of fat it contains. But to be honest, who does not like some chips from time to time?

Imaginative cooks prepare their cheese toasts differently each time. Thus finely chopped onions could be mixed with the cheese pulp; or add finely chopped herbs or mix with tomato puree or roasted ham or bacon bits – each of these ingredients varies the dish. Even some chopped nuts or bits of sautéed vegetables or mushrooms make a difference.

The cheese can be grated or put on the toast as a piece. You can also add fruit, olives, anchovies or even fried eggs to go with the popular sandwiches.

If the bread is a bit old, spread some milk or white wine on it and it becomes fresh again when baking.

If you prepare the toast in the oven, it requires less fat. However, the omelette pastry will only be fluffy when fried in enough fat in a pan or deep fryer.

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