

Current Concerns

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

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National Referendum of 30 November

How large should our gold reserves be according to the wishes of the electorate

by Dr rer publ Werner Wüthrich

Is the popular initiative “Save our Swiss Gold” really “unnecessary, harmful and utterly undesirable” as Federal Councillor Widmer-Schlumpf and the financial director of the Canton of Zug allege in the “Neue Zürcher Zeitung” from 8 October 2014?

The ongoing discussion about our gold reserves is not new. Since the Second World War there have been several “gold votes”, which are worthy of being brought to mind once more. Already in 1949 the situation was politically very similar. It concerned a new monetary constitution and, in particular, the type and composition of foreign exchange reserves. In collaboration with the *Swiss National Bank*, the Federal Council and the Swiss Parliament then drew up a Currency Article for the Federal Constitution, which would leave open the question of the composition of foreign exchange reserves. The proposed Article 39, paragraph 6, was to read as follows: “The Federal Government may declare the banknotes and other similar monetary units as legal means of payment. It determines the nature and scope of coverage.” Had this article been adopted, Parliament could have created the legal conditions to keep mainly US dollars as reserve currency – which the United States advised the countries participating in the Bretton Woods system to do. This was possible because the banknotes were no longer convertible in gold. The new monetary constitution was unchallenged in Parliament and in the media. The Federal Council, the National Council and the Council of States approved it almost unanimously. Only the two members of the National Council who were close to the demurrage movement voted against it. All the more surprising was the voters’ reaction on 22 May 1949: 61.5% of the citizens and 20 ½ of 22 cantons rejected the proposal. The reason was obvious: The clear majority of voters refused to leave the type and composition of foreign exchange reserves to the Federal Government, i.e. the politicians and the Nation-

al Bank. – Large parts of the population wished the gold reserves to be anchored in the Federal Constitution.

The Swiss National Bank, the Federal Council and the Parliament learned the lesson from this vote. They worked out a new proposal. This said in paragraph 7: “The notes issued must be backed by gold and short-term deposits”. – However, banknotes were not convertible even then. Various members of the National Council and the Council of States expressed their view that gold should serve as a precaution in case of a catastrophe. The spokesman for the preliminary commission, *Renold*, explained this in the National Council on 22 June 1950 as follows: “To be sure, the notes are not convertible until further notice. However, the gold remains associated with the banknote coverage for widest sections of the population. It is notably the gold standard by which the currency is judged most often. [...] In the present unbalanced international economic and currency conditions, it is very important for a country to have sufficient gold reserves. [...] And if a country also has, along with these, regulations concerning a minimum gold coverage, then I think there is a greater guarantee that the gold reserves are further accumulated and kept at an appropriate level”.

Assent to more gold reserves on 15 April 1951

On 15 April 1951, 71% of the voters and all cantons said yes to the new monetary constitution, which again gave greater weight to gold and thus set the course for the future. In the following 15 years, the National Bank accumulated the gold reserves from about 800 tons to 2,600 tons. It bought the gold for 4,500 francs per kilogramme and held on to this valuation until a few years ago. Economically, Switzerland financed the gold from the current account surpluses of those years, since the country exported more goods and services than it imported. These surpluses were generated by hundreds of

millions of working hours accomplished by the population. This currency policy, which was supported by the people, has undoubtedly contributed to the good name of the Swiss franc and has strengthened the export industry over the years, because Swiss exporters learned to assert themselves on the international markets even with a strong currency. The cantons were strengthened as well, because they could not – as they do now – always count on National Bank profits, but relied on their own strength.

Federal Council and Parliament undermine the people’s will

Further details are known: The gold reserves remained untouched until a few years ago – until a committee of experts declared them as “excessive” and the National Bank in consultation with Government and Parliament then sold more than half. They did this, however, without asking the voters whether they agreed to this sale of national wealth, and without a wide debate with the people, as had taken place at the beginning of the 1950s. The legal basis was provided by the new Federal Constitution of 1999, of which the Federal Council had claimed – contrary to facts – before the vote on it, that it was merely an update without any substantial changes. The protest of the people against this approach and against the incipient massive gold sales manifested itself not only in letters from readers, but also in two plebiscites. On 22 September 2002, the electorate blocked the distribution of the sales revenues. They said no to the Government’s and Parliament’s proposal to bring in the money into a Swiss Solidarity Foundation, and they also said no to the proposal of a popular initiative to use the money for the old-age and survivors’ insurance.

Gold reserves instead of risky currencies

Against this background, some citizens have started the popular initiative

Will the Swiss vote to get their gold back?

by Ron Paul*



Ron Paul
(picture ma)

On November 30th, voters in Switzerland will head to the polls to vote in a referendum on gold. On the ballot is a measure to prohibit the Swiss National Bank (SNB) from further gold sales, to repatriate Swiss-owned gold to Switzerland, and to mandate that gold make up at least 20 percent of the SNB's assets. Arising from popular sentiment similar to movements in the United States, Germany, and the Netherlands, this referendum is an attempt to bring more oversight and accountability to the SNB, Switzerland's central bank.

The Swiss referendum is driven by an undercurrent of dissatisfaction with the conduct not only of Swiss monetary policy, but also of Swiss banking policy. Switzerland may be a small nation, but it is a nation proud of its independence and its history of standing up to tyranny. The famous legend of *William Tell* embodies the essence of the Swiss national character. But no tyrannical regime in history has bullied Switzerland as much as the United States government has in recent years.

* * Ronald Ernest "Ron" Paul, physician and author, several times Republican Congressman and twice Republican presidential candidate, advocates, among other things, a non-interventionist foreign policy as well as the gold standard. To this end he wrote the book "Gold, Peace and Prosperity – The Birth of a New Currency", published by the *Ludwig von Mises Institute* in Auburn, Alabama, in 1981.

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"Save our Swiss Gold" and collected over 100,000 signatures.

The dollar has meanwhile dropped from 4.37 Swiss francs (in 1949 – the year of the first gold vote) to below 90 rappen today, and the price of gold had risen from 4,500 francs at that time until recently to 50,000 francs per kilo. According to its balance sheet, the National Bank today holds foreign currencies worth about 460 billion Swiss francs – about half of them in euros and a quarter in US dollars. These currencies are associated with significant risks. Today, the National Bank holds significantly less than 10 percent of gold reserves compared to these currencies. There is good reason to refer to this enormous amount of risky currencies as "excess cur-

rency". Indeed, it makes sense to buy not only shares – as is already happening today – with a portion of these surpluses, but also to buy gold.

The Swiss tradition of bank secrecy is legendary. The reality, however, is that Swiss bank secrecy is dead. Countries such as the United States have been unwilling to keep government spending in check, but they are running out of ways to fund that spending. Further taxation of their populations is politically difficult, massive issuance of government debt has saturated bond markets, and so the easy target is smaller countries such as Switzerland which have gained the reputation of being "tax havens." Remember that tax haven is just a term for a country that allows people to keep more of their own money than the US or EU does, and doesn't attempt to plunder either its citizens or its foreign account-holders. But the past several years have seen a concerted attempt by the US and EU to crack down on these smaller countries, using their enormous financial clout to compel them to hand over account details so that they can extract more tax revenue.

The US has used its court system to extort money from Switzerland, fining the US subsidiaries of Swiss banks for allegedly sheltering US taxpayers and allowing them to keep their accounts and earnings hidden from US tax authorities. EU countries such as Germany have even gone so far as to purchase account information stolen from Swiss banks by unscrupulous bank employees. And with the recent implementation of the Foreign Account Tax Compliance Act (FATCA), Swiss banks will now be forced to divulge to the IRS all the information they have about customers liable to pay US taxes.

On the monetary policy front, the SNB sold about 60 percent of Switzerland's gold reserves during the 2000s. The SNB has also

in recent years established a currency peg, with 1.2 Swiss francs equal to one euro. The peg's effects have already manifested themselves in the form of a growing real estate bubble, as housing prices have risen dangerously. Given the action by the European Central Bank (ECB) to engage in further quantitative easing, the SNB's continuance of this dangerous and foolhardy policy means that it will continue tying its monetary policy to that of the EU and be forced to import more inflation into Switzerland. [...]

The Swiss people appreciate the work their forefathers put into building up large gold reserves, a respected currency, and a strong, independent banking system. They do not want to see centuries of struggle squandered by a central bank. The results of the November referendum may be a bellwether, indicating just how strong popular movements can be in establishing central bank accountability and returning gold to a monetary role.

Source: Ron Paul Institute for Peace and Prosperity, <http://www.ronpaulinstitute.org/archives/featured-articles/2014/september/14/will-the-swiss-vote-to-get-their-gold-back/>

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Yes to the initiative "Save our Swiss Gold"

If the gold initiative is adopted by the people and cantons on 30 November the National Bank will – in consultation with the people – again increase the gold reserves. As yet, gold has survived every currency crisis and currency reform. I deem the principle moderate that the National Bank is to hold at least 20 percent of assets in gold in the current system (as the initiators require it). It is an insurance for the case of a disaster and also strengthens the National Bank, if this is put under pressure – from the inside or from the outside.

25 years after the fall of the Berlin Wall – What lessons can be learned?

by Karl Müller

9 November marks the yearly anniversary of the Berlin Wall opening for the citizens of the former GDR. This day 25 years ago, was a day of joy for many people. But the people's hopes that the doors would be pushed open to a better world have not been fulfilled. On the contrary – humanitarian organizations today say that the already high number of crisis regions will presumably even increase in the years to come. The international world order is in a very unstable condition, and the economic and social development is not going well in many countries of the world.

All this is no accident but the result of policy mistakes of the past 25 years that were intentional – not for the general good, but for very specific interests.

This can be well exemplified by looking at three interviews conducted in recent weeks.

The first interview was conducted by the *Deutschlandfunk* (German Radio) on 10 October 2014 with the former East German civil rights activist and Protestant theologian *Friedrich Schorlemmer*. Occasion for the interview was the renewed demand of West German politicians, to regard the GDR as an illegitimate state in its entity and thus to delegitimize everything in the GDR. Schorlemmer rejected this view. He stated inter alia: “This killer argument prevents any differentiating consideration of what the GDR was and wanted. [...] One must also understand the initial intention of the GDR in 1949. If even a person who was chased away from the GDR, the great *Hans Mayer* says, the GDR was an attempt, and if you look at the pathos of Becher's national anthem, ‘Let us plow, let us build, learn and work as never before’, this were superior ethical ideas. But in my view the impossible was tried with inadequate means. But to call the whole thing an illegitimate state is misleading. [...] Peaceful Revolution also means that the ones did not hang, and the other did not shoot. Why not acknowledge them. It is true, one must not prostrate before them. But to say, well, dear *Hans Modrow*, you did prevent the impending civil war in Dresden on your own responsibility, or take *Roland Wötzel* in Leipzig. I think we should also recognize that they finally withdrew peacefully from power and we were initially able to organize democracy on our own; I think we should

not forget that. It is enough just to denounce the prison system in the GDR as well as the political criminal law, and this is done to this day over and again. This is true but it is not the complete reality of life for people in the GDR, let alone the motives of people who thought the regime had the right answer to the fateful German history. All this must be considered from a differentiated perspective without relativising the matter. But one does not need to worsen the GDR. [...] Among those who supported the system, there were certainly people who wanted something great, namely that the alienation of work ceases, that the exploitation of man by man is stopped, everything – as it was expressed back then: “With the people, for the people and by the people”.

These views are not well received by the West German elites. They do not fit into the habit to paint everything black and white, nor do they fit a deluded Western complacency, above all they disturb a small minority's claim to power.

The second interview was conducted by the *Deutschlandfunk* on 14 October 2014 with economist *Max Otte*. Together with *Eberhard Hamer*, Professor Otte was one of the few economists who predicted the global financial crisis at a point of time considerably before 2007. Now he commented on the current economic downturn. Among others Max Otte said: “The fact is that the policy is slowly running out of options, this slump is perhaps more dangerous than the one we had in 2008. We have been ripped out by cheap money again, but the policy of the central banks is at its limits now. [...] The policy of the central banks is now at an end. We have arrived at almost zero interest rates now, we have penalty interests. This is somewhat reminiscent of the late period of the GDR, when those Potemkin villages were built as well. [...] If it hits us, it probably means a downward spiral in the entire world economy. [...] The whole lot of money, we have printed lately, that has gone to the banks, that has been channeled into speculative areas, and is not really gone to where it should have gone, namely in the south, to the SMEs in Germany, where investments are making a difference. [...] The situation is now more serious than it was over the last couple of decades, because in reality we have many

crises, and the central banks with their policy have reached the end of the line.”

Max Otte then added two considerations about the economic decline in Europe: “We have decided on sanctions against Russia, many of them too early and much too strong. They are of course mainly affecting Germany and Austria.” And next: “In the field of high technology it is top priority that Europe becomes independent from its total dependence on the USA”. In that respect the Europeans are “an appendix of the USA”.

The third interviewed was the owner of the Swabian textile company *Trigema, Wolfgang Grupp*. He is considered one of the most distinguished leaders of German family owned mid-sized businesses. He was interviewed by the magazine *Compact* in its October issue of 2014 where he answered questions and very explicitly gave his opinion on the policy of sanctions against Russia: “My vote against sanctions is certainly not caused by economic reasoning and certainly not from selfish motives. The export of *Trigema* products to Russia is zero.

I am talking about peace on our continent. It cannot be that we let ourselves be drawn into a new Cold War by the Americans. The big winners of the sanctions policy are the United States. The Americans have little exchange of goods with Russia, but they want us to ban exchange of goods. The reason is clear, the US sees Europe as the major economic competitor, and with these sanctions they want to weaken Europe.”

And with respect to Russia he added: “In Moscow there are no *Stalin* and *Brezhnev* any longer. A lot has happened since *Gorbachev*. *Putin* has continued this path, and therefore we need to deal with him in a friendly manner. We can even express criticism, but we should not pose as teachers.”

It is worth to reason about the present state of Europe, its inner workings and the now 25 years of Western dealings with the former GDR. Painting in black and white, arrogance and condescension are “useful idiots” to an ice-cold power and interest policy. Close and careful examination of facts, independent thinking and equal treatment of all people on this planet are a good immunization against this interest policy. 25 years after the fall of the Berlin Wall we may learn our lesson from history. •

Lampedusa – the southernmost lighthouse in Europe

Report from South Italy

by Heinz Werner Gabriel, Marina di Camerota

The small Italian island of Lampedusa is the main gateway for refugees from Africa and the Middle East. More than 15,000 of them arrived only in the first week of August 2014.

To date the Italian Navy has taken about 90,000 into safe havens.

Italy is under strain. The EU has still not got an effective action plan. 500,000 asylum seekers are expected.

The adverse repercussions in particular on the region south of Naples are serious, as talks to people reveal who work in the administrative bodies of towns, as well as police and tourism managers: turnovers decline, social frictions and the crime rate are on the rise.

Causes and options for action will be discussed below:

Lampedusa, the southernmost Pelagic island, is reached from Sicily after approximately 250 km, passing the islands Pantelleria and Linosa. At night, you are welcomed by a beacon with 3 flashes. The distance to African Tunisia is about 120 km.

Why isn't Spain, which is only 25 kilometers away from Africa, used as a destination to flee? Moreover, Spain has two small colonies on the opposite African coast. The answer is simple: in the African countries, which are opposite Spain, peace and stability prevail.

From which countries do the refugees come then?

Today, the regions of origin are Libya, Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Central and West Africa. All these regions have been destabilized by war and civil war systematically.

Who initiated the civil war and thus caused the wave of refugees?

Let's take the example of Libya: the majority of refugees came from there after the bombing by Western forces. An unpopular dictator had to be eliminated. Militia set up simultaneously destroyed the prosperous country's infrastructure and residual groups of this militia are still operating today. Next, most of these troops were sent to Syria as "human rights de-

fenders" to eliminate the president who had been re-labeled as villain. After he had almost destroyed the self-proclaimed human rights activists with external help, they were allowed to move on mostly to Iraq... of course protected by their original clients.

In the meantime this Sunni force wants to build an Islamic State (IS) in Iraq with brute force, which are to be fought by the West on request from the Iraqi Kurds... i.e. fought just by those who created it.

What is the obligation of the Western democracies?

According to their oath the heads of Governments have to avert harm from their citizens. Planned, costly wars with huge waves of refugees and thousands of dead people are not acceptable as ethical and material burdens on Europe. The European States are guilty as accomplices in the current situation because of their active contributions or their acquiescence.

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

Pope Francis on World Food Day: Global solidarity for sustainable management

Pope Francis acknowledged rural families as a role model for sustainable agriculture. In a message to the Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) on the occasion of World Food Day on 16 October, Pope Francis calls on protecting peasant farming families worldwide, to continue developing their potential and supporting their working methods. In his letter to *José Graziano, da Silva* published by the Vatican this last Friday, the Pope puts further emphasis on the rural family as a role model for responsibility towards the Creation as well as for collaborative work. According to Pope Francis, these forms of sustainable management should be supported even stronger locally, nationally and on an international level.

Dramatic present-day paradox: Waste and hunger

In view of World Food Day, Pope Francis once again called on the global community to consolidate its efforts in the fight against hunger. Highlighting that global crisis and current trouble spots predominantly affect the world's poor, he referred to "one of the most dramatic paradoxes of our time" that in some parts of the globe people suffer from hunger while food is wasted in other parts. Moreover, he named the general decline of public funding for foreign aid as a contributing factor to an overall "alarming situation". Pope Francis also strongly opposed speculation in food commodities and condemned this sort of pursuit of profit in the name of "God profit".

Pope calls for fair global economy

In his letter Francis additionally calls for a general reconsidering of aid- and development policy. Countries that primarily depend on their agriculture should be guaranteed "self-determination of their own market". Consequently, the rules of international production and trade modes have to be adapted. In summary, the pope calls for a fair global economy among mankind and the protection of the Creation at its core, stating that maybe this would be "the only chance to build an authentic future of peace".

Source: http://de.radiovaticana.va/news/2014/10/17/papst_zum_welternahrungstag:_globale_soli-darität_für_nachhaltiges/ed-831481
from 17.10.2014

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

The fight against terrorism may be conducted only on the basis of the rule of law and respecting human rights

Address by President of the Republic of Argentina Cristina Fernández de Kirchner
to the UN Security Council on 24 September 2014



I greet all the dignitaries belonging to the Security Council. I have come to this meeting of the Council with some certainties and with some questions, I have come to approve the resolution we have agreed on; and undoubtedly also to condemn terrorism energetically and definitely.

My country, the Republic of Argentina, and the United States of North America were those countries in the Americas, that have been targeted by brutal terrorist attacks: In 1992, the Israeli embassy in Buenos Aires was blown up, and in 1994, the headquarters of the AMIA [*Asociación Mutual Israelita Argentina*, a center of the Jewish community in Argentina – editor’s note].

Starting from that point, many questions arise in my mind. Because what is happening now, i.e. the appearance of this phenomenon ISIS, which was still virtually unknown a year ago, is somewhat like what happened in Argentina in 1994. At that time the word spread in my country and around the world was that *Hezbollah* was responsible for the bombing of the AMIA. Today, *Hezbollah* is a party in Lebanon. Later, in 2006, and after a Special Prosecutor had been established at the urging of President *Kirchner*, the judiciary of my country began to undertake a thorough examination of what lay behind the attack which – I will repeat it here – had occurred in 1994. This year it’s been 20 years since the assassination took place. And still it has not been possible to convict the guilty, even though the competent judge had decided to indict eight Iranian citizens living in Tehran on the basis of the findings of the Special Prosecutor (2006).

From then on, that is from 2007, first President *Kirchner* and later I myself have demanded the cooperation of the Islamic Republic of Iran at each General Assembly of the United Nations between 2007

and 2012 in order to interrogate these defendants. In addition, we offered – as in the case of Lockerbie – the alternative to judge the defendants in the court of a third country.

Finally in the year 2012, the Iranian foreign minister proposed a bilateral meeting on the basis of which we then signed an agreement on judicial cooperation in 2013, with the sole purpose of allowing the [Argentinian] judge to interrogate the Iranian citizens. We had to do this because the Argentine legal system knows no conviction in absentia, but according to our Constitution the defendants have to be tried and condemned in our country.

Since the signing of this agreement, non-governmental organizations that had always supported us when we called on the Islamic Republic of Iran to cooperate with Argentina have begun to reproach us because of our agreement with the Iranians. So we came to doubt whether those who had always required us to demand cooperation from the Iranian government, really did so with the intention of realizing this cooperation, or rather, in order to create a “casus belli”.

And here, in this country, the so-called vulture funds engaged in massive lobbying in the US Congress. You can check this on the vulture funds’ websites. And on those of the Task Force, where they showed pictures of me with *Ahmadenejad*, in order to condemn Argentina’s legal assistance agreement with the “Islamic terrorist state” Iran, as it was called up to last year.

I was really surprised, but not angry; yes, surprised, but not angry – because it cannot be bad to have a dialogue – to learn that this weekend, the head of the State Department had met with his Iranian counterpart at a popular hotel in this city to tackle the ISIS problem.

You are aware of the fact that the members of ISIS are Sunnis and the rulers of Iran Shiites. You, the United States, want to see what degree of cooperation they can reach and what progress they can make with respect to the issue of their nuclear program. I note how much more friendly and amicable the dialogue is now held even by those who were still reproaching us last year because of our dialogue with the Iranian “terrorists”. The dialogue seems to me to be no bad thing. On the contrary, I appreciate it. I believe that dialogue between nations is always good.

But I am concerned about what has happened since the 1994 AMIA attack: the bombing of the Twin Towers by al-Qaeda, conceived and executed by *Osama bin Laden*, who had not appeared out of the blue. *Osama bin Laden* was trained alongside the Taliban to fight Russia during the Cold War in Afghanistan, in that foreign country from which – as I like to say – only *Alexander the Great* came out alive.

Another question that has newly developed: the famous Arab Spring, in which seemingly everybody was a freedom fighter and in which new democracies were expected to arise. Now it turns out that many of the Arab Spring freedom fighters are fundamentalists who were at that time being militarily trained and today fight in the ranks of the ISIS and recruit young people.

As an anecdote I can tell you that I have also been threatened by the ISIS. There is a legal investigation in my country what this threat really means. I do not really think that the ISIS cares about the President of Argentina. The motives for the threat to kill me are my friendship with Pope *Francis* and the fact that I am recognizing and endorsing the existence of two

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states: the state of Palestine and the state of Israel – in order to enable them to live to coexist peacefully.

I have noted here a few questions which came to my mind: during the interregnum of all this, *Saddam Hussein* had appeared in Iraq with chemical weapons; a war was waged against him, which finally ended with his elimination. Since then the situation in Iraq and the global situation has grown more and more complicated. Last year's scenario, when Iran's nuclear threat was top priority, is now completely outdated. Now we have the ISIS, new terrorists, where we have no idea who is buying oil from them, who is selling them weapons and who has trained them. Obviously they command huge financial resources and supplies of weapons.

This is leading me to the question: What is really going on there and how can we efficiently fight this terrorism? There is no doubt that we need a military response in order to defend ourselves against the aggression – this is not a question. [However, it is just as clear] that the present method to fight terrorism is not the proper one, because the situation is permanently growing more complex. More and more groups are getting involved, each time they are more violent and each time they are more powerful.

If I use a certain method to solve a problem and if this problem, instead of shrinking or even disappearing, is growing larger, it would make sense to question the efficiency of the method since it is apparently not successful. I am not claiming to know how we should proceed. Nor do I have any absolute certainty regarding what should be done. A proverb of my country says: The only thing you should not do with cannibals is to eat them. I believe that it is most crucial to understand the logic of terrorism. It is meant to provoke the same, symmetric reaction to the violent attacks. This would justify permanent bloodshed because for each person killed there will be two new ones, for two killed there will be three new ones – an infinite bloodshed.

And all this is happening in the Middle East where the state of Palestine is still not recognized. There we have seen the disproportionate application of violence

against civilians, but we have not seen the death of any of the leaders who fired missiles at their opponents. Instead we have seen the deaths of children, women and innocent elderly people. All this will remain a fertile soil for these groups.

This is why I think that – beyond this resolution which we share and support – it would be dishonest, wrong and cynical if I came here to tell you that we are using

But often I think that it is not enough to dispose of information. In addition it is necessary to understand what is going on in each society and in every country and then to find the right means to efficiently fight terrorism. Because it would not be a surprise if next year, in 2015, the ISIS had disappeared and was replaced by another faction with another strange name and even more violent methods and we would

"This is leading me to the question: What is really going on there and how can we efficiently fight this terrorism? There is no doubt that we need a military response in order to defend ourselves against the aggression – this is not a question. [However, it is just as clear] that the present method to fight terrorism is not the proper one, because the situation is permanently growing more complex. More and more groups are getting involved, each time they are more violent and each time they are more powerful."

the right method. I think that the situation in the Middle East is about to deteriorate dramatically.

Moreover: when I was last year in St Petersburg as member of the G-20 – not so long ago; if I remember well it was in November, not even one year – the Syrian government was considered the big enemy and those fighting against it were freedom fighters. Now it was discovered that many of those freedom fighters are actually members of the ISIS. But who was it who supported the opposition, who provided them, as freedom fighters, with weapons and means?

For me it seems like many things should be reconsidered now, most of all by those who have a lot of information – more information than I have at my disposal as President of Argentina. My country is not producing any weapons and not selling any. On the contrary, we have to buy oil because we do not have enough energy, even though we have large oil fields which will make us large suppliers of oil in the future... and I do not know if I should be happy about this, since obviously every country that has gas and oil, also has a lot of problems. But it is definitely true that we are a country that is not producing any weapons, we are a country that is buying energy and we do not have as much information as the superpowers.

eventually do nothing but aggravate the situation.

To come to the conclusion, Mr President: I think that the base for this involvement must be respect for human rights.

And why are we emphasizing this? We are a country that has suffered an unprecedented genocide dictatorship, a country where afterwards justice has acted in an unprecedented way. We did not need a Nuremberg Trial here; we also did not have to invoke the Court in The Hague in order to convict our dictators. It was Argentine by itself, our own justice, which put the responsible persons to trial and convicted them, including those responsible for the death of French citizens like the French nuns or the disappeared Swedish citizens.

From our experience we think that the current struggle may only be conducted with respect for human rights and based on the rule of law. Only this can ensure that we are no longer feeding the monster.

Thank you very much, Mr President. •

Source: Unauthorized translation from the Spanish transcript taken from the official website of the President of Argentina <http://www.cfkargentina.com/discurso-de-cristina-fernandez-de-kirchner-en-el-consejo-de-seguridad-de-la-onu>

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

Fundamental reflections on the cultural situation of Switzerland

by J.R. von Salis, lecture at the meeting of delegates of the Swiss Teachers Association on 25 September 1955 in Lucerne

Nine months ago, returning from a distant part of the world, I could see and experience Switzerland anew after having been allowed to represent it as a member of a delegation to the General Conference of Unesco.

I had spent a radiant and hot summer day on the Pacific coast in Chile. The next day I started off in Santiago. The aircraft screwed up to a height of 6,000 meters within a short period of time in order to be able to fly across the jumbled wilderness of rock and ice in the Andes and then cross the pampas. In the glowing evening light we landed in Buenos Aires and only some time later, at noon the next day, we landed in Rio de Janeiro at almost 40 degrees in the shade. After a Christmas party in which we sat around the Christmas tree in shirtsleeves and with the windows open until late at night, I boarded the *Swissair* flight across the South Atlantic the next morning, first to Senegal, then to Lisbon on the next day. It was Sunday, and it seemed to me that we were almost at home. We were on the Iberian peninsula. Another lunch high above the Pyrenees and now an already wintry afternoon over France. Then above the cover of fog and clouds, the chain of the Alps and the summit of Mont Blanc appeared.

It was a new discovery to fly across the Alpine foothills from Geneva at dusk, to see the fading evening on the Bernese Alps, below us Lake Thun, then the falling night on the already barely recognizable central plateau, until we set foot on Swiss soil again in the early evening hours at Kloten airport. Four days from the Chilean highlands to the Limmat, from summer on the southern hemisphere to winter in the North yielded time for contemplation; first to be grateful for our homeland, beautiful beyond all comparison, then time to think.

What had I left behind? An empty continent, tremendously vast plains, vastly superior, but almost shapeless mountains without any profile, jungle and tropical climate in Brazil, peoples and races in their colorful mixture of skin color, vast oceans, a world in the making, far from Europe. An optimistic and forward-looking determination together with a leisurely pace gradually conquer the space there. It is a new world, where they still have plenty of time ahead.

And here? Our small, densely populated country, where each patch is utilized, fostered and cared for in every way, highly developed civilization and entrenched

“We do not only have a wonderful home, but also a Swiss mental heritage, and we should defend and maintain both. We can, however, prepare the ground for the receptiveness and the attention of the young, especially in teaching. Not everyone is a cultural creator; actually only very few are. But we as teachers are cultural mediators, and much depends on how we communicate the cultural heritage, in which spirit we do it, whether a broad and open-minded class of culture recipients will grow up in our country.”

customs and civilized behaviour, an educated people, formed by its good schools, an acquired and developed small world embedded in a magnificent nature, a

to identify the country that, in a sense, is entrusted to every one of us.

What is the thing, which is given to us, actually made of? I do not want to speak



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democratic political system that keeps up its rights and practices, but sandwiched between larger nation states, without access to the sea, doomed to constant effort and diligent work, but also capable of enjoying life and having pleasure: So it looked again. And what had seemed common before, what had been one's everyday life and one's own existence, had to be touched, understood and affirmed anew, with its daily detailed work, with the schools starting again, with all the many and inevitable that is given to each of us. Yes, it was again an effort about identity, not only of the homemaker himself, but also about the identity of the location, the identity of the community to which the homemaker belonged; an effort

about the teaching materials, from the elements up to the basic scientific research, but about our task for the youth, for our own people; about the contribution that each of us must make to provide the adolescent, the young man and young girl with an awareness of what Switzerland is, and what our national community means, and in this context, in particular, what the cultural life of Switzerland is and what it looks like.

Forgive me if I start with a perhaps trivial remark: “Each of us teaches in his own language.” That is, however, very significant for a country like Switzerland. With its four languages, we must remember, our

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country is divided into several language communities. This fact alone gives our whole educational structure but also cultural life an entirely different basis from those states which rest on one national culture. In other words, our ethnic community is not also a language communi-

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ty. I would therefore like to point to the importance of language here, because it is the one who teaches, that passes on the culture, or, if he is a writer, it is him who creates culture. Creators must use the language as the first and most important tool, as material for ideas and thoughts, as a material for design, either educational or for a literary work of art. In his form of speech man bespeaks himself.

Now, entitled “Sprachgemeinschaft und Volksgemeinschaft” (Language community and ethnic community) the linguist Professor *Albert Debrunner* in Berne recently published a very interesting treatise worth knowing, in which he says among other things: “A German-speaking Swiss person, who has been living in Germany for a long time, will certainly hear the assertion that he – the German Swiss – belongs to the German people that he is a German because he speaks German. If he answers that he belongs to the Swiss people, he might meet with utter incomprehension in most cases or even with a derogatory remark: ‘There is no such thing as a multilingual people.’ I realized in numerous conversations in Germany how firmly this opinion is set in the minds of Germans.” It is in fact true that for those living in a nation-state the phenomenon Switzerland as a Swiss people with multiple languages is difficult to understand. “The Swiss national community”, Debrunner continues, “is essentially a community of established by the will of the people. The most serious internal crises of the Confederation were overcome by the desire to stay together: 1476, 1847, 1914–1918.” By the way, there are definitions in which the national community and the nation is conceived essentially as a community of will. I think, above all, of that of *Ernest Renan*, in which the element of communion of will is equally important, and in this sense we have to regard our national and state structure: as a community of fate and will. We must

assume that this is more important and more powerful than the language community. It is now a basic presupposition for the entire political, but also cultural behavior of the Swiss.

I want to examine very briefly the political aspect, as far as it has consequences for cultural life. Remember that the culture in Europe has increasingly developed on a national basis since the end of the Mid-

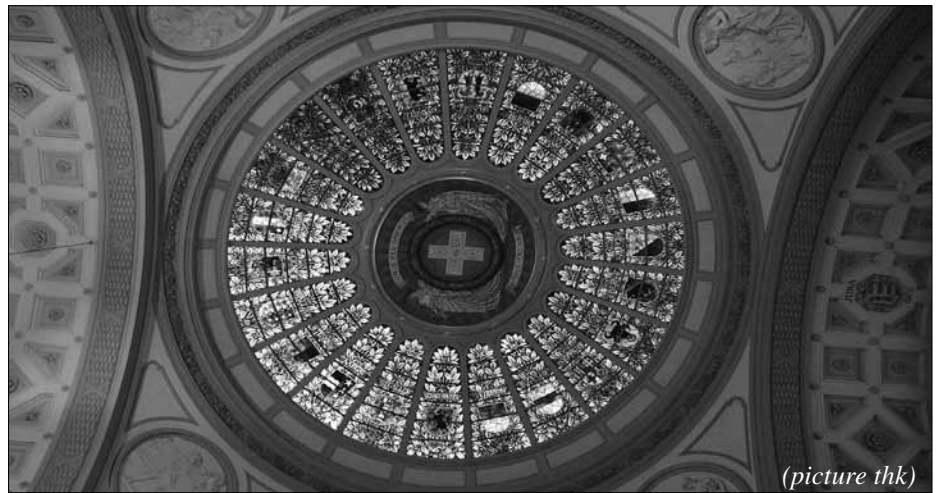
dle Ages. The Renaissance and the Reformation pushed the universal conception of culture into the background and brought to light the special features, and thus also the national features. The Middle Ages’ international language of culture, the Latin language, has been replaced by the European vernacular languages since the 16th century. The universal religion of the Middle Ages, Catholicism, broke apart as a result of the schism, and the unity of religion in Europe was replaced by variety.

The emergence of the nation state in

nic community, and this would also form a state, has prevailed in the 19th century and at the beginning of the present century, mainly promoted by the Germanic and Slavic peoples by the way. But already the French Revolution had set up similar postulates, although the addition of romantic ideas about popular customs and traditions was less among the peoples of England, France and Italy than among the Germanic and Slavic peoples.

Certainly some cultural phenomena of universal or international importance have always remained the same in spite of this development towards national cultures and nation-states, for example, the natural sciences and the worldview they had created. Today’s modern, perhaps partly still nascent worldview of philosophers, psychologists and natural scientists is based on international work. So one should neither overestimate the national element. There is a duality: the national cultures, which are based on the linguistic communities, and the internationally valid and active philosophical, scientific and technical structure of the modern world.

Returning to Switzerland, our country offers the worst possible conditions for a national culture at first sight. No common cultural language is present, no common denomination unites the entire people; we do not have a nation-state in the prop-



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Europe made the realization of national culture a public task, fostered by the state. The so-called principle of nationality, which set up the postulate that language community equals the cultural and eth-

er sense, we do not have a capital that influences and represents the whole country. There are contradictions between the ex-

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“The Confederation Switzerland (must we say it again and again?) is a political creation. The patriotism of its citizens is a much more cooperative, democratic, federalist form of expression of the national, so that the national, if one applies the word to our country, looks completely different from that in other European countries.”

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istence of Switzerland, which has always segregated a bit in the midst of Europe, and, I would say, separated itself from the popular European rules of identifica-

of the languages gains more or less importance than the other, so that no minority problems arise. The Federation may establish certain guidelines for education, for the medical service; it provides for a single university that is dedicated to the technical sciences; it ensures the freedom of

ers; it is an advantage, because the Swiss people share with all these languages and denominations share the cultural and religious life of great European nations. We have wide-open windows directed towards large areas in the north, west, south and east of our country. Switzerland is equally composed of several cultural provinces that have their centers in other states; but these different cultural provinces of Switzerland in turn form a unit with their own centers.

There is a big difference, not only between us and the great nation-states on our border, but also other small countries, such as Holland, Denmark, Poland, Portugal, etc. Since these countries have one national language. Compared to Switzerland they have the advantage of their own cultural centers, their own national literature, and yet these small states are disadvantaged by the fact that it will always be more difficult for a French, English, German or Italian person to become familiar with the cultural, especially the literary productions of Poland, Holland, Denmark or Portugal than with those of Switzerland, which due to its spacious languages belongs to the larger European area, the larger European community. It is obvious that nobody will be a great Swiss writer, if he is not also a big German, French or Italian writer. He may be a good writer of dialect or Rhaeto-Romanic, but in this case he faces tight constrictions of being universally accepted. Here we might remember in worship *Rudolf von Tavel* or *Peider Lansel*, who were masters of native idioms. But if we think of the big languages, *Jean-Jacques Rousseau* is without a doubt the greatest writer of the French speaking Switzerland, because he is also one of the

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tion of language, culture and country. The Confederation Switzerland (must we say it again and again?) is a political creation. The patriotism of its citizens is a much more cooperative, democratic, federalist form of expression of the national, so that the national, if one applies the word to our country, looks completely different from that in other European countries.

The result was that church, education, science and culture were matters for which the cantons were responsible. This was undoubtedly right, and practically this organization led to the slightest friction. Such conflicts would emerge in large numbers, if Switzerland had something like a joint Ministry of Education or a Department of Education. Only about 80 or 90 years ago a period of cultural and science-promoting activity of the federal government began. I will not describe it, however mention it briefly. Since the federal government guaranteed support for cultural matters of national importance, it has, perhaps, taken possession of competences that go beyond its constitutionally defined obligations; they do, however, not concern the school system itself but the advancement of art and literature, the protection of nature, historical monuments and cultural heritage, scientific research and other branches of cultural life, in case they cannot be handled by the cantons for the entire country, but have to be promoted at the national, that is at the federal level. But in terms of our cultural life, the federal government may basically only guard the freedoms that are necessary for cultural life, the freedom of religion, the freedom of political and ideological attitude (“Weltanschauung”) and the forming of an opinion. It may also watch over the freedom of linguistic usage and that none

scientific research and teaching activities; it watches over the peace between the different ethnic groups, and this peace among the various ethnic groups is a cornerstone of Switzerland’s cultural life.

To be a stickler for details, this affirmation of the cultural diversity of Switzerland has initially been a stopgap. Switzerland was not founded to give the world an example of cultural, linguistic and denominational diversity, but its polymorphism was nothing more than a condition of the Swiss Confederation that had developed just like this, and once it was there, its care, the care of these multiform Switzerland, had to be construed and accepted as a positive task. I would not say that we

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made a virtue of necessity, but Switzerland had to justify its existence as a multilingual and culturally multifarious people towards the all around nationally organized Europe.

Now this overlapping of different culture circles in Switzerland, the Roman Catholic one, the Reformed one, the German, French, Italian, Romansh, is both a disadvantage and an advantage. It is a disadvantage because of the indirect dependence on foreign cultures and cultural cent-

greatest French writers. The same also applies to *Jeremias Gotthelf*, *Gottfried Keller* and others. However, it is noteworthy that each of them is deeply and unmistakably committed to Switzerland by their educational backgrounds and literary topics. We will always remember how a seemingly extramundane poet like *Carl Spitteler*, in the dark winter of 1914, when internal distress and dangerous conflicts threat-

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ened our country, held his courageous and masterful speech as a true citizen about "Our Swiss position". It should, it seems to me, be printed in every Swiss German reading book.

Nevertheless, one must admit that a great literary impact is possible only in the sphere of a larger cultural nation. Here a conflict appears that we cannot escape, we cannot ignore, but which we have to tack-

he did acknowledge the federal administration and the militia. But to explain a nation that did not exist, was "une entreprise accablante", Ramuz said.

I think we should not denounce those who embodied Swiss literature in the purest way because of such phrases. One should not see these things differently from what they actually are, or something artificial will emanate, or otherwise moderate we would simply be of the kind that oppose the cultural realities of the greater European family of nations, which would

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le and which will only be overcome if the roots are firmly embedded in the homeland. That was not the case with everyone. Here is an example: The farther back the past events fade into the distance, the clearer appears the tragic side of a fate as it was destined to *Jakob Schaffner*. I do not hesitate to call this name. This man has paid for his political mistakes, for his wicked treachery of the homeland, suffering in a cellar in Strasbourg, where he was killed by a bomb. But would it not be a shame to have to miss for ever his adolescent work and masterpiece in the catalog of Swiss education novels? I ask this question merely in passing. Maybe the critics in our country will even deal with it one day.

The Zurich literary historian *Fritz Ernst*, who under the keyword of "Helvetism" ever and again raises his concern for common Swiss features of our literature, honestly pointed out in a speech entitled "Is there a Swiss national literature?" ("Neue Zürcher Zeitung" of 10 October 1954) that Gottfried Keller rejected without quite some acrimony the demand for a "so-called national literature in the corner". "He decidedly does not want," says Ernst, "to have anything to do with the 'eternal founders of a literary home industry'." In 1880, Gottfried Keller wrote in a letter that if anyone wanted to literarily accomplish anything in Switzerland, "he had to adhere to the great language area, to which he belongs." Fritz Ernst also reminds of *Ramuz*' letter from 1937, in which he denied that the Swiss could be one people. As common characteristics, Ramuz merely recognized the mailboxes and military uniform, so apparently

be unjust; because the same people, who sometimes surly distance themselves a bit from a too fervent regional art, are also those who have earned our country its cultural *raison d'être* in the world. To teach them lessons about proper civic thinking is an unfortunate effort in most cases that does not honor those who with a stern face wag their all-knowing finger.

One cannot speak about fundamentals of a culture, if a creative cultural production is not available in the first place. We do not want to replace the creative, spontaneous cultural production by an organized cultural policy; because as far as such a policy has a justification and a right to exist, it is only to hold out a carefully serving hand in the background, wherever the culture creator's power may be insufficient; and that usually concerns the material side of the whole matter.

Depending on the region of our national territory, it is not only the language but also the sense for form, the mentality, the sensitivity that are different. Therefore one should not seek to blur and merge them, because they are not a unitary culture. They belong to us, the Swiss, while at the same time they belong to our relatives across the borders. On Swiss soil we should acknowledge everyone according to his kind. The confederate roof protectively spreads over all of us. We are a nation in which sometimes the one feels somewhat strange to the other one. I cannot see these things differently. Recently one of my Geneva colleagues told me, "We have the outland in our own country" (*l'étranger chez nous*), a remark which is actually obvious when you consider that as a result of language barriers certain

things seem alien to us in our own country, to the ones as well as to the others. Only on the basis of these conditions am I able to look at what unites them and what are the common tasks of the Swiss people and the federal state. I do not think we should ignore that which separates us. Quite the contrary, we should raise it to our awareness and acquire or understand it to a certain degree, so we can recognize and promote the common characteristics.

We should accept another style, a different language, different denominations, different feelings. It is a divine gift if we then find something common in the broadest sense of the word, something truly Swiss, in the works of literature, the arts and the humanities. It is hard to say what actually makes up these common characteristics: but it is there, and the less consciously and intentionally a *Hodler* painted, a *Honegger* composed, a *Gottfried Keller* or *Ramuz* portrayed, the more convincing and true is it. In that case it is evident that someone from a foreign culture says: Your Ramuz, your Keller, your Hodler, your Honegger.

I think the attempt to explain a Swiss culture from its national character is a little "accablant". If you try it with the Platonic idea and say there is one, so to speak pre-formed Helvetic culture, I have to shake my head and say: "Anyone who claims such a thing is always a little above, below or beside it."

The question is justified whether one should say: "Swiss culture" or "culture in Switzerland". Related to different manifestations of cultural life both may be justified. The decisive factor seems to me the profound national community, rooted in history and decisive for the civic and political decision-making process. It sometimes requires, hence in dangerous times, a certain renouncement in the cultural sphere. It could and can happen that for the sake of our state's and our national community's preservation that we really need to prioritize the Fatherland, the defense, the resistance against foreign influences before the unlimited freedom of movement into the neighboring country which all of us might favor. Unfortunately, we do not yet live in the cosmopolitan universe of *Goethe*. German speaking Switzerland's relations with Germany during the times of *Hitler* and the Third Reich could not be as impartial and frank as they had been before. It is true that the profound disturbance of these relations called for a defensive position, because we were barked at from over there that a multilingual nation would not exist. Language community was also a national and Reich community, it was claimed! We had to defend ourselves against this point of

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view, and thus an alienation occurred, at least for the duration of the Third Reich, an alienation that was the expression of a defensive reflex.

You remember that just at that time of the defense against Nazi imperialism the idea and also the thing that was called mental defense emerged. From 1939 onward, the Landi with its mountain trail developed from this mental defense of the country. It was also the source of an increased preservation and promotion of Swiss peculiarity, of typical Swiss cultural values. At that time Federal Councillor *Etter* in his memorable message to the councillors proposed the establishment of the Association of *Pro Helvetia* in order to respect and promote Swiss culture.

You might object that in the Romanic part of the country this defensive position had had less impact. People had not got as excited as in German-speaking Switzerland against German Nazism and Hitlerism. In addition, the bonds of the French speaking part of Switzerland with the cultural centre Paris was stronger than today's bonds between the German speaking Swiss and corresponding cultural centers in Germany. That's true. However, there was also a similar defensive position in French-speaking Switzerland at the time of *Napoleon I* and *III*. At that time a part of the culture-creating Swiss lived in a state of emigration towards France. Remember the memorable role of *Madame de Staël* and her circle at Coppet Castle, in the Canton of Vaud. *Madame de Staël* and the best minds of French-speaking Switzerland faced *Napoleon* in a position of political and ideological defence. They were also constantly monitored and harassed by *Napoleon's* police. They could not go to France and had to stay away from Paris for years. This was not without consequences, and the French critics of these writers reproached them with their "style émigré". Even under *Napoleon III* some French-speaking Swiss stayed at home and did not want to see Paris that way protesting against the dictatorship of the emperor. The most famous among them was *Frederic Amiel*.

It must be admitted, and here we return to the issue of the meaning of language for culture, that such periods of cultural seclusion can have adverse effects on linguistic skills and the literary expression of the Swiss. *Amiel*, who had never been to Paris, wrote a style that bore clear traces of his provincial seclusion.

In German-speaking Switzerland, we have a flexibility that our French and Italian speaking confederates do not have to the same extent. We have agreed on the use of the vernacular as a political weapon

in the fight against excessive nationalism of the northern neighbors. Heritage and national culture are certainly to be promoted, but with all that care of the folk culture, all our love for dialect we should not underestimate the danger of a provincial turning away from the great world of culture. It really does matter for a country that trades with the whole world, that is on the technical and scientific forefront together with other civilized nations, whether its world view keeps pace with the times and is part of the great developments of the century or whether it is sometimes anxious and embarrassedly leaning on its dialect and its home region and uses them as a refuge. They should probably be a refuge, but this refuge should not prevent the people from also treading the path to the outside, also in the sense of cherishing the standard German language. I am convinced that it is a national educational task to clearly and cleanly distinguish dialect and written language. Give to each what it deserves, and let none of them go short. This is one of the difficulties posed by the educational tasks of the German Swiss who does not know the French-speaking Swiss. The neglect of the standard language is certainly inappropriate. It is to be learned by children at school and learned well, and it should be applied properly in life. I mean less the pronunciation in which we can always easily detect the Austrians, the Rhineland people and the Swiss in the German language area; but I think the correct, clean, conscientiously written and oral application of the standard language should be an important cultural concern with us. A *Gottfried Keller* would be the first who would blame us very much if we neglected the standard language or treated it with ne-

a background of tyranny. Between Italian Fascism and German National Socialism we had a kind of monopoly of political freedom and the freedom of thought in Central Europe. We were the defenders of *Schiller* and of all that *Schiller* had proclaimed. So it came about that in the cultural area, for example, the "Schauspielhaus" in Zurich, the Swiss press and the Swiss Radio, the Swiss film and the Swiss cabaret, universities and publishing houses were given a great importance because this theater, this press, this radio could adopt philosophical and literary products, if I may say so, which were outlawed in Italy and especially in Germany. We could impartially publish and show products of foreign culture in German-speaking Switzerland, admire or criticize them. It was our pride to lead a cultural life in the heart of Europe with this impartiality and freedom, which contrasted so strongly to the keywords and the marching bands in the Millennial Kingdom. We could also fulfill humanitarian tasks. We could afford help and services of various kinds.

This monopoly does no longer exist. The time has gone when someone or something was sought for abroad, only because it was Swiss.

Rather the opposite can sometimes be noticed. The mood is not always sympathetic towards Switzerland. Not even in the small states, such as Holland and Belgium, which – in contrast to us – had suffered the enemy inside their country and during the war and who now bear us a grudge for not having suffered and having achieved material gains. Our agency services are no longer so important and not so much in demand. Former enemies communicate directly today. As a result, we can only survive in competition with the

"But in the Federal Constitution there are no minorities and no citizens of less rights, but only equals in Switzerland, which is not egalitarianism following the mediocre, but which includes the right to one's own personality and one's own expression. We are careful not to let extensive freedom, given to us by law and justice, be stunted by custom."

glect. We would defraud ourselves of an essential part of the cultural importance of our country, if we let the German language and its knowledge be decomposed by misunderstood patriotism.

Our role throughout European and perhaps non-European cultural life is naturally different in times of peace than in times of war. In the last World War this task was simpler in a sense, however not easier. We defended our freedom against

other nations, if we accept only the real thing, the excellent, the quality in the cultural sphere, and by coming in direct contact with the spirit and the currents of our century in various areas through our mediators of cultural values. That may oppose a certain popular distrust in the extraordinary and superior and reveal our conservativeness and self-sufficiency to a bigger

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world. But it is in no way written down in our old alliances and not even in the constitution that we have to sacrifice excellence to the good average. It is like in sports: Only the top results count, but they must be supported by all levels of the pyramid, which rise from the base to the tip.

I see the only correct and possible solution in a genuine competition with foreign countries, which ensures that no own cultural achievement stays behind that of the rest of the world. For it is the outstanding works of the mind, which distinguish a nation. Our country owes its cultural reputation to men like *Heinrich Pestalozzi* and *Jean-Jacques Rousseau*. It owes the reputation to its achievements in the fields of medicine and technology. It owes it to outstanding musicians, such as *Honegger*, *Schoeck*, *Ansermet* and others. All this is not always duly recognized and appreciated in our own country. But you should be aware of the values that are really available in the country and that are alone capable to provide charm.

There is a record on "His Masters Voice" with a dramatic poem by *Denis de Rougemont*, whose sound track was written by *Arthur Honegger*. The topic is the story of the hermit in the Ranft, *Niklaus von Flüe*, whose figure fascinated these two artists who were so committed to the French word and spirit in the thirties. It is a rare and for the whole country valuable example that a national topic from one language area has produced an important work of art in another language area. It dates from the year 1939. The performance was recorded with the Parisian "Orchestre du Conservatoire", with a French conductor. In German-speaking Switzerland this work remained almost unknown. Even at international festivals that take place in Switzerland, we hide our light under a bushel; outstanding works of our own composers can hardly be heard at such international festivals. But we should be warned that we do not spoil the high spirit of our country's creative artists by indifference. Life was not rendered good and easy for a *Spitteler* and a *Ramuz* by their people, and they have – like many other great thinkers in spirit and word –

only become properly recognized and famous after their death.

When an innovator and younger writer like *Max Frisch* criticized his city and his country, he must indeed be prepared to meet with opposition and counter-criticism. When, however, a Swiss newspaper writes in the aftermath that this man should emigrate since he was no longer a Swiss, it is miserable and infamous. As if *Gotthelf* had not recklessly denounced the abuses in his country at the time and *Gottfried Keller* had not written his "Salandier"! Were they asked to emigrate for that? Our great thinkers or outstanding people often had a difficult time with us. *Pestalozzi*, for example, could never perform his work in his Zurich homeland. They thought he was incapable, if not crazy. He had to go to the Bernese Aargau and to Vaud. People from Basel, Berne and foreigners looked after him. After the death of such men, when their bones bleach in the cemetery, their posthumous fame is often claimed by cities and countries. We Swiss must watch out against envy and jealousy. Unfortunately, they flourish quite well in our conditions.

It always takes the good will of everyone, the consent to the just-so-and-no-different features of Switzerland, if you want to preserve it and keep its sense and its right to exist. This is more difficult in cultural sphere than in all other areas, because it repeatedly requires tolerance, i.e. not only the acceptance of the difference, but often also of the uncomfortable and of startling our mental inertia. Ours is a certain conformism, and it bothers us when someone comes along who sees things differently, or represents them differently from what pleases us. I want to ask: Has, for example, a *C.G. Jung* found the recognition in our country which he had in the wide world for a long time? I do not know. It was certainly encouraging that this Swiss person, who is much honored abroad, received his honorary doctorate on the occasion of his 80th birthday for the first time by a university of our country. Self-isolation, influence abroad and finally recognition if these men are old or have died and people have taken due note of the fact that they have done something significant: This was and still is exactly the same with not only a few great thinkers.

I do not want to mix cheap irony into these considerations. But I think that we rendered our country a better service if we candidly and humorously called these things by name, so that they do not taste too bitter. And let us not forget: It is no longer a situation like war, not even the immediate post-war situation, where we were able to help, but now we are to some extent referred back to our seat by the others who have taken their seats again.

We should, I would like to say in conclusion, not let entire ethnic groups nor some outstanding cultural creators feel their shortcomings in the totality of our controlled everyday life too much. There are in fact minorities with us, as there are also insulated. (We should examine the causes of such isolation or of unconnectedness to the whole of the Swiss life one day.) But in the Federal Constitution there are no minorities and no citizens of less rights, but only equals in Switzerland, which is not egalitarianism following the mediocre, but which includes the right to one's own personality and one's own expression. We are careful not to let extensive freedom, given to us by law and justice, be stunted by custom.

We want to honestly contribute as teachers and educators that everyone can look forward to be Swiss and to be called as such, and that the big-hearted approval, which *Gottfried Keller* was once able to give to the newly designed alliance of the Confederates, will also be made it easy to achieve for the culturally creative artists of our days. We do not only have a wonderful home, but also a Swiss mental heritage, and we should defend and maintain both. We can, however, prepare the ground for the receptiveness and the attention of the young, especially in teaching. Not everyone is a cultural creator; actually only very few are. But we as teachers are cultural mediators, and much depends on how we communicate the cultural heritage, in which spirit we do it, whether a broad and open-minded class of culture recipients will grow up in our country. •

Source: *Schriften des S.L.V.* No 30, Zurich 1955 from: *J. R. von Salis: "Schwierige Schweiz, Beiträge zu einigen Gegenwartsfragen"*, Zurich 1968, pp. 107–122

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

The population depends on a healthy farming community

Great cattle show in Kirchberg SG

by Thomas Kaiser

More and more people are entering in the café near the town's main crossroads. The hour hand moves slowly toward eight o'clock, and the people here know only one topic at the moment: the arriving of the cows to the cattle show. It is shortly after eight o'clock and the just yet fully stocked café empties all of a sudden. The crowd is striving toward the main crossroads between church and parish hall. No one wants to miss what is shown by the farmers from the surrounding area. A thrill of joy is in the air in Kirchberg on this unfortunately cloudy Saturday morning. But nobody is actually interested in the weather; a much too important event is ahead.

From far away you can hear the dull deep sound of large cow bells. The sound is coming closer and closer and you can already see a large herd, led by farmers with their children, continually coming towards the crossroads. The traffic is stopped, for once the cows, bulls and goats are the lords of the street. The colorfully decorated animals have reached the crossroads, the village is filled with the vibrant sound of the bells, and the whole place seems to vibrate. The cows proudly wear these magnificent bells and as a spectator one has the impression that they enjoy being in the spotlight for once and admired by the many audiences. Hardly the first herd has passed and the next one appears. The proud animals arrive from all four corners led by their no less proud peasant families. The cows are decorated so affectionately and differently; they seem to know that today it is their day. This is the proud Swiss farming population, trying to provide the population with good food, with great dedication despite the many changes in the last few years. Over an hour the magnificent animals are passing parade, then traffic moves again unhindered, only a few cowpats remember what an impressive spectacle has just happened.

Nearly 840 animals gathered at the Frohheim scene in the village of Kirchberg where now the competition and the show of the Miss contest start. The audience is large and there is a friendly atmosphere among the peasants, they know each other, exchange news and cultivate their common interests. What about the dear cattle? While one flock waits restlessly and vigorously mooing for its appearance, others are standing stoically in row until they are taken in the ring for



(picture thk)

assessment. It is an impressive experience to watch the natural relationship between man and animal. While one cow can be led quietly and securely through the ring, the other remains stubborn and self-willed and can hardly be held in line for the award ceremony. Of course, every cow has its own character, and each farmer, too. "Today in the morning when I came into the barn with the bells my animals were totally excited. They knew exactly that today it's the cattle show and they were hard to contain. They know what is going on and they enjoy it properly." The farmer embraces the strong neck of his favorite cow, a Swiss Brown cattle, with appropriate pride and raves about its balanced character. "These are excellent animals; they can be led calmly and are fully cooperative." He hopes for a first place in the ranking – and so does his neighbor with which he had an amicable chat. A few meters further there is a discussion about the agricultural policy of the Federal Council. It has little approval. "It is not about us in this policy, this is a policy past the farmers." So is the view of the great majority. "What would be if we all were to stop? Where would the food come from then?" "From the Ukraine", one says boldly, "but we would look very stupid then." "They do not have enough for themselves." "If we make us dependent from abroad, we will lose our political freedom of action; the Federal Council must not undergo this risk." This is what could be heard at various locations.

No, the cattle show in Kirchberg as in many other places is not only folklore that they may still cultivate, thus avoid-

ing that discontent becomes too big and turns into political resistance. The farming community of Switzerland is aware of its true significance. They also know that they do not have a reliable partner in the Swiss government for which the welfare of the farmers and hence the population and ultimately the state is a major concern. Settling free trade agreements and ruining the local agriculture still seems to be content and orientation of the Federal Agricultural Policy, what kind of agenda may ever be behind. Cattle shows like the one here in Kirchberg can also be means to make the non-peasant population familiar with the importance and beauty of rural work. Most people in this country are highly convinced of a meaningful and comprehensive agriculture and food supply. The perpetual financial argument why free trade is important for our country is much too short-sighted. It does not only destroy the local agriculture as is shown in an interview with *Jakob Maute* but leads to famines in the exporting countries. We humans are dependent on a healthy farming community. Only thanks to their work we are provided with high-quality food products. They have a certain price and should be paid well. Food security is a great asset and contributes to our state sovereignty. It is natural that traditions such as cattle shows and the cattle drive up to alpine pasture and the descent are parts of a sound agriculture. It can only perform its tasks if the agricultural policy both refers to the concerns of the population as well as to those of the farmers and puts them into action. •

“We are a typical family business, where all of us play their part”

“Free Trade Agreement deprive people in the affected countries of their livelihoods”

Interview with farmer Jakob Maute, Schönau

Current Concerns: Was the cattle show in Kirchberg successful?

Jakob Maute: In the morning our bull won the “Mister Kirchberg” trophy. There were some bulls in the qualification round, and of course I am pleased about the title. In the afternoon there were five department victories for us. Plus the title of “Miss OB” and “Vice-Miss OB”. The abbreviation means the old “Schweizer Originalbraunvieh” (Swiss Original Brown Cattle). That is the original Swiss breed.

There were a lot of animals at the cattle show, almost 840. From this large number how is a “Miss Kirchberg” or a “Mister Kirchberg” selected in the end ?

The experts are trained to judge the cows. There are five main essential characteristics. This is the “format”, that means the whole cow, next the “foundation”, which are the legs, important for



Jakob Maute with “Vero – Mister Kirchberg” (picture thk)

fertility and birth is the “pelvis”, then the “udder” and the “teats”. These are the items, and the jurors who must assess this, are trained and have an eye in order to identify which are the strong points of the cow and where. That is the way they assess them.

Then, only a small number is selected for the qualification round?

Exactly. For us Schönau people the following is fantastic this year: In the category “Originalbraunvieh” we won the Miss and the Vice Miss titles and my neighbor, Peter Truniger, won the Miss and Vice Miss titles in the more modern breed category, the Swiss Brown. Now we have these titles here with us in Schönau. I am delighted with that, and we are quite a bit proud.

Congratulations! A farmer winning a prize at a cattle show what does this mean for him?

It elates us, it fills us with some breeder pride. You must know, breeding animals is a very cumbersome affair. It takes almost two and a half years until a cow has borne the first calf. Making progress in such a cumbersome and time-consuming affair and in doing so still being able to maintain the standard, this is already an art. And if you can maintain the standard it makes you proud, of course.

What are important breeding criteria for you?

I attach great importance to a long-living, healthy cow. We had already four cows which yielded over 100,000 kilos of milk and lived more than 20 years. This is evidence of our success. Of course our cow has to produce, but not at the limit, instead it is to remain healthy and grow old. To almost exclusively feed our cattle with roughage from our immediate environment is very important to me, and that is part of our fundamental philosophy. In addition to roughage they get some feed pellets, too.

How big is your live stock right now?

We have 30 cows and 40 young animals, 8 Franches Montagnes horses and 2 bulls.

Do you also do suckler cow husbandry or just pure dairy farming?

We also do suckler cow husbandry to sell a few animals, because they are in demand. The “Schweizer Originalbraunvieh” is part of the utility class 2. It is a useful cow in suckler cow husbandry. And if someone is interested, I sell an animal.

Do your young cattle also go up to the mountains during summer?

Yes, I bring them up to an alp in the Engadine.

So your cattle had a good time?

No, this year it was not so good. Four animals

fell. One is dead, one had a leg broken, two of them are injured but still alive. But it is still uncertain if the animal with the broken leg will survive.

Do you know the cause?

It happened in broad daylight. A shepherd observed that the herd suddenly became very excited because of a noise and ran off. Most likely it has to do with the wolf. At night, when no one is there, the wolves drive the animals on the alps and thus teach their offspring to drive and rush the deer. For the farm animals in the Alps, this is extremely problematic. We feel this till today. If something exceptional happens, the animals are extremely frightened. The wolf chasing our animals about in the mountains is an impossible situation and when then they fall and perish somewhere or die instantly, this is very difficult for us.

If you talk about the wolf, then you talk about the killed animals, nobody talks about this consequences.

Yes, the big animals have not been killed up to now, but the young wolves are taught chasing and driving, and those are the effects then. The wildlife leaves the areas where the wolf is active, and the wolf of course drives the animals that are left over at the end. The wildlife searches for another habitat. The mountain wildlife passes into the valley, which is also not natural. So there are strong shifts that are very questionable.

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(picture thk)

“We are a typical family ...”

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I would like to come back to your statement that you feed your animals with roughage from the environment.

This is very important to me, although policy pulls in a different direction. They talk of free trade agreements, because one wants to purchase products as cheap as possible, and deprives the people in the affected countries of their livelihoods, their basis of existence. While others are starving, we, who actually have enough, receive the products out of these countries, and everything has to be purchased as cheaply as possible. Of course they do advertising for regional products, but I often have the impression that this is just an excuse to sell the products. They constantly talk of free trade agreements and buy products, no matter how they were produced. They make life difficult for us, when the stable is one inch too small or the cow has received a ray of sunshine too much. In transport, enormous requirements are imposed and one is punished with a big fine if you do not comply. In other countries, the transport of the animals is not monitored, but the goods are brought into the country cheaply and that is completely incomprehensible to me. If you look at the world events, for example, at the crisis in the Ukraine or whatever else is happening in the world, it has never been as significant as today, that you attach the utmost importance to the supply with our own products. If self-subsistence would become a reasonable value again, we would have to deal much more carefully with the ground in our country, because then we would need the ground for food. Concreting over our farmland would stop. We would have to take a lot more care to all these things, including the next generation. We are not the only ones who want to live here. We have rented this earth only for a little while and then we have to leave again. We imagine that we need to be in control of everything during that time. That is complete nonsense. Our vocation to produce food for the people is something very beautiful, but it should be appreciated a little more. All the luxury of our time, all the electronics, the expensive cars, driving around on our roads, have such a high priority, but with food it has to be the cheapest, food is supposed to cost less and less. This is indeed out of proportion.

What should be changed?

It would be desirable for the peasantry of course and would make the profession more attractive if we farmers were recompensated for our hard work with reasonable product prices. This would also express an appreciation, which would affect

agriculture as a whole. Agricultural policy would have to go in this direction. But, of course, that is in contrast to the efforts to buy everything cheaply on the world market. The whole thing is altogether absurd. If goods are transported over thousands of kilometers into our country and still are cheaper than the ones produced here, then something is wrong. On the one hand this is ecological nonsense, but also the production methods and the recompensation for the people in other continents and countries are far below our standard. This way you cannot trade fairly because ultimately we must meet all requirements in our production here in Switzerland, and of course that costs a lot of time and money.

The argument of free trade is also completely misplaced here?

As a farmer one is bound to one's soil and farm. You cannot infinitely use the soil, otherwise you have nothing left in the end. We have excellent grass land here. If grain is now increasingly in demand, we cannot just plant wheat, that is impossible with our soil, except we would use fertilizer to an extreme degree, that would be utter nonsense and totally uneconomical. We cannot just change that. This must be taken into account. When making screws or other industrial goods, you can buy raw materials of varying quality, but as a farmer we are bound to our soil, there is no other way. The industry is flexible, we are not. We must take care of our basis, everything else would be fatal.

How could you keep up your farm until today?

We are a typical family enterprise in which all of us contribute. Without the support of the family members, we could never have managed our business to this extent. That is what it takes. Food prices are much too low. You could not collect apples and pears any more, if people did not work without payment in a sense. Therefore something is still left over under the bottom line. It is like that in various fields of agriculture, and that's not entirely fair. The relationship between a liter of milk and a liter of petrol is still completely absurd. One liter of mineral water or a liter of cola is more expensive than a liter of milk. Milk is a high quality foodstuff that contains so many nutrients, but the price has dropped more and more in recent years. ...

While the price of milk is steadily falling, the price for a liter of diesel has risen.

Yes, that's the way it is. If we look back in history, then you know that a family with one cow could survive the winter thanks to the milk it yielded. All people had enough milk, so you could get by, a 10- to 15-member family could survive. With a calf you could meet the demand for meat. This is unimaginable for us today.

This is presumably a result of the fact that people, especially in the cities, do not know how things are all connected.

That's why we try to familiarize the people with the joy and the beauty of the farmer's profession by cattle shows like the one on the penultimate Saturday. Many visitors come, who can have lunch there and experience the extraordinary, positive and joyful mood. This is also advertising for us, of course.

Actually, this is still an easy way to get to know the rural culture for people who have no idea about agriculture, even if the hard work that is associated with each cow does not become visible, of course.

Yes, that's been the main reason why we have always taken children and school classes on our farm. We had a lot of school groups here with us. We have always told ourselves, that this is an opportunity for young people to learn something that they won't learn anywhere else. And those who have taken something in will have it for their entire lives. Something will always be kept. ...

... That's right, I have experienced it myself. My aunt had a farm, although only agriculture and forestry, but as a child I learned and saw a lot about agriculture there...

It was very impressive when the children came to us. Many of them were completely insecure and could hardly cope with the

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(picture thk)

Statement of the "Schweizerischer Schafzüchterverband" (Swiss Sheep Breeders' Association)

Response of the "Schweizerischer Schafzüchterverband" to the statement of Swiss "Tierschutzverband" (Animal Protection, SAP) in the Coop Magazine from 23 September 2014 "Dear hikers: Inform us about alp sheep that were left behind!"

After about 100 days of summering on alp pastures, after numerous animal and alp controls and a well-prepared "Alpabfahrt" (transhumance) animals are not just "accidentally left behind on the mountain". Before the actual "Alpabfahrt" the animals are herded by their owners and kept overnight in a pen before they go back down to the valley, the next morning. Missing animals are searched until dusk and then again at daybreak. We are speaking of animals/ living creatures and not of a piece of paper (that as well should not be left back). In case a sheep ran away too far from the rest of the herd or has been injured or cannot be found due to bad weather, the breeder does not yet give up. In the course of the next few days he goes back to the alp, even several times, if necessary, together with friends or family members, and searches the area. Sheep are not easily forgotten, and they do not run away without any reason! The SAP calls for sheep, to be reported immediately, if they are noticed in the alps after 22 September. This call is an intrusion into the privacy of sheep breeders and sheep farmers. It is written nowhere that after 22 September sheep are no longer allowed to be on the alps. Depending on the weather and feed sheep still enjoy the late fall on the alps for a long time.

Is the Federal Government wasting tax francs for summer pasturing?

Once again, sheep farming and subsidy is thrown in a pot with taxpayers' money. It is true that sheep summering is granted payments in accordance with the "Sömmeringsbeitragsverordnung, SR 910.133" (Summering Grant Regulation) within the direct support scheme if the required

conditions are met. Approximately 40% of all sheep breeders and sheep farmers receive no contributions, but provide the same services and have the same amount of effort! The study of the Summering Grant Regulation is highly recommended to every critic.

Sheep farmers and breeders represented as indifferent, callous, jaded and forgetful individuals

During the winter months, most lambs are born to grow up, protected by their mothers, and have time to develop to be independent young animals until the beginning of June. Usually at mid-June, depending on food availability, the sheep are entrusted to the care of a shepherd or "Bergvogt" who is in charge of the animals for approximately the next 100 days. Depending on the location (topographical and geographical) the flock is constantly guarded by a shepherd with dog (constant shepherding), or the sheep are kept in a rotating grazing system (paddocks). On those alps, where neither constant shepherding nor rotational grazing is possible, the owners care intensely about the welfare of their animals. In all weathers, regular patrols across the entire grazing area are part of their work as much as the controls on animal health and animal welfare.

Should not the alps be utilized more?

The alps have been used for hundreds of years for the grazing of livestock. Thus the population is provided a living recreation area. This tradition could be preserved and kept alive for many years to come, if the work of farmers were appreciated and supported by the non-agricultural population. But as long as the call for the existence of large carnivores (wolf, bear) has not died away and sheep farming is accused of squandering taxpayers' money for keeping sheep over and over again, we see dark clouds rising over the alps. Certain circles pursue the goal that the pastures are ceded to bikers and large preda-

tors in the near future – or only to large predators.

Lamb: Should import have priority over domestic production?

What is grown or grows on our doorstep, does no longer seem to appeal to the consumer. The consumer has lost all sense of time for seasonal products, everything has to be available all year round as cheaply as possible. Lamb's loin, imported from South America, England, Scotland, New Zealand and Australia, is offered at prices that should make every consumer think twice. What do we know about sheep farming in these countries? How long are the transport routes that the animals have behind them before slaughter? How long do they have to wait to be killed at the slaughterhouse? Is the consumer really able to enjoy an import lamb's loin with so many question marks?

Swiss lamb in contrast grows on our doorstep, at species-appropriate care, on meadows, pastures and on the alps. Don't forget the winter pasture (migratory herds) where a part of the lambs stay until they are ready for slaughter. The transport to the slaughterhouse is short and the processing is usually done in the same place. From the slaughterhouse to the retail store, the meat is transported along the fastest route in modern refrigerated trucks. In Switzerland, the traceability from farm to fork is guaranteed, that is, the butcher/seller is familiar with the place of origin. Swiss lamb is slightly more expensive than imported meat, but we can eat and enjoy it with a clear conscience.

Ladies and gentlemen of the Swiss Animal Protection: Such public statements are unnecessary and counterproductive – our wish for the future is cooperation instead of working against each other.

*Schweizerischer Schafzüchterverband
(Swiss Sheep Breeders' Association)*

German Schmutz, President

(Translation Current Concerns)

"We are a typical family ..."

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new impressions. When a cow shit, some of them even panicked and ran away.

Will your farm continue to exist as a family business?

There is a good chance that it will continue. Both sons are skilled farmers,

they have made the apprenticeship and our daughter as well. Thus, the conditions are good that one of our children will carry on with the farm. I am very pleased of course, that they have learned something from me and want to continue the tradition. Even my great-grandfather, my grandfather and my father had a farm business here. They see this as their future, and that is of course very positive.

I have always told myself that the food question will preoccupy us in the future, we as farmers will be needed in the future, but we must be able to make a living from it.

Mr Maute, thanks for the interview. •

(Interview Thomas Kaiser)