

Switzerland 2000



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In the past visions were the privilege of prophets and saints. Nowadays they are widely available and at little expense. Mostly they are unrealistic ideals or then again terrible visions. Everlasting prosperity, a society without unemployment, greater solidarity, more environmental protection, less smoke, a Swiss metro from Geneva to Madrid, Botta bridges in the larger Swiss cities - it is difficult to hold back one's tears. In the meantime also corporations and football teams are equipped with visions. Visions are the modern substitute for traditions. "Sacred cows are taking long to clear the stage" was the title of a story which recently appeared in a German news magazine (about the vacation country Switzerland). The murder trial surrounding Bruno Zwahlen took up the largest amount of space. The magazine also expects Switzerland to go downhill and - gleefully - expects its traditions to be liquidated. Its solo run has weakened its economic fighting power, its police systems are endangered, the chasm between the political class and the people is wider than ever before, while brutalization and violence is spreading like wildfire. This is the outside view. Internally it is even worse. Scenarios on Switzerland 2000 don't only not appear rosy, but indeed look pretty apocalyptic.

The European Wild West

According to the Wild West scenario that which is already reality in many parts of the world, will become, after the usual delay, reality here. The unemployment rate will continue to rise, not to ten, but to twenty, perhaps thirty per cent. The labour market will split into two: a protected market and a contract, rental and temporary market. Society too will fall prey to polarization. A High Society that seals itself off and surrounds itself with private guards, will face an impoverished population that lacks protection in the economic and social territory through which it moves. Crime will increase. Of all countries it will be Switzerland that as a rich and independent country will become the preferred object of inter-

national and organized crime. Civil warlike confrontations are on the daily agenda. The public sector disintegrates for lack of finance and the deregulated market is not able to provide the compensation promised (jobs). The police are no longer in control, the parks are in the hands of drug dealers, public places are the stock markets of international crime, the banks the hub of - as Jean Ziegler called it - a "multicriminal" society, the churches emergency shelters for the homeless and the unemployed. This gloomy scenario resulted from the naive utopia of a multicultural society and of an ill-considered opening up to Europe and world politics, as advocated, in particular, by progressives, socialists and internationalists. They don't think much of borders, have little regard for traditions and are pushing for an insidious replacement not only of distinctive features in Swiss politics and culture, but also of the native population.



Heidiland

The progressive apologists of international solidarity and multicultural openness see the defensiveness and retreat of Switzerland, as practised by the right and the preservers of values, doomed in a different way. Switzerland, as it withdraws behind its fortifications, will choke on its own traditions.

According to this scenario it will develop into a kind of Eurodisneyland, in which not Mickey Mouses, but cheese-makers and choirs in national costumes will be performing their Alpine traditions. This amusement park of 41 thousand km² will be administered by banks and insurance companies. The Swiss population will be employed in jobs designed to maintain this Heidiland. During festivals to satisfy the paying foreign visitors, the Alps will be, to the extent that forest, man and animal can put up with it, illuminated, and

bank directors will be working for the fun of it in the cheese-making show or will be training hillbillies in restaurant marquees, modeled on Swiss chalets.

2000 is already upon us

The first indications of both visions, in fact, already exist. Soon more foreigners than natives will be present at local festivals and at Swiss wrestling matches. Since the rejection of the EMU, more than 50 bil of funds from Germany alone have within a period of 6 months poured into Swiss bank accounts (the Swiss state budget is 40 bil). Mobile spaces enjoying freedom from the law are emerging in larger and smaller towns. One thing is at least clear: The year 2000 will not suddenly descend on us. The future is already upon us today. If the 90s we will be living through, are not to become for our children "the good old days", and the year 2000 is not to be the entombment of Switzerland, replaced by a Wild West or Heidiland, it is necessary to think about what one wants. Viktor Frankl once wrote that it was the tragedy of the modern age that because one no longer knows why, one does not know what one wants either. That's correct. But don't we have a pretty clear idea of what we don't want? Vision 2000 for Switzerland should be: Preventing what one doesn't want, and trying to preserve what one is happy about.

Preventing what one doesn't want

One should state what one doesn't want. This is simpler than painting paradise in the footsteps of Christianity and the philosophers of progress, and then giving the present marching orders in the direction of paradise. However, it is more difficult than nobly swearing Christian solidarity with the whole world and accusing the sceptics of egoism. That remains rhetoric. For nobody, basically, knows what the reaction to the daily diet of abominable atrocities delivered to our homes should be like. But at any rate, nobody wants Yugoslav or Iraqi conditions in Switzerland. Nobody wants violent conflict between ethnic groups. But neither does anybody want any such conflict between polarized classes separated to such a degree by income, wealth and education that they can only perceive each other as enemies. Nobody wants "Age Wars", and nobody wants the creation of spaces

free from the law and segregated zones of poverty and crime. In order to prevent what one doesn't want, one needs to develop a policy of prevention and a plan of preventive action. But how? By preventing unbridgeable chasms in society. The test of this will is the close space, the group and the generation, the neighbourhood, the quarter, the immediate social surroundings and the partnership. "A beginning shall be made in the home of what shall shine in the fatherland" - old-fashionable but true!

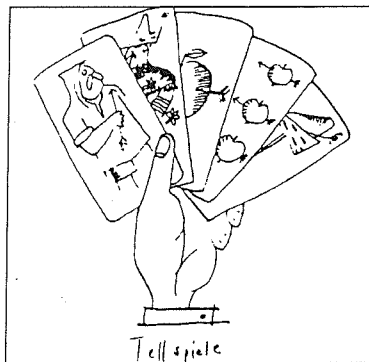
Preserve achievements

Switzerland is struggling with problems which are similar to those in other affluent societies. Demographic aging, the increase in single households, increasing mobility, a growing crime rate, high and increasing unemployment and a growing unprotected labour market (temps and contract workers) are the most important. How they are evaluated depends on the solution that might be applied. Furthermore, the meaning of it all is the question behind all political and economic questions. For too long the communist enemy had given meaning and covered up the loss of meaning in the West. Developments that can be given meaning, lose their dangerous nature. Where a society defines itself in terms of its youth and work, age and unemployment have no meaning. When meaning becomes a "more" without substance, then arranging oneself with what one has is meaningless. The worldwide unrest and the economic crisis afford time to redefining essentials. The central European geographical location, the well-advanced federalism, the philosophy of voluntary networks and the direct democratic process were innovative answers to the old threats. They should be reapplied for a common production of meaning and security close home, on the doorstep. The uncertainty as regards the economy is to be compensated for through small-scale solidarity pacts. A secure sense of community in the home, in the neighbourhood, in the quarter and in the community cannot be forced, but must be worked on. For this purpose social, not technical innovations are required. Keywords would be: the expansion and improvement of the voluntary networks; reapplication of energies released (also those of the unemployed and senior citizens); the renaturalization of security production (social, ecological) through self-help and self-protection.

A hard times handbook

Survival manuals are in great demand. They contain advice on how to keep

warm in case central supply systems break down, on how to feed on insects, on how to produce candles and on how to cover food requirements through land cultivation or bartering. They serve to render households and families independent of the large, and, consequently, highly sensitive and vulnerable circulation of energy and goods. This too is to be safeguarded. By means of flexible, mobile and, as it is so nicely put, lean private-sector and public companies. It was possible for everybody to obtain more in an expanding economy. In a crisis there are winners and losers, and there exists less scope for the distribution of material blessings. But this is only one side of the coin. Are we proud of our highways, textile machines, Swatch? Is it the air and the forest that define quality of life? Or is it in the end always a question of social conditions? Don't we have enough washing powders, suits, shoes? Do we really need 24 valves and drivers' seats



with 12 adjustments? Who is trying to kid us into believing that a camera must be fully automatic? Mutual cooperation calls for new and innovative developments. The year 2000 requires a "Hard Times Handbook" for this mutual cooperation. Not more washing power, but more social strength is necessary. And everybody has to make a contribution, not only through ideas, not only through taxes, not only through political participation, not only through advice, but through deeds.

Corporate identity

A new social contract is necessary to realize this vision. Instead of a social contract, one could speak of "Corporate Identity", which also a country, a people, a nation should aspire to. Corporate Identity demands of participants more than good ideas and good intentions. It must be assimilated into society's capillary system. Its script is no longer written by the political class. Produced is not paper, but reciprocity, solidarity and interpersonal relationships. The upswing begins in people's

heads - and ends in their hands. That which needs protecting and that which needs preventing are right there on each person's own doorstep. For a new kind of solidarity pact between everybody to become effective, each social group must appreciate the other group and its function, and must be able to assume that this group also appreciates it and takes it seriously.

The hole in the ozone layer is a metaphor for the meaningless emptiness we face. Meaning is found in actions that reassure and satisfy. Indeed, in a schizophrenic way, corporations, managers and politicians know that much of what they must do, will only increase the problems. Employees must be made redundant to increase productivity.

A great strain is placed on what is still bearable to fulfil one's duty towards international solidarity. Mobility is increased with the result that the neighbourhoods that have grown together are torn apart. Emancipation is demanded and then people are left on their own. Everywhere more of the same - more roads, more work, more consumption, more freedom - all this will not take us any further. This modern, open society is full of contradictions. The story has no Happy End. There are no simple solutions available to the world community. There is a price to be paid for this increase in opportunities and also for this growth in the unforeseeable. Only the small communities can develop integrative powers. We still live most intensively in these communities. They have to be revitalized. They have to be made acid-proof. In these communities, everything that has been achieved, can be consolidated, suffering prevented and meaning found: a meaning in taking action right there with and for each other. In fact cultural conditions and the resulting inner peace are decisive prerequisites in the future - not low pay or a socially explosive situation. This is what those involved in the economy and politics should be protecting, not themselves!

Vision 2000

Vision 2000 as applied to Switzerland: the development of its socially innovative potential and the demonstration of the power of cultural projects. Switzerland will again become what it has always been:

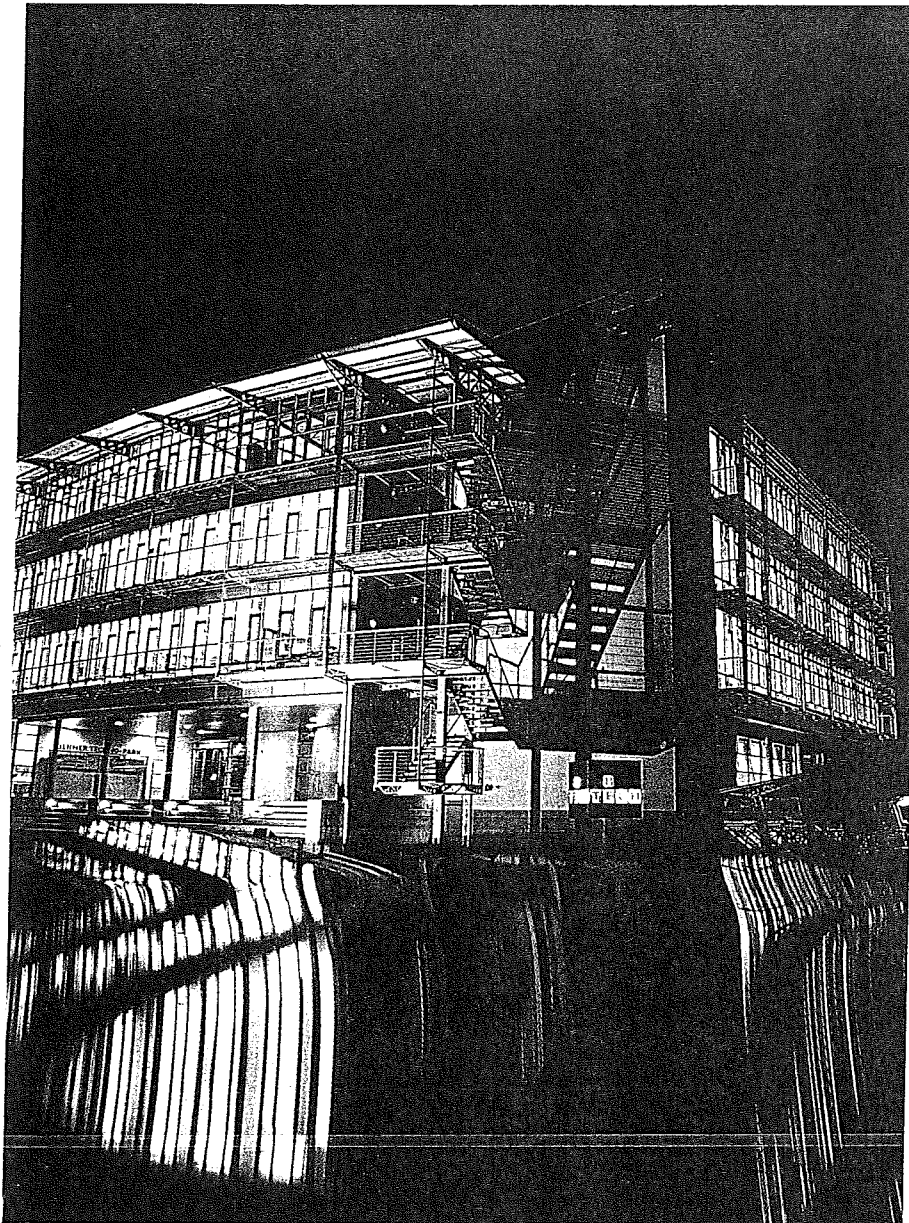
Neither a bureau de change nor a supermarket, neither the Wild West nor a Heidiland, but a social and cultural model for the future of European nations - accepted, perhaps marvelled at and possibly even revered. A model that lives, because it lives! ■

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Dear reader

Switzerland is currently emerging from a prolonged phase of economic stagnation accompanied by an unusually steep rise in unemployment. Many Swiss are concerned about their jobs. They are additionally made to feel insecure by our country's integration policy. People fear that entrepreneurs will migrate to other European countries on a large scale. They are haunted by the spectre of an isolated Swiss economy.

I do not share this view. Our economy has never allowed itself to be isolated. Its close links with other countries have always been one of its strengths. Today it provides employment for almost as many people abroad as in Switzerland. The capital - per head of the population - invested from Switzerland in foreign production facilities is higher than for any other comparable country. The proportion of total international direct investments accounted for by Switzerland amounts to approximately 4 %. This is on a level with G7 countries such as France, Italy and Canada.

Our enterprises have already been concentrating their investments in western Europe for several years. Today half of Switzerland's foreign capital holdings



are in this region. On the other hand, a considerable number of shareholders of Swiss firms are from EC countries. In terms of capital, Switzerland is fully integrated in the EC, presumably even more so than most of the member states.

Switzerland's direct investments abroad will continue to grow regardless of the country's integration policy. Businesses characteristically invest in areas with expanding markets and good earnings prospects. Disappointed supporters of EEA membership are occasionally

tempted to qualify every investment abroad as a disastrous consequence of the negative vote. This attitude is not correct. Direct investments abroad are not an expression of weakness. They are a sign of economic strength. Swiss enterprises that expose themselves to international competition with such investments are making a greater contribution towards revitalizing our economy than politicians have succeeded in doing so far.

The negative outcome of the vote on accession to the EEA has, however, created an awareness of the question of Switzerland's attractiveness as a business location. We can ensure that certain production sectors, in compliance with the international division of labour, remain within the country by providing a favorable regulatory framework. As a trade center we continue to hold attractions. If this is to remain so in future we must, however, concentrate our efforts on improving the regulatory framework. The Swiss National Bank is willing to make its contribution.

Markus Lusser
Dr. Markus Lusser, Chairman of the Governing Board, Swiss National Bank

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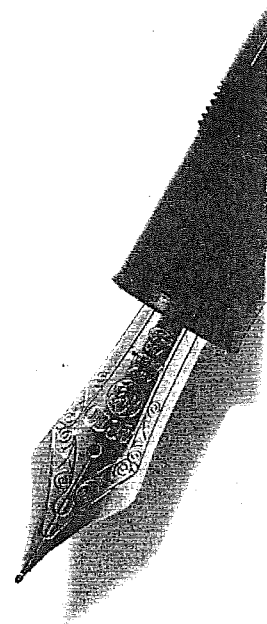


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Editorial



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