

# Current Concerns

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

English Edition of *Zeit-Fragen*

## “Gold reserves are national wealth and no speculation object for politicians and central bankers” Yes to the popular initiative “Save our Swiss Gold”

Interview with Lukas Reimann, National Councillor, SVP/SG

*thk.* On 29 November the Swiss people will decide on an extremely important draft, namely, how high the percentage share of our currency reserves should be in gold. Since 1999, the Swiss National Bank (SNB), by throwing tons of gold onto the market, sold off more than half of the national wealth accumulated over decades. Since the financial and economic crisis, the SNB has begun to support the euro, thus tying up the Swiss franc to the euro. By this massive support purchases, Switzerland holds nearly half a trillion in foreign currencies, today. The majority of them are euro. Due to the enormous sales and the increased money printing the share of the gold has decreased to less than 10 percent. This means that Switzerland is tied up to the euro at its mercy and, in case of a further weakness of this single currency, it will have to continue to print money in order to do further support buying. Thus, the balance sheet is still more inflated, without any material security. Since all these are not only financial issues, but especially questions of political explosiveness, National Councillor Lukas Reimann clearly argues in favour of adopting the popular initiative “Save our Swiss Gold”. In the following interview he explains why and how.

*Current Concerns:* What is the significance of the gold reserves for our country? Why should we increase this stock?  
*National Councillor Lukas Reimann:* The gold reserves and the upcoming vote are of existential importance for Switzerland. In the end it is about Switzerland’s freedom and its independence. It is about the question whether we can autonomously and independently shape our monetary basis and our monetary policy, or whether we are completely and utterly at the mercy of the dollar or the euro or rather of these countries’ development. Currently we are at the mercy of these power formations. This might have serious consequences: The United States saw 136 years of monetary stability under the gold standard. Since 1913, however, the purchasing power fell by incredible 95 per-

cent, because the state institutions have obsessively printed new money. These are no prospects for Switzerland. Stability and prosperity are something else.

*What are the advantages of the gold standard?*

Paper money can arbitrarily be manipulated and reproduced, which is impossible for gold. Paper money is at the mercy of the central banks’ inflationary monetary policy currently being conducted around the world. The gold is not delivered up to that. Therefore, this is of existential importance for our country. We can only be independent if we have again our own independent share of reserves. This has been proven over years. The gold backing has not only grant the quality of independence but also of stability. If we do not make reserves, we are lost and fall as well if another financial and currency crisis comes. And it will come.

*Are these not unnecessary shackles for the National Bank?*

Up to 1999, up to the new Federal Constitution, Switzerland had a gold backing. We had invested 40 percent of the monetary reserves in gold and precisely for that reason we excellently came through all crises. One must never just throw a system overboard that has worked well in difficult times and that has spared land and people a lot of harm. The franc was safe and stable, because we had a gold backing. Even today the franc enjoys a good reputation because of the gold backing of the past. Unfortunately, the gap between reality and reputation is widening. Here we want to achieve again a normalisation of the situation, again. The gold has significantly strengthened the National Bank in its capacity to act and in its independence.

*Why did the different countries constantly reduce the gold backing, although in the financial world gold is generally considered a safe investment?*

This shows how dishonest the debate is. If one exactly knows how important it is for the individual to invest his assets in real

values, in order to have a security in case of extreme emergency, it is all the more important that the state as a whole is prepared for emergencies and holds a sufficient share of gold.

*What are the consequences if the state has no gold reserves?*

That seems obvious. Paper money can arbitrarily be manipulated and reproduced, but they are telling the citizens that all this takes place without costs. That’s not true. The more money you print, the more it loses in value. If you arbitrarily print money, there is either a currencies’ collapse or a massive devaluation of the individual coin. This is a disastrous monetary policy, where all those who spend money and make debts, are rewarded. Those people who go to work every day and always put a little money aside, are punished. Punished is indeed also the pensioner, who gets a constant pension from the state, which, however, has less and less purchasing power. The employee going to work every day, is punished because his wage increase can no longer compensate for the money devaluation. Ultimately, this is a hidden tax, a hidden expropriation operated by the states. Gold may counteract this trend!

*When was the gold coverage abandoned?*

This is historically very interesting, it began with the First World War. To finance this war, they had to quit a gold-covered currency. Then one could print as one liked. This continued during the Second World War, and the Vietnam War, etc. With every war the gold backing was further reduced so that the states could print money as they liked. The currencies in



National Councillor-  
Lukas Reimann  
(picture thk)

**“Gold reserves are national ...”**

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which this step was taken are now completely disintegrating. There is no comparison between the value they had then and what has been left of them today.

*I think, with regard to the dollar this is obvious for everybody ...*

The dollar has remained stable for decades, as long as they had the gold backing. Since this does no longer exist, we have had a devaluation of the dollar of 95 per cent. The Swiss franc is also threatened, if we go on like that. That must be very clear to us. What was possible with the gold standard is set at risk with the current policy. Exactly the same will happen to the franc as will happen to any other currency if money is printed boundlessly.

*Can we say that today's debt economy and the horrendous debts of the respective states were only possible because their currencies were no longer backed by gold?*

There are two reasons why Switzerland behaved like that, although it was done completely without need. Moreover, it is completely incomprehensible and against any reason. One reason was that Switzerland itself can make as much debt and print as much money as it wants. No one can object, no one notices, and no one is bothered. This is convenient for politicians. You may make election promises and still finance them and that way obtain the voters' favour. No one talks about the long term destructive and disastrous consequences. The second reason is internationalisation. They started to put great pressure on Switzerland. Switzerland was accused of its gold having been looted, and other nonsense was pulled out of the hat in order to make the Swiss sell their gold. They just do not want the existence of countries in this world that still bank on real values, on safe currency. This was not achieved in all countries. But whoever does not go his own way, will neither be independent of the United States nor the EU nor whoever in terms of monetary policy. The less gold our state has, the more we drift into dependency. You can tell you are not a member of the EU, but if you actually bind yourself to the euro, then you are as dependent as any eurozone country.

*Therefore, you can say that the monetary policy of the SNB is expansive...*

Yes, seen in relation, we are even more expansive than the ECB or the Fed. The balance of the SNB has expanded so enormously in recent years, and in parallel we have sold that much gold. As a percentage our balance sheet expansion is greater than that of the US or the EU.

*So we produced more money to buy the euro.*

Yes, we have bought euros and dollars for hundreds of billions, and now they argue, that the gold initiative is a risk because of the gold price. But if the euro is devalued only by 20 percent – and unfortunately this is not unrealistic, since even the ECB concedes, that there will be a devaluation – then it will cost Switzerland hundreds and even more billions of francs. Gold is much safer here. For over 3000 years, gold has de facto had the function as a means of payment. So far gold has survived all crises. After all, the fact is that gold is more and more demanded and becoming stable in case of serious crises. Everything is insured against any risks. Gold is an insurance for the assets of an entire country. Gold reserves are no speculation object for politicians and central bankers. It is national wealth, which has been achieved by generations working hard. We must not destroy within a few years what has been created by the citizens of Switzerland in the course of centuries. I really find it appalling what is happening.

*In this context the question for me is, who buys the gold. If no one wants more gold and everybody throws it on the market, then it ought to be dirt cheap and there would be a great goldmountain. But that isn't the case.*

No, it isn't like that. Of course there are countries that have a different view. They have detected the significance of gold in a time of an uninhibited monetary expansion and of the increasing currency crises. In the last two years China has even bought more gold than Switzerland still owns today. Also other central banks, which are looking more in the future have realised that for the country and the population gold is the safest and most stable asset. Switzerland is once more running behind the US and European central banks and thus running blindly into destruction. I hope that the Swiss people realise that and stop the destruction.

*What are the reserves in other countries?*

In Switzerland 85 percent of our monetary reserves are held in foreign currency, and indeed mainly in euro. We don't have any more assets. Our neighbouring countries Germany, Italy, France hold 70 of percent gold reserves. We do not hold even 10 percent. This is extremely risky and highly dangerous, but certainly not the gold initiative isn't. It introduces safety into such a situation. Every single citizen has, if he wants to buy a car or a house on credit, to produce a security, at least 20 percent of the monetary amount. So we may yet expect from a state that it puts 20 percent safety in a high-risk portfolio.

*What is so very risky in this portfolio?*

With these foreign currencies the SNB has in part bought gambling stocks and shares of arm companies in America and government bonds of foreign governments. No one can tell me that they have done so out of conviction. Brussels came and said: “You now have to help us buy euros.” We must build debt tower on debt tower. At some point the confidence will be lost. When people comprehend the manipulation, the debt tower will collapse. Then there will be a total loss in the currencies or massive inflation. Regardless of what happens, you need a reasonable hedge. Everything else is very risky. The initiative brings a much-needed insurance against what will follow in the next few years.

*The accusation is looming that we have too much gold due to the acquisitions that we could no longer sell later.*

First we must have our gold back again, and the initiative requires at least 20 percent. If you have more, and it occurs a blatant case of emergency, then you can always sell gold via emergency law. There are plenty of mechanisms which can intervene. But conditioned by the gold backing this situation will not occur because the currency is much more secure.

*You hear ever and again that the Asian countries buy the gold of the Europeans. Is the behaviour of Switzerland only the result of the mentioned pressure tests or is it also actively leaning towards the powerful? A fiscal need is unlikely, according to your explanations.*

There is absolutely no need to sell the gold. The SNB itself admits today that the gold sales at low prices were a mistake. The National Bank would have, if they had not sold the gold for years, after all, a ton of gold per day, today 50 billion more reserves. That's a weird amount. This is almost the annual budget of Switzerland. Mistakes can happen, but you should draw the right conclusions. Half of the nation's wealth is gone, now you should at least ensure that the other half is retained, and that's the initiative. After they had already sold 1,300 tons, 250 tons were thrown again on the market, thus acquiring euros. They exchanged a safe value for a high-risk currency and high-risk currency bonds. This is completely incomprehensible. There are of course those who yield due to the pressure from outside and adjust, but unfortunately there are also domestic internationalists and self-destructive forces trying to weaken the country.

*Who are the driving forces against the gold initiative?*

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# We citizens must watch over the sovereignty of our cantons

## Strengthening of federalism is urgent

by Dr iur Marianne Wüthrich

### Intergovernmental conferences to control Switzerland by Berne and Brussels

*At regular intervals, political scientists publish confessions in the media in which they conjure up the end of federalist Switzerland with its 26 cantons. Their lines of argument are as alike as two peas in a pod: the Canton borders had been obsolete long since, because many Swiss are working in one canton but live in a neighboring one, or relocate to a different canton. Many things would have to be regulated across the cantonal borders, anyway by concordats, i.e. agreements between particular cantons, or by intergovernmental conferences like the Conference of the Cantons, or through lower level institutions like the EDK (Education Director Conference). It would therefore be more convenient to merge the cantons into six or seven larger areas. Cui bono? Whom does this track serve?*

What is true is this: Actually more and more traditional sovereignty areas of the cantons are restricted by the Federal Government's issuing new provisions in the Constitution and federal laws, in particular in the fields of education and health, but also with respect to regional planning and elsewhere. This even concerns funding of music lessons or day schools, matters that definitely are not the domain of the Federal Government.

What is as well true: 20 years ago, the Cantonal Conference and its sub-conferences turned up out of the blue; they since then have increasingly tried to impose their projects that are always hatched behind closed doors to all cantons, often excluding the possibility of a referendum.

This development is not inevitable. Rather, we as citizens are called upon acting against this increasing deprivation of power in our cantons. We are the sovereign, it is up to us to say "No" to the ever growing number of bills aiming at centralization.

The self-assigned intergovernmental conferences in Switzerland are mirroring the EU Ministerial Conferences. They have been invented one year after the "No" to EEA (1993) to concoct rapidly unified solutions and to introduce them comprehensively. The centralist EU doesn't want 27 Swiss contacts (Confederation and Cantons). It wants to have one contact person to lay down the law and the cantons have to enforce it. Thus Federal Councillor *Widmer-Schlumpf* has recently signed a memorandum, in which she pledged to "harmonize corporate taxes in Switzerland". She had probably forgotten that the Federal Government is not entitled in this area, as the corporate taxes are the domain of the cantons. Now, *Widmer-Schlumpf* is going to ask the Board of Directors of the FDK (*Financial Director Conference*) to take care and harmonize the cantonal taxes for companies domiciled in the Switzerland. The FDK will concoct something in consultation with Berne, which they will then try to enforce as authorized governmental councils in their cantons.

One can see: These intergovernmental conferences have nothing to do with federalism, even less with direct democracy. Actually they do not exist, because they were never assigned by the sovereign nor equipped with a mandate. We citizens elected the Governmental Councils as executive members in our cantons, with the mandate to lead the cantonal administration and to execute the decisions of the parliament and the people. (cf. "Conference of cantonal governments (KdK) – Rule of the executives instead of federalism and democracy", *Current Concerns* No 34, 5.11.2013).

We, the citizens in the cantons, do not have to accept any single decision of these bodies, which are not democratically legitimized. We must take advantage of our strong political rights and put the ladies and gentlemen in the "House of the Cantons" in their place.

### No "regions" in Switzerland – we want to preserve our cantons

Since the rejection of the EEA accession by the Swiss people and by a large majority of the Cantons (16½ No against 6½ Yes) on 6 December 1992 it is clear to the Swiss politicians, political scientists, the federal administration and the diplomats, who all of them would like to join the EU: the Swiss people don't wish access to the EU, even less today, when we compare the conditions of our country in every respect to the state the EU is in. Therefore the EU applicants had to come up with something else. Since long they would like to abolish the "cantonal majority rule", and they want to reform the Cantonal Council in a way, that the big cantons would have more Cantonal Council members compared to the small ones. Fortunately, such upheavals are subject to the obligatory referendum in our federalist system, which would have to be accepted by the people and states (Stände). Since this will never be possible, the idea to form large regions by combining several cantons has been haunting the country for the last 20 years; if this became reality, one actually wouldn't need the Council of States any longer, and neither the "cantonal majority rule". And Switzerland as a whole could be better controlled. We Swiss don't want that.

A recent example is the following: On 28 September the Cantons Basel-City and Basel-Country voted once again on the merger of their two cantons, and on establishing a single Constitutional Council.

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### "Gold reserves are national ..."

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All parties, the Federal Council, the media – in fact the Action Committee is against it all. Of course there are everywhere in all parties individuals who participate. These are members of the cantonal parliament, e.g. also of the FDP. The BDP of Basel-City adopted the slogan Yes. Most cantonal parties of the SVP did as well. Many citizens are for it but those who are powerful and who want to manipulate the wealth of the citizens are

against it. I hope for the people that it recognises the urgency of the whole problem and does not to side with the powerful who manipulate the monetary system and destroy the property of the citizens. The system of "Fiat Money" that we have in many countries today is a betrayal of all citizens who provide their services and go to work every day, and to all savers.

*So far the polls show a positive image and an approval by the majority.*

This is very understandable. According to the survey 17 percent are still undecided.

If we can convince 6 per cent of these, we would have in fact over 50 per cent. If the citizens look at their own wallet and at their own country and don't trust any banksters and speculators then they would have to vote Yes. But still nothing is decided: We have to fight for every vote and the smear campaign of the opponents has only just begun!

*Mr National Councillor, thank you for the interview.*

(Interview: Thomas Kaiser)

**"We citizens must ..."**

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It was pretty sure that Basel-City would agree, as they suffer from a lack of space and have for long been fond to absorb the neighboring canton with its huge territory. But people in the Basel-Country? They still wanted to keep their independence from Basel-City, which they had gained in 1833. So one had to try and change their minds first. After "experts" and the media had tried for years to put discord between the "advanced" districts close to the city and the "backwoods" in the more rural areas of Basel-Country, it turned out at the day of voting, that this splitting-up had been pure fiction: more than 68% voted "No" in the Canton Basel-Country on the idea of a merged greater region, none of the 86 municipalities approved!

**Why merged regions?**

Here we let the *Federal Office for statistics* (BfS) speak. A troop of EU applicants sit in this Office of the Swiss Confederation with its harmless-sounding name. They do their homework – but not in favor of those who pay their wages, the Swiss taxpayers, but directly in favor of Brussels.

"The 7 larger regions of Switzerland.

*In the course of European integration [sic!] the 7 larger regions were created on the basis of the cantons, which are to serve regional and in-*

*ternational comparisons. These regions are congruent with the NUTS 2<sup>1</sup> Eurostat (Statistical Office of the European Union) and since 1997 binding for the Swiss statistics [sic!]. However, they are no real institutional units.*

*This merging to achieve larger regions is not only an issue in statistics but also a fundamental development trend in business, politics and society [sic!]. Companies, associations and other groups organize themselves more and more in large regional references. Labor markets and commuting catchment areas are spreading. The development plans must increasingly take large regional processes into account."*

The regions are supposed to be assembled according to BfS: Lake Geneva region (Vaud, Valais, Geneva), Espace Mittelland (Berne, Fribourg, Jura, Neuchâtel, Solothurn) North West Switzerland (Aargau, Basel-Country, Basel-City), Zurich (Zurich), East Switzerland (Appenzell A. RH, Appenzell I. RH, Glarus, Grisonia, St. Gallen, Schaffhausen, Thurgau), Central Switzerland (Lucerne, Nidwalden, Obwalden, Schwyz, Uri, Zug), Ticino (Tessin).

Note: Cantons are merged – similar as at *Napoleon's* times in the Helvetic Republic – which do not want to belong together: for example Basel-Country and

Basel-City, but also Vaud and Geneva, which voted No on a merger. Not to mention the Jurassic, which probably won't want to go back to Berne, after they were finally able to separate from it?

**Conclusion**

It's up to us Swiss citizen to take countermeasures by our strong direct democratic instruments. We can vote "No" to any federal law and to any amendment to the Federal Constitution, which is intended to control more areas centrally and to interfere deeply with the core responsibilities of the cantons. We can request that in those areas, where our cantonal government councils are dealing with in the KdK, the EDK, the GDK, the FDK, referendums can be held, if the topic is of concern to us as is the case for example with Curriculum 21. From our representatives in Federal and Cantonal Parliaments we can request, that they bind back the Federal Councils to their duties to represent the interests of Switzerland and our population, against Brussels as well as against Washington. •

<sup>1</sup> "The Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics (NUTS) (*Nomenclature Unités Territoriales Statistiques*) was developed by Eurostat in 1981. [...] The nomenclature of territorial units for statistics (NUTS) applies to the Member States of the European Union only. But Eurostat has defined a classification of statistical regions in accordance with the candidate countries, other countries of the European economic area (EEA), as well as with Switzerland." [http://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/portal/de/index/international/11/geo/analyse\\_regionen/11.html](http://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/portal/de/index/international/11/geo/analyse_regionen/11.html)

## Letter to the Editor

**Gold and economic freedom are inseparable**

The Fed chief *Alan Greenspan* is believed to have said in 1966: "... An almost hysterical antagonism toward the gold standard connects state interventionists of all kinds. They obviously realise more clearly and with more sensibility than many advocates of the free market economy that gold and economic freedom are inseparable." Greenspan then changed sides, whether voluntarily, out of opportunism or because of the pressure exerted by high finance? And *J.P. Morgan* is to have said once: "Gold is money – everything else is credit". So he must have been right. It has been reported earlier, that in the "Goldstück" ("piece of gold") former National Councillor *Hans Kaufmann* advanced his opinion "Save our Swiss Gold" and underpinned it with good reasons. The fact that today the Swiss Federal Council and

a parliamentary majority decisively reject the gold initiative, speaks for itself:

It seems that one does not want to admit having been wrong after having hoodwinked the "people" by updating the Federal Constitution with respect to the gold standard. I have lost all confidence in the elites, including the Swiss National Bank. According to opinion polls, the vote on the "gold-initiative" is teetering on the brink. According to opinion polls, the vote on the "gold-initiative" teeters on the brink. In former times the nation always overruled the Federal Council and Parliament on this issue and left them standing in the rain! Hopefully the majority of the voters can be convinced this time, that the gold standard is important and correct.

*Kurt Jean Bolli-Tanner, Beringen*

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

**"All Swiss should support the referendum"**

All Swiss should support the referendum, thus restricting the banking community from further devaluation of money. The idea that the Swiss frank should be supported by the dollar as a reserve currency is ludicrous. Speaking from this side of the Atlantic the dollar has no backing whatsoever, it is in fact worthless.

No gold, no silver, not one smidgen of hard asset backs the dollar. It is no longer backed by debt, as it was previously it in no longer backed by *Heinrich Kissinger's* petrodollar, it is backed since QE 1.2.3, and 4 by absolutely nothing. The paper the dollars are printed on have greater value than the so often touted backing.

*Dr A. H. Krieg, Florida*

# “The German people want to live in peace and in freedom with all the states and peoples in Europe and in the world”

Interview with Willy Wimmer\* on the forthcoming peace conference in Berlin



Willy Wimmer  
(picture ma)

*Current Concerns: On 22 November the Magazine “Compact” will conduct an international conference on “Peace with Russia”. You, Mr Wimmer, have been a longtime security expert and security politician with a lot of international experience. Why do*

*we need today, almost 25 years after the end of the Cold War, a conference on such a topic?*

*Willy Wimmer:* Already the circumstances in which this important conference will be conducted, are devastating. We believe that we live in a free country where everyone can be happy in his own way and can speak his mind freely and uninhibitedly. The conference, to which nearly 1,000 participants are expected has nearly a “samizdat character” because it must be expected after the experiences of the previous year in Leipzig that “opinion terrorists” will try to prevent this conference.

Equally devastating is the reason for this conference. The German people want to live in peace and in freedom with all countries and peoples on its borders, in Europe and in the world. We want to trade and traffick in the best sense. The Russian Federation and the Russian people do not consider that differently. Moscow gave us the key to the German reunification, and Moscow has handed us this key in trust. Since the speech of the Federal President *Joachim Gauck* at the Munich Security Conference everyone in Germany knows that the leadership of our country in concerted action with NATO and its leading power, the United States, wants to “unsheath” against Russia, its elected president and the Russians in general. We not only face the smithers of our policy, but we also are to be dragged into a new major European conflict.

*How do you assess the current Russian policy with respect to the United States, NATO and the EU?*

After the German reunification and the temporary end of Europe’s division, Russia must recognize that neither can one speak of a “common European house” nor are the interests of the largest coun-

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## Peace with Russia. For a sovereign Europe

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Place: **Berlin**

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try in the world appropriately taken into account. Until today there is a “recurring theme” of Western policy towards Russia: Either open the country to plunder or obey submissively. In case of refusal Russia is thrown out of Europe. In May 2000, the famous Conference of Bratislava illustrated the situation dramatically. The United States consider us to be “European area” and keep us under control with the help of the Baltic States, Poland and the Ukraine, by impeding the free exchange with the Russian Federation. Washington makes no secret of the fact that the objective of the recently approved sanctions against Moscow was to get the EU on the hook. Now at declining growth rates they are trying to determine our economic policies.

*What are the underlying causes of the USA’s, NATO’s and EU’s policy towards Russia and in particular against Russian President Vladimir Putin?*

Decades ago, the US stood for a different policy. However, when a few weeks ago the former US President *Jimmy Carter* said that the US actually had no functioning democracy, you really knew enough in Europe. The USA have covered our region and our neighborhood with a trail of blood. Once upon a time the saying that “democracies do not make war” was true. Either the United States with its NATO rabble are no longer a democratic power and NATO’s “community of values” has long been written off, or there is evidence since 1999 that only democracies wage war. From Russia they demand unconditional surrender, and since the Anglo-Saxon propaganda roll di-

rected against *Wilhelm II* and thus the German Empire we Germans have known how this is done. There may be forces in the Russian Federation, which are believed to be able to turn against the freely elected president because they want someone else. Mrs *Nuland* as American Secretary of State has made it clear in her famous phone call with Kiev how one does it. Forget about an exchange of leaders in Moscow that would be based on own ideas. In its today’s state the United States are neither able nor willing to have peace. Just look at the groups who want to unsheath against President *Putin*, the Russians or Russia.

*What do these developments mean for your country, for Germany?*

One circumstance reveals it particularly well. It’s good diplomatic practice, that after taking office, the German Federal President visits our neighbors. This includes a visit to Moscow anything else wouldn’t be decent. Mr *Gauck* would not be our President if it had not been for *Michael Gorbachev* and *Helmut Kohl*. Neither is the visit his private pleasure, it is his duty. We want to live in peace and freedom with the Russians and demand the same of him. But the visit has not taken place. *Gauck’s* agenda is not the agenda of the German people, perhaps the agenda of someone else. There you realize the state Germany is in. Who dreams of a conflict with Russia, has not had my experience with a potential conventional and nuclear conflict in Europe as part of a major

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## Shall Germany fall victim to Nuclear War?

km. A conference was held in Geneva from 1974 to 1977 to further develop International humanitarian law during war times. The conference adopted two protocols additional to the Geneva Conventions of 1949. Protocol I is an amendment protocol to the Geneva Conventions relating to the protection of victims of international armed conflicts and the natural environment. The warring powers, according to Article 57 of the additional protocol, are to "refrain from deciding to launch any attack which may be expected to cause incidental loss of civilian life, injury to civilians, damage to civilian objects, or a combination thereof, which would be excessive in relation to the concrete and direct military advantage anticipated".

The Federal Republic of Germany had indeed agreed with Resolution 2444 of the UN General Assembly of 1968, in which the protection of the civil population and the ban on different ways of conducting war, were put down. But resolutions of the General Assembly are not legally binding. The Federal Republic of Germany had also officially explained, that NATO planned "no military operations which break international law".

However, the federal government was not prepared to unconditional-

ly ratify the additional protocol mentioned above. It limited its agreement to the use of conventional weapons and expressly excluded the use of nuclear weapons. Germany was not the only country which made these reservations; the atomic powers USA and Great Britain reacted similarly. The atomic power France avoided a ratification, altogether. The background for this was the Cold War at the time as well as the NATO threat of first use of nuclear weapons.

At the time every use of nuclear weapons was against international law. Many years later, in 1996, the International Court in Den Haag expressly confirmed this in a report. However, obviously no one was interested in this ban.

The fact that the German Government maintained the threat with the use of nuclear weapons at the end of the seventies and beginning of the eighties, was a grotesque perversion even perceived by the country itself. NATO's strategic plans provided that Germany, in case of an attack by the Warsaw Pact States, would be made into an atomic battlefield and with that be delivered to destruction. According to these plans, as late as in 1989, Germany was to play its part in a NATO Manoeuvre named *Win-tex/Cimex*. *Willy Wimmer* was then the

Secretary of State in the German Ministry of Defence and was to be the responsible German representative at the exercise. As *Willy Wimmer* learned about the plans, he retracted the German participation in this manoeuvre in agreement with the former federal Chancellor *Helmut Kohl*.

The strategy of first strike of nuclear weapons has, until today, not yet been given up by the US and by NATO. Until today, Germany has not yet ratified the first additional protocol to the Red Cross Agreement [Geneva Convention]. *Alois Mertes*, the former Minister of State in the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs, was the author of this terrible sentence: "Even the humanitarian ideals of the Red Cross touch upon the limits, which are set by the efforts to political and military safeguarding of peace. Even a ministerial councillor, *Reinhard, Schneider*, had expressed his criticism regarding Germany's reservations in a Petition in 1984: "The reservation would [...] advertise that the Federal Republic would exclude the application of the protocol onto its own civilian population in the case of a future nuclear war." This perversion went very far: Germany was the first country in the world to have expressed this reservation.

### "The German people wants ..."

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NATO manoeuvre in 1989. In the role as a Minister of Defence during this manoeuvre, I asked the former German Chancellor Dr Helmut Kohl, to abstain from this exercise. The Chancellor immediately did so. There was in this exercise, neither in Germany nor in Europe, anything to defend. Moreover, the Additional Protocols to the *Geneva Red Cross Convention* still make it clear that nuclear weapons might be used on German soil in accordance with international law, whereas this does no longer apply beyond the French border (see box).

*What do you think is necessary to de-escalate the new East-West conflict? What should and what could Germany do in particular?*

We have to make the war-mongers – including the media – put a stop; show civic sense in order not to end up in incrustation and impotence. Let's dare more democracy, as *Willy Brandt* postulated once.

- There must be a halt, politically, and the Common House Europe and the trans-Atlantic Arc must be filled with life.
- We still remember the best diplomatic tools to deal with all unresolved issues or crises. Let's use them.
- Prevent any arms race or the communitarisation of our armed forces, because foreigners will then send our daughters and sons to their deaths.

*Mr Wimmer, thank you for the interview. •*

*(Interview: Eva-Maria Föllmer-Müller and Karl Müller)*

\* *Willy Wimmer* (CDU) was member of the Bundestag from 1976 till 2009, defence policy spokesman of the CDU / CSU Parliamentary Group, State Secretary in the German Federal Ministry of Defence and Vice President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly. In 2014, together with *Wolfgang Effenberger* he published the book "Rückkehr der Hasardeure: Schattenstrategen, Kriegstreiber, stille Profiteure 1914 und heute (Return of the gamblers: Shadow strategists, war-mongers, silent profiteers in 1914 and today)", ISBN 978-3943007077.

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# We need a war-preventing army again!

## Call to the Swiss people and the Swiss Federal Parliamentarians

by Gotthard Frick



Gotthard Frick  
(picture ma)

With the upcoming parliamentary resolution on the further “*Weitentwicklung der Armee*” (WEA development of the army) its scope, equipment, tasks and functioning will be established for a long time. Therefore, we Swiss citizens call

on the Swiss people and their elected representatives in Berne today.

### A strong, neutral Switzerland as mediator and helper

We stand for an open-minded, neutral, economically leading and social Switzerland with a national defence based on the militia system. It must be strong enough to be able to keep a war with its immeasurable horrors and destructions off the country, as it did for the last 200 years. If we realize this image of Switzerland, Switzerland remains the model of the most peaceful, defensive, most democratic country, one of the economically and socially leading countries in the world, as it was until recently.

Only this way can Switzerland fulfill its international core task mediate conflicts in a trustworthy manner, alleviate suffering, provide a secure base for the *Red Cross* and other organizations with humanitarian and peace-building missions.

### The commitment to a peaceful world must go on

Like all intelligent world citizens, we also hope to succeed in forever abolishing War as a continuation of politics by other means. Many people around the globe work for a more peaceful, more humane and more social world, and important progress has been achieved. The UN, the EU, a peace project despite its drawbacks, the OECD, but also the organizations for peaceful cooperation, built by powers others than the West, as well as the contracts concluded by them and many other achievements suggest that humanity in search of a lasting peace has already achieved a lot. We and our country support these efforts. They are encouraging, but unfortunately do by far not guarantee an end of the violent conflicts.

### In Europe as well, war is still possible

The long peace in our European neighbourhood in combination with a unique

wealth period in world history have led many Swiss people to believe that another war could be excluded, at least in Europe. They therefore believe, we need not take the extra effort and cost of a reliable army on us any longer. We think this is an illusion that we might have to pay for very dearly, one day. The existing potential in every human being is not just creativity, constructiveness, peacefulness, humanitarianism but extends to destructiveness, demolition, violence, bestiality. Depending on the external conditions, the negative side might win, reinforced in the interaction of many people and lead to war and chaos.

Many months before the crisis in the Ukraine, also several prominent European politicians of different political persuasions, such as *Egon Bahr* and *Helmut Schmid*, SPD, or the new President of the European Commission, *Jean-Claude Juncker* of the Christian Social People’s Party, have at various occasions pointed to a possible war in Europe; Juncker for example by saying that the demons of war were not dead, they only slept in Europe. But the Chinese also repeatedly speak of the possibility of war. Thus, a Chinese major general wrote in November 2011, a war with the US was “inevitable” under certain circumstances, and recently, one could read in the Chinese media that the crisis in Ukraine could extend to a third world war and that China should be prepared for it (“*Global Times*”, Beijing from 15.9.2014).

With this information we do not want to suggest that war is imminent, but we want to show our nation, and that we must count with such a possibility and prepare ourselves for the worst scenarios, if we want to continue to keep our country out of conflict.

### States pursue their interests

We may also not forget a fundamental law of international relations: countries have neither friends nor enemies, they have only interests (200 years ago formulated by the British Prime Minister *Palmerton* and repeated by General *de Gaulle* in 1940). In crises they will push through their interests even more recklessly as in peace times, as we already frequently experienced with the imagined “friends” during the last peaceful years. There is no bonus for democracy and equal values.

### A new world order is emerging

A new world order is emerging. We do not know what it will look like, but it will probably replace the order most familiar to us which had existed for sever-

al hundred years and which was determined from the West. Such a phase of transformation is always associated with high stresses and distortions, because the states are fighting with other powers for their position, resources and spheres of influence. In addition, many countries claim territory, others also consider as belonging to them. Also, there are still many ethnic, religious and other tensions having partly lead to brutal violence. There are also profound developments in many areas, which can lead to large stresses in the human community.

Globalization means that everything is networked. Extreme developments in one region can spread rapidly, widely extend and destabilize many countries. For example a collapse of the debt mountains in the West would lead to disastrous consequences in the economy and among others in the public social insurances in many countries, throwing the people back into greatest poverty and thus arouse their violent side.

### Conceiving of most extreme threats to Switzerland

Without insinuating any aggressive intentions to Russia, we call to mind that its forces have repeatedly conducted very extensive manoeuvres during the last few years until today. In each case, up to 155,000 men, thousands of combat vehicles, hundreds of aircrafts and large fleets were deployed. The remarkable thing was that these forces, without having been forewarned, were put on stand-by within 3 days and were instantly transported up to over thousands of kilometers and brought into action. *NATO* was surprised by this capability, as its high-commander frankly admitted.

This means that the major powers and alliances can bring powerful armies into action over large distances within a very short time. Therefore, our army must again – as in World War II and until the late 20<sup>th</sup> century – be able to mobilize and achieve combat stand-by within two days.

### Central Strategic Importance of our Alpine Tunnels and Airfields

We must also take into account that our airspace, situated in the heart of Western Europe, our efficient Alpine tunnels and our civilian and military airfields are of utmost importance to *NATO* in case of major tensions or a war, apart from the longer-term importance of our economy and the traffic system for all the powers. For this reason an enemy of *NATO* will

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# “Building peace”

On Theo Dannecker's exhibition in Adliswil, Zurich

by Dr Vera Zirotff Gut

After his successful exhibitions in 2008 in Zurich, in 2009 in Glarus and in 2013 in Ebnet-Kappel, the conceptual artist Theo Dannecker shows new and well-known works on the theme "Building peace" from 6 to 28 November 2014 in the Culture Centre in Adliswil in the Canton of Zurich. In collages, objects and installations he illustrates the prerequisites for a peaceful co-existence in the social structure from home community to international community.

## Adliswil honors its artists

In the recent history of "Adliswil – a city with a future", we read about *Theo Dan-*

*necker*: "Conceptual artist. Born in 1938 and grown up in Adliswil. After intensive studies of art he headed a private art school in Zurich since 1972. As an artist, he designed objects of all kinds, (almost always associated with painting (acrylic or gouache). As a teacher, he taught comprehensive lessons following philosophical principles, knowledge in art history and practical experience. His sculpture 'Iisscharrete' was purchased by the city of Adliswil ..."<sup>1</sup> And in the older chronicles Dannecker's early *Raumabbilder* (images of room) were already accurately described and appreciated.<sup>2</sup> Meanwhile, the commune acquired the display *Mitbestim-*

*mung* (participation) and set it up together with the works of other artists in the entrance hall of the townhouse. So it is not surprising that Theo Dannecker gladly returns to Adliswil with an exhibition in the Culture Centre, the former school building, in the very classroom, in which he had spent his first three school years.

## Tribute to Adliswil

Dannecker opens the show with a tribute to Adliswil, with snapshots from a time which no longer exists as such: Four pencil drawings on canvas capture the early

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## "We need a war-preventing ..."

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also put strategic installations in Switzerland at the top of its target list, to prevent their use forcibly, if we cannot do so.

## Other dangerous scenarios

Other extreme developments, limited to Europe, are conceivable. If for example the gigantic debts should collapse or for other reasons the economy should massively shrink and a time of material poverty could begin for most people, nationwide violent riots could break out everywhere on our continent, extreme political movements emerge, here and there even regional conflicts could break out and hostile hordes could overrun Europe, pillaging and plundering. In short, a situation similar to the War of Thirty Years or to today's Middle East could occur. The already existing large number of people from different cultures with different values and behaviors that have already settled in Europe, may be increased through more flows of immigrants from collapsing states, which would exacerbate the whole thing.

Of course, even weaker threats may emerge. We can respond to them if we rebuild an army that can fulfill the requirements outlined here.

## Numerous ground forces essential

As the current debate among the powers intervening militarily in the Middle East prove: an opponent can be defeated finally only by strong ground troops occupying the country. Therefore we need a large army with a numerous staff to prevent an occupation.

## Requirements for the Swiss National Defense

Our army must be able:

- to mobilize within two days and to deny all powers the use of our territory for their own purposes including the alpine transversals, airports and our air space. This, by the way, is also required from us by the International Law of Neutrality;
- to deny entry into our country for foreign forces that want to submit Switzerland and attack somewhere on our borders and – if this should occur – keep large parts of the country in our own hands;
- to dispose of many combat units that can perform these tasks in many places at the same time, that are trained very well for the fight and equipped completely with robust, effective weapons and equipment;
- to be so strong that from a cost-benefit perspective – something that any attacker makes before he decides to attack – the calculated cost for an attack is to be much higher than the expected gain, so that he dispenses with the attack and we will spare our people the horrors of war. (In the Second World War not only Germany, but all major European powers and the United States have checked whether an attack on Switzerland for its occupation or bypassing the front line of the enemy will be worth it. All came to a negative conclusion due to the strength of our army and the difficult terrain.)

## Vulnerability of modern states

Today's modern states are extremely vulnerable. Switzerland can be paralyzed by the major powers from a great distance without having a foreign soldier cross the border. Such a campaign has the goal to eliminate a country without using it later for its own purposes, as the United States

did with Serbia. But we have a mortgage – the Alpine Transversals. If any power dared to wage such a war against us we should be ready to defeat them so persistently that they could not be at disposal for many years even in the following period of peace. You can assume that an attacker with such a possibility in mind would, in his own long-term interest, abstain from totally paralyzing the country. (German attack plans in the Second World War repeatedly stressed that only a largely undamaged Switzerland would make a "reasonable price" for an attack.)

We call on our people and the Federal Parliamentarians representing it to engage in the coming debate for an army which meets these requirements.

• Gotthard Frick, Economist & business administrator grad. Sciences Po & Sorbonne, Paris.

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places of events that is his memories of Adliswil. They represent the mood of the war and postwar years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century Adliswil had experienced an economic boom, which was highlighted in that excellent description of the Swiss state in 1827, in which all cantons of the Confederation, all districts, counties, offices as well as all cities, towns, villages, castles, monasteries, and all the mountains, valleys and lakes, rivers, streams and spas were listed by alphabetical order. Under A for Adliswil, it records “... handsome village of 50 houses, among which there are several nice houses, on both sides of the river Sihl, in the parish Kilchberg and the Zurich District of Wädenschweil. The through road to the mountain Albis vitalises the village, so there are, in addition to a new and large English-spinning mill, also a blacksmith shop, a grain and saw mill and a good inn. Farming, animal husbandry, factory labor and trade are the food basis for the residents who live in considerable prosperity ...”<sup>3</sup> The people of Adliswil were not only wealthy, they were also economical. After 1902 when they could no longer oppose the general language cleanup of local names – in which all names ending “weil” or “wyl” were uniformly renamed into “wil” – the postmen still used their postmark Adliswil at least a year longer than all others.<sup>4</sup> The Great Depression of the Twenties, however, brought the village to the brink of ruin. A quarter of the population was unemployed. And only in the period after the Second World War, which is the time that Dannecker has represented in his pencil drawings, Adliswil slowly recovered and again made some progress.

With the first drawing of the house of the *Fuhrhaltere* Hasler Günthart (wagoneer’s business) we take a look at this old Adliswil. Here, the artist was born in the middle room of the house’s third floor; a reinforced line frames the corresponding window. In the background of the drawing an old coach of the *Fuhrhaltere* can be seen. Intentionally Dannecker chose the pencil draw-



View into the studio with Theo Dannecker. (picture td)

ing, a traditional technique, which is particularly labor-intensive on canvas, stroke by stroke made with pencils tips in varying hardness and requiring great accuracy, however coming closest to ancient photographs – modelled on which these drawings were produced. On the next picture *Auf dem Heimweg vom Kindergarten 1942* (On the way home from kindergarten), he is photographed; incidentally the young artist holds a drawing in his hand. *Ich und mein Banknachbar Werner Bähler* (My classmate Werner Bähler and me) takes us into the former classroom with the old school benches made of iron and wood. When Adliswil witnessed an economic boom in the post-war period, they began – as the very first thing – to build a new school house, even if the building had to be closed down for lack of money for one year. On the drawing *Aufstellung zum Schülerumzug und Einweihung des neuen Schulhauses Kronenwiese* (Students’ lining up for a parade and opening celebration of the new school building Kronenwiese) the tallest student of the fifth grade carries a panel with the inscription “In the fifth grade, but already bigger in mind, you learn much of the beauty of the lovely Zurich country”. This small panel clearly expresses the systematically structured curriculum of the former elementary school. Step by step students learned at that time about the things close and well-known to them, about the home community with its institutions and administrative bodies, which were taught in the lower grades continuing with the more distant things, e.g. the canton. The fifth class clearly shows a cardboard cut of the Canton of Zurich as their topic. At that time it was common knowledge that the subjects’ topics had to be constructed systematically, this order representing a prerequisite for a

good public education. Theo Dannecker in shorts and festive tie is carrying a poster of the sponsoring company Vivi Kola, others hold posters of Maggi, of the Glazier Bülach and of the Sihltal Railway. The teacher in the foreground has taken out his notebook and clearly directs the students. The artist’s personal memories of his birthplace are complemented by pictures on the family topic, which indeed forms the core, the smallest unit of social life in all cultures. The conceptual artist Theo Dannecker regards the prosperous development of a personality within the family, its careful education at school, its development in the greater surroundings, the community or the cooperative as the fundament for a peaceful coexistence in the politico-economically independent communities in the Confederation and the international community. This social structure reflects the concept of the exhibition.

**Theo Dannecker, conceptual artist**

But even before the visitor enters the exhibition, he learns that the content of his pictures is particularly important to the conceptual artist Theo Dannecker – quite in contrast to non-objective painting. He makes clear statements, but gives the onlooker room to read texts, to reflect and empathize. Everyday findings, objects that he saw at a neighbour’s or fellow artist, aphorisms that he found with a philosopher, shape his way of working. Already on the market square of Adliswil a *Kopffigur im Käfig* (Head figure in a cage) whose mouth was stitched up, welcomes us with the words, “No power may silence our voice of justice”. The woman’s head with the torch of Picasso’s *Guernica*, the most important anti-war image of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, illus-

**Exhibition “Building Peace”  
Theo Dannecker**

At the Kulturtreff Haus Brugg  
Bahnhofplatz 5, Adliswil  
Vernissage 6 November 2014  
Finissage 28 November 2014  
Opening hours:  
Mo 2 pm - 5 pm / Tue 9 am - 11 am;  
6 pm - 8 pm / Wed 2 pm - 7 pm  
Thu 9 am - 11 am; 6 pm - 8 am / Fr  
5 pm - 7 pm  
Sa 10 am 3 pm with artist present  
Guidance (groups or classes) after arrangement with the artist

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trates Dannecker’s concern. Within the exhibition, we read “*Der Stein der Gerechtigkeit muss gerollt werden*” (The stone of justice must be rolled) on an oversized stone. The inscription on a folded Plexiglas wall urges everyone “*Sag ja zum Frieden*” (Say yes to peace). And when we leave the room, we read the words, “*Denn du bist ein Mensch*” (For you are a human being). In order to truly make peace, man has to take a decision for peace and be determined to engage for it with all his might. Peace does not emerge from the silence of weapons – as we have witnessed in Israel and Palestine for many years. Peace requires activity and the willingness to jointly solve the causes and problems that have led to a conflict, together with one’s opponents. The installation *Völkerrecht* (international law), which the Glarus exhibition had already shown, clearly expresses this idea.

**Homage to Pieter Bruegel the elder  
(about 1525–1569)**

Of course, there is human error, which might oppose the demand to “build peace”. In a homage to *Pieter Bruegel the elder* Dannecker has taken up the “proverbs” of 1559 in a collage. Bruegel then literally depicted 119 everyday – at that time well-

known – proverbs with which he appealed to his contemporaries to take moral more serious again; he wanted to contribute to the world’s improvement. Superficially, we might have the impression that the people in a village on the coast fulfill their daily tasks, until we realize how absurd, how foolish their activities are. From a photocopy of the original work in the museum catalog, Dannecker selected ten scenes which he adds for consideration: A globe that is suspended upside down on a house wall illustrates: *Verkehrte Welt, was nicht sein sollte* (Topsy-turvy world, what should not be). And if we think about what is going wrong in our world, in our political life? *Er hängt den Mantel nach dem Wind* (He hangs his coat in the wind) is the name of the scene, showing a man on the parapet of a roof, whose coat is blowing in the wind. A woman with water bucket, iron tongs and burning coal represents the ambiguity and falsehood: *Sie trägt Feuer in der einen, doch Wasser in der anderen Hand* (She carries fire in one hand, but water in the other hand). The quote from St. Paul’s Epistle to the Romans “*Wenn ein Blinder Blinde führt, fallen beide in die Grube*” (If a blind man leads a blind man, both fall into the pit) does not mean theological but very secular, political heresies: In war situations, for example, which we cannot check for ourselves, we are absolutely dependent on trustworthy news. And we

know from the studies of Becker/Beham on the War on the Balkans<sup>5</sup> that the desinformation representing the Serbs as oppressors and aggressors, was fed to the news by the American PR firm Ruder Finn on request of various governments. In almost all the papers the Serbs were compared to the Nazis, and this way the readers fell in the pit.

Human misbehavior also includes a second object, that Dannecker designed in Pieter Bruegel’s style: *Die Gier* (Greed). A small gouache shows *Zwei angekettete Affen* (Two chained monkeys) adapted from Pieter Bruegel the elder. The monkeys are put on a chain with gag lock; they could easily free themselves if they were only able to use their brain. With their beautiful and striking reddish-brown coat they are sitting in a wall opening. One is turned toward the viewer, while the other is seen in profile, as he looks at his empty nutshells. Through the wall opening, we look out into a bright city landscape on the river. In the sky, two birds are flying whose free flight forms a striking contrast to the chained monkeys, who lost their freedom because they gave in to their gluttony, their greed, and have stolen nuts. In front of that, on a stand trapped under a Plexiglas dome, a modern couple is sitting, three-dimensionally molded in clay, spruced in gold, light blue and pink, surrounded by gold bullions, but chained like monkeys. Even more than the two monkeys who have only stolen two nuts, they are clearly prisoners of their greed. Here Dannecker raised the question of Bruegel, whether it is worth giving up freedom for a profit of dubious value.

The counterpoint to the monkeys on the chain are those people who Theo Dannecker introduces to us in his famous *Atelierbild* (studio picture) who in words and writing, pen and brush have committed themselves to public education, the development of human rights and international law, for political independence and non-violent coexistence.

**Family farming**

A secured livelihood is also a specific prerequisite for peace. The painting *Die kleinbäuerliche Landwirtschaft* (family farming), pencil drawings of a farmer and his wife, represents this condition; between them in veritable straw there is a gouache, showing their son at work in the barn, in front of it on a metal plate a small colored pencil drawing of a scythe – an important tool in agriculture – with sharpening stone and the appropriate water jug. Attached to the installation is the *UN World Agriculture Report* of 2008 which makes clear that it is not the globalized, industrialized production of agricultural goods, but the regionally focused, small-scale agriculture which is the right answer to the world hunger problem. The revised version of the report of 2013, however, says that the weakest link in the



Installation to the international law. (picture td)

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chain of food production, processing and sale today are the farmers who produce the food. Due to the concentration processes in the food production, seed patents, the expulsion of people from their land, unfair working conditions and low prices they are getting under increasing pressure and our food sovereignty is pushed into distant future.

Cooperative

We already know smaller studies by Dannecker on the topic of cooperatives. The collage in Adliswil building on the central circle figures, on the vertical and horizontal central axis, is a very harmoniously developed composition and truly radiates this very original form of collaboration that is based on the principle of equality of all members. It envisions a situation just before the start of the General Assembly, the governing body of a cooperative. The meeting's president with red tie and blue jacket at a table in the background calls via microphone “Please take your seats, we are starting“, “the microphone is open” and “Paul is writing today’s protocol”. In the foreground and middle ground the cooperative members, dressed in complementary colors of red-green, blue-yellow or brown-blue, stand together at round tables in small groups and discuss the papers

that need to be dealt with. Their “simple” speeches, documented in the picture, such as “will we cope with that?”, “I think we will need it”, “it must be ok for everyone or else there will be discord”, “this issue is delicate”, “listen to what the others say”, “that’s very important to me”, “one person alone won’t cope” are evidence of a dialogue in which all can have a say on the basis of a common level of knowledge, which is a prerequisite of a working cooperative and a working democracy. In order to draw attention to the fundamental economic and social importance of the cooperative model, the General Assembly of the UN had made 2012 the Year of the Cooperatives and then even declared our decade to be the decade of the cooperatives: cooperatives take action against poverty, create jobs and promote social integration.<sup>6</sup> Politically, cooperatives play an important role in the development of Switzerland as René Roca recently put down in his book “Wenn die Volkssouveränität wirklich eine Wahrheit werden soll ...” (If the people’s sovereignty is really to become true)<sup>7</sup> which is on display in the installation *Eid-Genossenschaft (confederation)* below the *Röpke Brevier* (Röpke Breviary).

Con-Federation

*Die Installation zu Wilhelm Röpke* (installation on Wilhelm Röpke) is dedicated to a great economist and liberal thinker of the

20<sup>th</sup> century, who, standing for a decent order of economy and society, appreciated the structure of Switzerland, the Con-Federation very much. Dannecker has molded his beautiful head in clay and placed it on a red brick base, brick being the building material in northern Germany, Röpke’s homeland region is the Lüneburg Heath. The head, of course, represents Röpke’s ideas, which are cited in the Röpke Breviary “*Das Mass des Menschlichen*” (The measure of humaneness); an enlarged passage of the text is highlighted on a separate pedestal. Injured as an 18 year-old young man in the Frist World War, Röpke saw the war as the great primal catastrophe of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and became an intrepid fighter for peace and freedom for the rest of his life. As an economist, he saw his role primarily in “having the little glorious, but all the more useful task, [...] to let the logic of things speak for itself, to bring the uncomfortable facts and relationships to light, to put everything in place with appraising justice, [...] to puncture bubbles, to unmask illusions and confusions [...]”.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, he was of the opinion that an economist who is nothing but an economist cannot be a good economist. As a young professor in Marburg he warned his fellow Germans prior to the Reichstag elections of 14 September 1930 in

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(picture td)

### “Building peace”

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a pamphlet: “Nobody, *who will* vote national-socialist on 14 September, should later say that he did not know what could come from it. He should know that he votes for the war both internally and externally, for senseless destruction.”<sup>9</sup> And when he gave a speech on 8 February 1933, eight days after *Hitler’s* appointment as Chancellor, at the grave of his teacher, in which he spoke of “[...] that a mass uprising has dawned against the ultimate foundations of everything we call culture: a mass revolt against reason, freedom, humanity and against those written and unwritten norms that have emerged over millennia to enable a highly differentiated human community, without degrading the people to slaves of the state”,<sup>10</sup> he was dismissed without notice and accepted an invitation to the University of Istanbul by *Kemal Atatürk* that same year. In the winter semester 1937/38 he accepted a call as professor of international economics at the Institut Universitaire de Hautes Etudes Internationales in Geneva. In the postwar period he was in continuous contact with *Ludwig Erhard* and was involved in the reconstruction of market economy in the Federal Republic of Germany; he is indeed considered the spiritual father of the social market economy. At the same time he sharply criticized the European Economic Community, in which the “Economocrats” were beginning to design Europe according to their collectivist ideals. According to Röpke Europe should – as each individual state should – develop, according to the principle of subsidiarity, slowly grow together from below. His ideal of societal organization is based on federalism, on small decentralized forms of life, on small-scale structures shaped by the individual, the family, on small and medium-sized enterprises, i.e. regional structures, which lead to national and then international networking.<sup>11</sup> During the establishment of a “European Federation” he warned that the actors did not sufficiently understand the complexity of it all. Federalism was a political philosophy, a spiritual-moral choice to which one must be educated. The connectedness to one’s own homeland had to be balanced with the respect for the homeland of others. Thus he wrote, “They handle the concept of federation, as if it were the simplest thing in the world. They have no idea that such a precious fruit cannot be picked easily, but is linked to many serious conditions [...]. They do not know that this fruit can thrive only out of the humus of a society that still has a structure in genuine small communities, and presupposes the philosophy of tolerance, of liberal acceptance, respect for others, the love of the small and the manifold as well as mutual consideration. Federalism should begin at home just as charity does. It is a constitutional principle of society, which is

## Wilhelm Röpke

### *Switzerland as a model*

“But just for the reason that we consider it as sound as being able to tolerate praise and blame in an equally composed way, we may present this country – representing one of the most beautiful examples of history for inner greatness in opposition to outward smallness – to the rest of the world which is seeking refutation of the claim that the fundamental problems of mass civilisation, of democracy and moral crisis were unsolvable in the Occident. Certainly, Switzerland is an exception in the sense that everything which half-way succeeded in history is an exception, however not in the sense that you should not follow it like a model everywhere in the world. Being a work of peasants and citizens who were independent and loved freedom and were associated in cooperatives, it gave to the world the living example of a harmonious conciliation of peasantry and urban culture, and from this combination drew the strength to merge conservative and progressive forces in society, continuity and mobility, tradition and modernity, reason and faith, bravery and love of peace, order and freedom, community and individual, prosperity and spirituality in a unity that avoids the extremes. Perhaps only by regarding the experiences of thousands of years of history and comparing the example to that of most other countries, not, however, by sticking to all the imperfect things and mistakes you can fully appreciate what it means that there is a country in the heart of Europe that was able to develop and form itself alone among its equals thanks to its own force and to its mountains, thanks to a kind providence and the constellations of history – *Dei providentia et confusione hominum* – without the *ruinous* doses of the social poison of the feudal system and reasonably free from the original sin of violence and exploitation.” (2, p.47/48)

### *Federative principle incompatible with collectivism*

Source: *Das Mass des Menschlichen. Ein Wilhelm Röpke Brevier.*  
Editor Gerd Habermann,  
Berne 2009, p. 47  
(Translation *Current Concerns*)

only possible at higher levels, if it applies at the bottom levels, as well”.<sup>12</sup> His ideas were strongly influenced by the structure of Switzerland, with which he dealt extensively and to which he dedicated his “Switzerland as a model”<sup>13</sup>, a text that is highlighted on its own brick pedestal (see box).

### **All countries are equal, each country is unique**

In the spirit of “Switzerland as a model” for the world, Dannecker concludes his exhibition with the installation *Alle Länder sind gleichwertig, jedes Land ist einzigartig* (All countries are equal, each country is unique). He spreads a map of the world with 196 countries before us, in which each country is assigned a different color, in a way that creates a harmonious color image. Thus, each country has a unique and special meaning and is indispensable in the whole harmonic structure. The focus is on the red example Switzerland. In some headlines and captions Dannecker tells us, what he means: The conceptual artist spreads his message clearly before us, he leaves nothing to the perform-

er: “The earth is now home to 196 countries with approximately 8 billion people”, “They all have and are endowed with the same rights, so that the world has a future”, “Switzerland is an example that direct democracy can be realized. We take care of her”. “All countries are equal, each country is unique. Reason enough to join hands and to encourage each other to solve the problems at hand.” In the flashing light of a lighthouse, which for centuries has shown the navigator the way, it says: “Conscience gives us the orientation.” A display with the outline drawing of a human head in the manner of *Munch’s Scream*, called *Die Not* (Need), and another with the drawing of a dog’s head, which is called *Die Wache* (The guard), stand in front of the map and make clear that on the one hand the people are suffering hardship in many countries today and that on the other hand we must take care of our achievements such as direct democracy. An alarm clock indicates it is the eleventh hour to solve these problems. Dannecker takes us on our promise:

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# “I have never regarded Switzerland otherwise than as having strong bonds with the world ...”

by Jean Rodolphe von Salis



Jean Rodolphe von Salis  
(picture ma)

I have never regarded Switzerland otherwise than as having strong bonds of solidarity with the world and as understanding neutrality not as a means of closing itself off against the outside world

but as a way of taking up our small place under the sun without national prejudices, without hatred, but with an understanding for any otherness, for the foreign and exotic. It is *André Siegfried* who said that due to their neutrality, the Swiss see in other nations less potential enemies than potential partners. To this I would like to add that this same neutrality should also enable us to see both sides of the coin when regarding political problems in Europe and in the world. This would transform the negative side of the neutrality concept, the abstention, into something positive, namely an intelligent open-mindedness to various aspects of the political universe.

We can prove the credibility of our neutrality only by participating in those European and world organisations of which we are members with practicality, objectivity and impartiality, and by also rendering good offices in other forms. Certainly there is no neutrality concerning basic convictions; but we must be careful not to start preaching and moralizing at the international level or to act the European schoolmaster type by the way we edit our newspaper comments and speak on the radio or TV, and by the gist of our verbal manifestations. Neither the small size of our territory nor the tangible feasibility of our exercising influence on the international scene entitles us to such attitudes. It is today as it was in *Gobineau*'s time: We feel “called to be the advocate of a general liberation of the European peoples”. A hundred years ago, the then downtrodden Germans, Italians and French finally gained their freedom, partly due to their own efforts and partly due to political events, but without our contribu-

tion. In the same way, people who are not free today will one day attain their dreams without our intervention. We do not know how this is going to happen, we only know that they can definitely not be delivered by Switzerland's power or sympathy.

In our practical behaviour, we will not close our minds to the historical trend towards regional agreements and we will consider in each case whether and in what form we can join in. We will avoid the false appearance that we might commit ourselves politically to a block or system of alliances. It would contradict the conception of political neutrality, were we to succumb to the belief that we are under the protection and defense of the Americans. It would also lead to the situation that in the case of the Americans' withdrawal from Europe, we would feel vulnerable and unprotected and we would then look to another power for protection. A “fatalism of being protected” would mean that we would forfeit our neutrality and so have to seek the exact opposite, namely affiliation to a stronger power. There are examples of small as well as large states – Finland, Austria, France – which are independent of any foreign protection and enjoy confidence in Moscow. As long as there is no dangerous reactivation of bloc politics which could yet cause a conflict in the end, a kind of European “Helvetization” or neutralization may be possible. In any case, in times of international tension we should help our responsible public authorities to maintain a prudent as well as a stable attitude, and we should not unnecessarily unleash collective emotions, which are of no use to anyone and thus needlessly put ourselves centre stage of the tension. The reality is that we should not *underestimate* the importance of our economic potential, our financial strength and the world trade processes we are involved in, but we should not *overestimate* our political and moral significance in the world. I am afraid that sounds very sober, but it is true.

To what end do we exist as a constitutive people? We can stand (the test) due to our material and our intellectual achievements, and also because of our humanitarian work, because all three of these activities know no boundaries and can unfold

anywhere; trade, culture and assistance, human solidarity and a willingness to form partnerships, to talk, to do business with others: this is how Switzerland presents itself to the world. Therefore, we must also understand our relationship to the world in a general way; by the way, transport, technology and science also point in this direction. Local is not enough, global is more important. Exactly a hundred years ago *Jacob Burckhardt* said in the lecture entitled “world-historical reflections” that has since become famous: “Acquisitiveness, the main driving force of the current culture, intrinsically posits the universal state simply on account of traffic, although of course a strong counterweight operates in the nature of individual nations and in their sense of power.” Since that time, there has been spatial research, but the universal state has not come into existence, because the unique character and the lust for power of humanity's peoples have retained their political diversity and hence also their tensions and conflicts.

A neutral state is one which behaves as if it were part of a universal state: because it basically has no enemies, it must seek to live in peace with everyone. This attitude requires patience, much good will, self-control and absolute loyalty. You have to act according to the English rule which requires you to regard your neighbour as a gentleman, as long as he does not give evidence of the opposite. And even if he does, our disappointment at his betrayal of our trust must not allow us to turn to violence, because we lack the power for it, and a small state cannot afford to use a policy of force, unless in self-defence. But it would be wrong to think or to fear that this lack of size and power could prevent us from gaining reputation once again. The Swiss undoubtedly have a sensitive need of estimation and want to be accepted and appreciated; our difficulty is to achieve this goal not by wrong measures but by proper behaviour. •

Excerpt from: J. R. von Salis. “Foreign policy Standpoint” (1968); in: J. R. von Salis, *Schwierige Schweiz. Beiträge zu einigen Gegenwartsfragen* (Complex Switzerland, Contributions to a Number of Contemporary Issues). Zurich 1968, p 330-333

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

Letter to  the Editor**Federal Councillor Berset belongs back into the ranks**

The speech “Basics on the cultural situation of Switzerland” which *J. R. von Salis* held 1955 in Lucerne at the Delegate Assembly of the Swiss Association of Teachers (*Current Concerns* No. 26), has nothing lost of its actuality and is of a sophistication and content depth to which nothing compares today. *J. R. von Salis* directs the focus to the essentials and gives an inner guidance and orientation when it comes to understanding political processes in Switzerland, to classify them and to act as a citizen. In the following I would like to seize upon a few of his key ideas to enlighten – based on them – some political events of the last weeks:

Switzerland is a community of will, which is not, as the nation-states surrounding it, defined by an area of a common language and culture. Under the umbrella of the Federation different religions as well as several language communities and cultural areas unite. Depending on the region not only the languages differ but also their perception of forms, their mentality, their sensitivity are different.

Therefore, church, school, science and culture are encompassed in the competence of the cantons.

The duty of the Federation is, to guard the liberties, which are a prerequisite for the cultural life, the freedom of religion, the freedom of political and ideological attitude and opinion building and the freedom of language use.

Only the federal and directly democratic structure of Switzerland enables a peaceful and mutually enriching coexistence in diversity, because the issues can be resolved in their own respective way at the communal or cantonal level. The task now is to preserve this multiformed Switzerland.

However, Federal Councillor *Berset* does anything but that. He is exceeding his authority when he launches a “National Cultural Policy”, when he wants to fixate at the national level, how many languages are to be taught at primary schools across the whole country, when he plans a national center of health excellence, etc. All these matters are encompassed in the competence of the canton. Federal Council *Berset* belongs back into the ranks.

Democratically unauthorized bodies such as the *Conference of Directors of Education (EDK)* work in the same direction: By means of the Curriculum 21, the elementary schools in all German-speaking cantons is to be harmonized down to OECD standards, all cantons are asked to introduce the early foreign language teaching according to the model 3/5, and a phony “language dispute” is instigated in the media. But the gentlemen did not reckon with the sovereign.

Resistance is building. In several cantons popular initiatives have already been launched, which demand that the introduction of the Curriculum 21 must be approved by the parliament. This decision is then amenable to a referendum, so that the people, if necessary, can have the last say. Also the “National Culture Policy” of *Berset* meets with resistance, we do not need a “federal culture reeve”.

*Susanne Lienhard*

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

**Would the United States tolerate a Mexico depending on China?**

Those who have watched the Ukraine crisis in the mainstream media, had to assume that Russia and in particular the “evil” *Putin* are to blame for everything. According to Western opinion cutting Crimea out of Ukraine was a breach of international law. However, what does the actual development look like in point of fact: After the reunification of Germany in 1991 Russia was assured by high ranking Western politicians that NATO would not expand to the East. Meanwhile, former Soviet Union states, i.e. the three Baltic States as well as Poland, the Czech Republic and Slovakia, Bulgaria and Romania were integrated into NATO - all countries serving mainly as a buffer zone between the Eastern and Western Block. And now the Ukraine is to be tied to the West. Recent-

ly, a trade agreement with the EU was completed. And all this after the Maidan riots under the significant influence of the United States. Anyone who still does not believe this should read the phone conversation between the US Deputy Secretary of State *Nuland* and the US ambassador in Kiev *Pyat* (published in *Voltaire Network* and in *Zeit-Fragen* on 9 September 2014) dealing with the best way of how to heave several Ukrainian politicians into high office. It is easy to understand that *Putin* can't tolerate a US-led NATO country directly at his front door. Would the United States tolerate a Mexico depending on China? That *Putin* is fighting with the gloves off is comprehensible. The policy of EU enlargement to Ukraine and a subsequent NATO integration

bears witness to USA / EU power politics and not to political realism in Western geopolitics with the consideration of Russian interests and it would be a clear threat to Russia. Whether the economic sanctions of the EU Commission to Russia will have a boomerang effect remains to be seen. Already, quite a few business circles moan at the expected responses. The USA have the last laugh, a weakened EU would just come handy for them. For me the idea of Prof *John Mearsheimer* is future oriented: a neutral Ukraine, which poses no threat to Russia and has trade relations to the East and the West.

*Ingo Kersten, Frittschen*

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

**“Building peace”**

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never before were as many wars waged as today. But: The people can approach each other and build peace. Never before the call “building peace” has been more necessary than today. •

<sup>1</sup> *Heinz Binder: Adliswil – eine Stadt mit Zukunft. Adliswil 2000. p. 316. The “lisscharrete” was a special natural phenomenon, which now rarely occurs: If after an extended cold period the Sihl river was frozen up to 60 cm, floating ice consisting of massive ice sheets was formed by*

excessive heating and heavy rain, which developed into an avalanche that thundered down to Platzspitz, a square near the city center.

<sup>2</sup> *Max Boot: Chronikblätter zur neueren Geschichte Adliswils. Horgen 1981. pp. 71.*

<sup>3</sup> In: “Vollständige Beschreibung des Schweizerlandes oder geographisch-statistisches Handlexikon über alle in gesammter Eidgenossenschaft befindlichen Kantone, Bezirke, Kreise, Aemter sowie aller Städte, Flecken, Dörfer, Schlösser, Klöster auch aller Berge, Thäler, Seen, Flüsse, Bäche und Heilquellen nach alphabetischer Ordnung.” publishing house: Aarau 1827. quoted in *Heinz Binder loc.cit., p. 24*

<sup>4</sup> see *Heinz Binder, loc. cit., p. 20*

<sup>5</sup> see *Jörg Becker and Mira Beham. Operation Balkan. Werbung für Krieg und Tod. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Nomos*

2008. See also *Helmut Scheben: “PR-Aufträge für Hass und Tod.” In: Neue Rheinische Zeitung of 15 October 2014. www.nrhz.de/flyer/beitrag.php?id=20861*

<sup>6</sup> see *UN Resolution A/RES/64/136*

<sup>7</sup> *René Roca: Wenn die Volkssouveränität wirklich eine Wahrheit werden soll... Zurich 2012*

<sup>8</sup> *Sara Warneke: Die Europäische Wirtschaftsintegration aus der Perspektive Röpkes. Stuttgart 2013, p.7*

<sup>9</sup> *loc. cit., p.8*

<sup>10</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wilhelm\\_Röpke](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wilhelm_Röpke)

<sup>11</sup> see *Sara Warneke loc. cit., pp. 14.*

<sup>12</sup> quoted in *Sara Warneke, loc. cit., p.65*

<sup>13</sup> *Das Mass des Menschlichen. Ein Wilhelm-Röpke-Brevier. Ed. by Gerd Habermann. Berne 2009, pp. 47*

# “Miscanthus giganteus” – a renewable raw material for the future

by Pierre A. Krenger, Pully, Switzerland

*er. Miscanthus giganteus is a plant unknown to many. There are several research centres that are doing research on this plant such as the Hohenheim University (agriculture) in Stuttgart. Interesting to know that the plant may thrive at sites where the soil is insufficient for crops for food production. The cultivation does not seem to be that easy since only after two years the crop is available and the cost must be provided in advance. In addition, late frosts are a problem in the first years which may lead to crop failure. As an energetic alternative to wood pellets the plant is very interesting. It provides comparably much heat and its other possibilities of use are numerous and varied. At times when one puts so much emphasis on renewable resources this plant could well gain in importance.*



*Miscanthus giganteus (picture wikipedia)*

One day, when I drove to the region near Nyon to meet with former service mates, I noticed a field where high stalks were growing which somehow reminded me of corn. What a strange plant is that, I asked myself. Is it papyrus, bamboo, or sugarcane? When at the meeting I posed the question to the round, I met with a connoisseur. Since his retirement, the former

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The use of Miscanthus, also called elephant grass, is undoubtedly an important contribution to the production of bioenergy. As it is rich in cellulose fibres, this plant provides a new sustainable option for renewable energy production, and contributes to the reduction of environmental emissions with greenhouse effect.

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banker used most of his time on promoting Miscanthus plantations in Eastern Europe. As a consequence, I accompanied him on a thrilling tour filled with hopeful promising discoveries that led us through Romania up into Turkey! China reed can be used in many different ways and solve many problems associated with sustainable development. All parts of this plant can be used, nothing is lost!

Its scientific name is *Miscanthus giganteus sinensis*. It comes from South East Asia and is an infertile evergreen hybrid and woody crossover plant (grass).<sup>1</sup>

## Plantation

*Miscanthus giganteus* has a rhizom<sup>2</sup> which develops scaly buds consisting of small rough leaves. A stalk grows from each bud. In order to produce rhizomes the mother rhizomes are dug up after three years and separated from the 60 to 80 subsidiary rhizomes which may be used for a new culture. The rhizomes form buds as long as 20 to 25 years. Three years after planting, reed-like stalks rise three to four metres high with a diameter of 10 mm.

Miscanthus improves the soil on which it grows. Each winter the fallen leaves produce 1–2 cm humus. It requires neither fertilizer nor other nutrients and is nourished by its own rotting leaves. Thanks to its very deep roots it works against the erosion of the soil. The earth is stabilized and not washed away by leachate. A Miscanthus field is natural and animal friendly as it provides an excellent shelter for wildlife, especially for birds. In contrast for example to cereals, the harvest season does not coincide with the nesting period.

## Harvest

The first “commercial” harvest takes place two years after planting. In this stage, the productivity corresponds to approximately half the maximum output reached in the fourth and fifth year. From now on, harvest takes place every spring without having to do any work during the previous year. This continues for 20 to 25 years.

Miscanthus grows on all types of soil. It is also content with poor soil so that

there is no danger of competition with food crops. It requires neither fertilizer nor alimony.

Miscanthus crops thrive well on soils of class 2 and 3, while cereals require soils of class 4 and 5 (maximum 6). Thus, it is no competition for cereals as the latter plants need nutrient-rich soils which are more expensive in purchase and demanding in maintenance. In Eastern Europe, for instance, Miscanthus can be grown on small animal pastures, where farmland would be much too expensive.

In Western Europe, the yield per acre is 15 to 25 tons of dry material. Thanks to permanent irrigation, the University of Illinois (USA) achieved a yield of 40 to 60 tons per hectare.

Not too far away processing centres (25–30 km) are needed for the voluminous transport and storage. Thus, it is most profitable if the material can be processed and used locally.

## Utilisation possibilities

*Miscanthus reaches its highest use as a renewable and eco-friendly energy source.*

## Energy production

Miscanthus can produce heat, electricity and biofuels.

The best gain is achieved through *burning*. The calorific value is high (18 MJ/kg). 20 tons of Miscanthus produce the same amount of heat as 14 tons of coal or 50 tons of lignite. In other words, 4,500 kWh per ton can be obtained from Miscanthus and 3,300 kWh from wood pellets on the same weight basis. Compared to wood, Miscanthus practically has not to be dried as its humidity is low (14%). Like wood, Miscanthus can be shredded and pressed into briquettes or pellets. One hectare Miscanthus approximately equals the heat output from 5,000 to 6,000 litres of heating oil.

In addition to residential buildings, also factories, greenhouses, ceramic stoves etc. can be heated. In Romanian *VaNatori* for example, the cultivation and the subsequent processing and utilisation of Miscanthus are beginning to revive villages (partly inhibited by Sinti and Roma) that were previously considered “extinct”.

In *Drax*, Great Britain, a mixture of 50% each of Miscanthus and coal is burned in a large thermal power plant.

At this, it is remarkable to note that with regard to air pollution lignite is the worst performer, coal a bit better and Miscanthus is almost neutral.

## “*Miscanthus giganteus*’ – ...”

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The production of *electricity* with *Miscanthus* requires the following steps: a very high grade boiler that produces steam that drives a turbine which in turn drives a generator.

In *Eccleshall* near *Stafford* in England the *Miscanthus* biomass (25,000 tons) is produced by a farmers’ cooperative of about sixty farmers on an area of around 1,500 hectares. It is delivered to a plant that provides the 2,600 households of the town with the necessary power (20,000 MWh). The power is generated by a 2,6 MW generator which is driven by a steam turbine. With the production of 65% “green” power and 30-35% heat, *Miscanthus* demonstrates in *Eccleshall* that its energy balance is clearly positive.

### Other modes of use

Note that in addition to energy production *Miscanthus* offers a wide range of organic products, the raw material of which is renewable.

#### 1. Animal bedding

The spongy interior of the stalk gives *Miscanthus* a large absorption capacity (almost three times the weight of water), which reduces the number of pathogens compared to the conventional bedding. In addition, *Miscanthus* is three times more absorbent than straw, and the animals do not eat it.

#### 2. Cover for ornamental plants

The *Miscanthus* allows an effective control of the regrowth of weeds in flower beds and thereby protects the ornamental plants from competition. Thanks to its excellent water-binding capacity, it limits the water evaporation of the soil, which reduces the necessity of watering.

#### 3. Replacement material for PVC and propylene

The *Miscanthus* stalks have special properties, especially with regard to solidity and elasticity. Therefore, *Miscanthus* can be used in many diverse ways, for example for devices made of *bioplastics*, which are made from ground *Miscanthus* and added by two other components. In Switzerland, for example, credit cards, business cards, mugs, cords for climbing plants (tomatoes, vines, etc.), paper, bookends, etc. are made in pre-industrial production.

#### 4. Compostable flower pots

The completely bio-degradable flower pots (biopots) represent an important sales

market. They are made of *Miscanthus* and binders of natural origin. In the agricultural industry in the Netherlands the use of *Miscanthus* in this area is already widespread.

#### 5. Construction industry

*Miscanthus* can be used for the production of lightweight concrete, filler, concrete slabs, straw-clay construction, insulation boards, bricks, plaster, etc. The walls made of *Miscanthus* “breathe” by avoiding the formation of condensation in the wall. Processed in boards, *Miscanthus* fibres are an ideal product for sound and heat insulation.

Compared to concrete products the production of *Miscanthus* boards consumes much less energy. As for bricks, the renewable *Miscanthus* replaces the non-renewable materials clay and kaolin. Such bricks are only a third as heavy as those made of concrete or pressed earth. If products made of *Miscanthus* are shredded, they are easily degradable.

*Miscanthus* can be used for the production of *noise barriers*. These absorb the noise better than conventional noise barriers and meet the EU standards in terms of resistance to fire, graffiti, falling rocks etc.

*Houses* and other buildings can be built with *Miscanthus* products: one hectare of harvested *Miscanthus* and 30 cubic metres of conifer wood are sufficient to produce the required building materials for a single-family home. Since the *Miscanthus* boards are not sustainable, the stability of the house must be secured by beams of laminated wood.

In 2007, a house was built from *Miscanthus* in Switzerland in Bannwil (BE). The *Miscanthus* heating allows a saving of 60% compared to a conventional system. In St. Blaise (NE), another house was finished a year ago. In Gals (BE) there is a huge garage made of iron beams and *Miscanthus* boards where agricultural machinery and vehicles are parked.

#### 6. Automobile Industry

*Miscanthus* is used in the production of steering wheels, bumpers, wheel covers, dashboards and doors. In Stuttgart, Mercedes-Benz manufactures steering wheels that contain *Miscanthus*.

### Brief review

Although *Miscanthus* is already cultivated in many countries, its cultivation in *Europe* has only moved forward slowly, due to – in part – the lack of adequate market outlets.

In *Switzerland* the former Swiss Federal Councillor *Jean-Pascal Delamuraz*, head of the Federal Department of Economic Affairs, supported the first experiments with the cultivation of *Miscanthus* by means of financial incentives. In 2000, an agricultural association was formed by *Miscanthus* producers. The *Solidarity of Interests Miscanthus (SIM)* has the task to promote the cultivation of this amazing plant. SIM’s president resides in the aforementioned house in St. Blaise.

The wooden snowdrift fences that are used as snow barriers during the winter time in our region could be replaced by lean *Miscanthus hedges*. In doing so, the significant expense of production and installation at the beginning of winter as well as the cost for removal and storage in spring could be spared.

### Swiss realisations in Eastern Europe

“*Biocarbol*” is a project founded and managed by the Swiss company *ETIA Management AG* in cooperation with SIM. The project in a first phase aims at producing rhizomes, whilst cultivating *Miscanthus* in Bulgaria and Romania on a large scale later on. The project, while being characterised by environmental friendliness and the use of renewable energy, also benefits from the fact that the cost for soil and workers there is considerably lower than in Western Europe. Once on its way, the majority of *Miscanthus* production is projected to be processed into “green” electricity and building panels.

Since the launch of “*Biocarbol*” in 2009, “test plantations” have already been set up in two countries and the project is estimated to be operating its regular course of business within the next 18 months.

Moreover, it is worth noting that “*Biocarbol*”, in using *Miscanthus*, also initiated a pilot project for the decontamination of soil polluted by heavy metal in *Copsa Mica* (Romania) and in Bulgaria, where a large brown coal plant has contaminated residual soil. ●

<sup>1</sup> *Miscanthus giganteus* is a naturally occurring hybrid of the plant species *Miscanthus sinensis* and *Miscanthus sacchariflorus*; it cannot produce fertile seeds. Systematically, it is to be assigned to the grass family.

<sup>2</sup> A *rhizome* is a more or less thickened shoot axis growing mostly horizontally underground, and has so-called adventitious roots, i.e. roots that spring up from the shoot. Rhizomes are used in asexual reproduction. Ginger “root”, for example, is a rhizome.