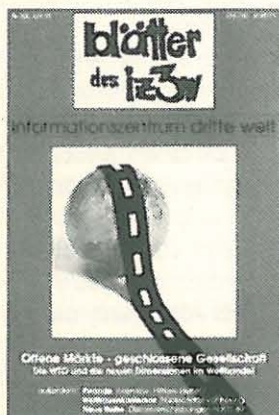


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Journal für Entwicklungspolitik XII/2, 1996, S. 243 – 251

Richard Gerster

Monitoring Swiss Participation in the Bretton Woods Institutions¹

1) Background

The principles and goals of Swiss Development Policy are laid down in a federal law of 19 March 1976. The wording of the relevant articles is as follows:

"Article 2: Principles

International development co-operation and humanitarian aid is an expression of solidarity. It represents one of the principles which shapes Switzerland's relations with the international community and reflects a linkage of interests around the world. It is based on mutual respect for the rights and interests of the partner in development.

The measures in this law take account of conditions in the partner country and the requirements of the people for which the measures are intended.

Switzerland's ODA is provided either in the form of grants or on preferential terms. As a rule, it complements the efforts of the partner.

Article 5: Goals

Development co-operation supports developing countries in their efforts to improve the living standards of their people. It should contribute to an advancement in the development of these countries, based on their own efforts. In the long run, it tries to improve the balance within the community of nations.

It supports primarily poorer developing countries, regions and population groups. Therefore it promotes:

- (a) the development of rural areas;
- (b) improvement of the nutritional situation, especially through self-sufficiency in agricultural production;
- (c) handicrafts and local, small-scale industries;
- (d) the creation of new jobs;
- (e) the restoration and protection of ecological and demographic balance."

¹ Presentation on the occasion of the Workshop "50 years Bretton Woods" in The Hague, September 12, 1994.

Most important, and most disputed in the 1970s, was the fact that not only the governments in the South are mentioned as possible partners, but also the "requirements of the people", the effort to "improve the living standards of their people" and the "support of poorer developing countries, regions and population groups".

Since its inception, the Swiss Coalition has been using these legal principles and goals to ask for more coherence in Swiss development policy. For instance, in 1981 we achieved a formal reference to the principles and goals of development policy in the law governing the Export Risk Guarantee Scheme. And as far back as 1982 the Swiss Coalition was publishing articles asking the Swiss Government for a development policy amendment to the law if Switzerland should decide to join the IMF and the World Bank Group. Bretton Woods and the debt crisis have been a major lobbying concern for the Swiss Coalition since the early Eighties. By the way, we are now asking for similar arrangements regarding membership in the new World Trade Organisation (WTO).

In 1990 the Swiss Government started negotiations on membership in the Bretton Woods Institutions. The Swiss Coalition approached the government, stating that we would not oppose membership if three conditions were met:

- additional funds to cover the costs, which should not be paid out of the regular development budget;
- stipulation that the principles and goals of development policy should be guiding principles for Swiss participation in the IMF and the World Bank Group;
- establishment of a broadly based advisory body to monitor Swiss cooperation in the BWI.

These three conditions were more or less fulfilled, and the parliament hardly changed anything in the government's proposal. Though disputed by the Swiss National Bank and parts of the Swiss economic community, the following development policy guideline was enacted as part and parcel of the Swiss Bretton Woods Agreements Act of 4 October 1991: "Within the Bretton Woods Institutions, in policy statements and decisions affecting developing countries, the principles and goals of Swiss development policy are to be heeded by Switzerland's representatives" (Article 6). The membership bill, however, was challenged by the demand for a referendum.

The development NGOs were split. An alliance of those opposing membership forced a popular referendum, which was an opportunity for a lively debate on the role of the Bretton Woods Institutions in general and the possible role of Switzerland in particular. On May 17, 1992, the Swiss people decided to join by a majority of 56 percent – which was a great surprise indeed. The Swiss Coalition campaigned in favour of membership, though

one of the five member organisations (Bread for all) joined the opposing alliance of NGOs. The IMF and the World Bank continue to be a focal point of the Swiss Coalition's advocacy programme.

2) Institutional Arrangements of the BWI Committee

During the legislative process, the Government accepted the NGO demand to consult with extra-parliamentary circles in matters concerning Bretton Woods affairs. The previously existing "Advisory Commission for International Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid" was assigned a leading role, and it subsequently formed a special Committee on the Bretton Woods Institutions ("BWI Committee").

Mandate

The Committee shall advise the appropriate Swiss authorities on their participation in the Bretton Woods institutions, to the extent that it affects developing countries. The administration and the Committee members may bring up general questions as well as specific ones. Consultations should occur on decisions of a fundamental nature.

Prior to the Spring and Autumn conferences of the Bretton Woods Institutions, a discussion shall be held on pending problems in development policy and corresponding Swiss positions.

The members of the Committee shall obtain all documents and information necessary to fulfill their mandate. Any confidential documents or information will be identified as such.

As it sees fit, the Committee may conduct direct discussions with Swiss representatives in the IMF and the World Bank. It may also consult external specialists.

Composition

The Commission determines the number of members, the composition and the eventual dissolution of the Committee. The Committee is composed of: Mr. K.-L. Leisinger (Chairman, Industry/Ciba-Geigy); Mr. B. Comby (member of the lower house of parliament/Liberal Democratic Party); Ms. A. Fankhauser (member of the lower house of parliament/Social Democratic Party, Non-Governmental Organizations); Mr. B. Gurtner (Swiss Coalition of Development Organizations); Mr. P.-L. Giovannini (Non-Governmental Organ-

izations/Declaration of Berne); Mr. G. Goetz (Banks/Credit Suisse); Mr. Ch. Juen (Swiss Industrial and Commercial Association).

The three Federal offices which are directly affected (i. e. the Federal Finance Administration, Federal Office for Foreign Economic Affairs and the Directorate for Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid) as well as the Swiss National Bank shall take part in the Committee meetings.

The BWI Committee usually meets every two months.

3) The Work of the Swiss Coalition

Thanks to its representation on the BWI Committee and the access this provides to confidential documents, the Swiss Coalition enjoys an advantage that is probably unique: it can state its position to the government in advance on a range of items on the agendas of the executive boards of the IMF and the World Bank. Of course, the Swiss Coalition cannot comment on every one of the almost 250 items of business dealt with annually by the IMF, or the approximately 400 different annual operations carried out by the World Bank.

The Swiss Coalition confines its attention in the first place to a few significant projects, such as the Narmada Dam in India or the Arun Dam in Nepal. Secondly, it concentrates on Country Assistance Strategies dealing with countries that have been given priority status, either by member organizations in the Swiss Coalition or by the Swiss Government. Thirdly, it makes a particular effort to concentrate on sectoral policy papers, such as those that deal with revision of resettlement policy, energy policy, and forestry policy. Fourth, it concerns itself with far-reaching issues like the allocation of Special Drawing Rights, the Enhanced Structural Adjustment Facility (ESAF) of the IMF or the Wapenhans report of the World Bank. Finally, the Swiss Coalition is firmly committed to institutional reform, including improved access to information, greater transparency, independent evaluation and inspection, improved possibilities of participation – for BWI member countries and for NGOs – and greater financial accountability.

Many of the positions adopted by the Swiss Coalition were developed by people who work in the Coalition's member organizations. Systematic incorporation of the views of these individuals allows Switzerland to draw on their expertise and knowledge of different countries in the course of its work in the IMF and the World Bank. This is a two-way process. Experience at the micro level can be made available to those responsible for decisions at the macroeconomic level, while specific knowledge of macroeconomic relationships can provide project personnel with new insights useful in work at the grass-roots level. In practice, however, we still have a long way to go. All

too often it is still left to the person responsible for a country or project to prepare a position. We think it should become a priority concern from the NGO side to pool our knowledge and to link micro and macro issues. As a priority issue, this will require clear-cut decisions by the management of the NGOs.

4) The Impact of the BWI Committee

It is too early to make an impact assessment of the BWI Committee. In specific cases, of course, the BWI Committee has certainly had a significant influence, though it is always difficult to say how things would have turned out without the forum provided by the BWI Committee. The Committee's influence can be traced, for example, in questions relating to

- the Narmada Project in India,
- the Information Policy of the Swiss Government in matters related to Bretton Woods,
- Article IV Consultation (see section 5),
- ESAF contribution and additionality.

As mentioned before, the almost unlimited access to information enjoyed by the members of the BWI Committee is the basis for various interventions, in particular those initiated by the Swiss Coalition. We hope, of course, that some of these comments and proposals help to improve the quality of Swiss interventions in the Board and influence the political priorities of Swiss cooperation in the IMF and the World Bank. Quite often it may not be possible to trace our footprints immediately, because the Swiss Coalition's interventions are one element among many others in an ongoing process. An overall assessment of the Swiss Coalition's role has yet to be made.

Two unintended side-effects need to be mentioned however. On the one hand, access to information becomes a challenge to the NGOs themselves: Do they really have the ability to draw on their grass-roots experience and relate it to the macro-conditions in a country? If not, our criticism of macro-policies like structural adjustment will lose much of its legitimacy. If yes, their criticism will become much more concrete and much more effective. On the other hand, the mere existence of the BWI Committee stimulates better cooperation among the various departments concerned and certainly is a constant incentive for them to do their homework properly.

5) Article IV Consultation

Transparency and participation are the keys to improved accountability. Whereas some progress has been made in the World Bank, the IMF still has

a much longer way to go. As is well known, due to a lack of symmetry, the IMF has almost no power to press for adjustment in the North. This situation led the Swiss Coalition to concern itself with Art. IV Consultation between the IMF and Switzerland. Based on Art. IV of the Articles of Agreement, the Fund is obliged to exercise surveillance over the exchange rate policies of its members. Today, the scope of its consultations goes far beyond exchange rate and monetary issues to include a medium-term perspective as well as structural policies. Therefore, these annual Art. IV consultations are one of the rare opportunities for Northern NGOs to participate and officially present adjustment proposals.

The Swiss Coalition asked the Government for official participation in the Art. IV process which was granted

- in 1993, in the form of a discussion between the IMF team and the BWI Committee, based on a memorandum by the Swiss Coalition,
- in 1994, in the form of direct consultation between the Swiss Coalition and the IMF team that will visit Switzerland at the end of October.

In terms of formal procedure this is quite an achievement because, to our knowledge, aside from labour unions in certain cases, representatives of the civil society had never been listened to. In actuality, however, none of our demands were reflected in the IMF report, with the exception of criticism of the low level of development aid provided by Switzerland. To be frank, the IMF report was rather poor, and we think publication of it might be an incentive for the Fund staff to improve it. Sunlight is the best disinfectant, says one proverb.

Article IV Consultation reports have not been published as documents by the Fund so far. Some exceptional countries like Belgium, Australia and Korea have made the major conclusions known. In Holland the concluding statement is not published; only the Parliamentary Committee on Finance is informed. Aside from this there is silence. During the first consultation in 1993, we asked our government on several occasions for transparency in this matter. In January 1994, after the relevant Board discussion, the cabinet of ministers decided to publish this document. Switzerland was harshly criticized in the IMF Board for this unique step, which was said to violate IMF rules. Only the United States supported the publication of Art. IV Consultation reports. This incident stimulated new discussions on IMF transparency. In particular, the U.S. exerted pressure linked to their – minimal – ESAF contribution. We are afraid that Switzerland will take a step backwards this year or next year. Each country may formally ask the Board to approve the publication of its Art. IV document. Holland could do it, Switzerland should do it and everybody would still remain within the rules of the game.

6) Activities outside the BWI Committee

Of course, the lobbying and monitoring efforts of the Swiss Coalition are not confined to the BWI Committee. Three examples will be mentioned here besides many other activities like seminars, media conferences, etc.: networking, research and a joint fact-finding mission.

Networking

There is *extensive networking*

- with U.S. organisations, facilitated by our part-time resident representative in Washington;
- with European organisations in the framework of Eurostep or Eurodad, of which the Swiss Coalition is a member;
- with the NGO World Bank Committee, where the Swiss Coalition represents Eurostep;
- with the Declaration of Berne on the national level, limited to specific cases like Narmada or the multilateral debt question.

Research

Lobbying cannot succeed unless certain issues are thoroughly analyzed and carefully researched. The Swiss Coalition does a limited amount of its own *research* and also commissions external studies. In 1993 the Coalition investigated the question of accountability of BWI executive directors in the North. Similar studies of executive directors in the South are currently under discussion. The Coalition has also presented a detailed proposal for voting reform in the IMF. A Ghanaian economist familiar with Switzerland from his student days has prepared a Policy Framework Paper for Switzerland, which proposes internal reforms from an African point of view. A further publication summarizing Swiss experience in the BWI is also being planned.

Joint Fact-Finding Mission to Ghana

A particularly revealing example is the fact-finding mission in Ghana that took place in late 1993. At the initiative of the Swiss Coalition, the Swiss Executive Directors of the World Bank and the IMF, high-ranking representatives of three Swiss ministries, and a representative of the Swiss Coalition visited Ghana in order to learn more about the problems and the impacts of structural

adjustment. Thanks to numerous contacts with local IMF and World Bank offices, other international organisations, various government officials, business enterprises, trade unions and NGOs, as well as visits to urban and rural projects, the delegation returned with a rich store of new experience which we hope will influence Swiss positions on structural adjustment. Articles and radio programs prepared by a journalist who accompanied the delegation reached a wide public. Due to this positive experience, a similar trip may be organized next year.

7) Concluding Remarks

To conclude, I should like to stress three weak points and three lessons related to our lobbying efforts:

- An assessment of overall effectiveness and efficiency has yet to be made;
- the link between micro and macro issues, and vice versa, has yet to be declared a priority by the management of the various NGOs, with all the far-reaching implications this entails;
- a wealth of material and topics often makes it difficult to set priorities and to stick to them for a longer period.

Despite these weaknesses and difficulties, we should never forget that

- the real political strength of the NGO community comes from its home base. If we do not do often difficult and thorny political homework, international NGO coordination is useless;
- a decision to embark on development policy issues only makes sense if it is taken at least five – ten years in advance. Short-term action does not change anything of substance;
- we should occasionally forget about the public relations attraction of World Bank projects and deal more thoroughly with IMF issues, which are as important as those dealt with by the World Bank.

Abstracts

Gemäß dem schweizerischen Bundesgesetz über die internationale Entwicklungszusammenarbeit sind sowohl die Verhältnisse in den Partnerstaaten wie auch die Bedürfnisse der Bevölkerung zu berücksichtigen. Die Leistungen erfolgen unentgeltlich oder zu Vorzugsbedingungen. Als die Schweiz im Mai 1992 nach einer breiten öffentlichen Debatte den Bretton Woods-Institutionen beitrug, unterstützte die Arbeitsgemeinschaft Swiss-aid/Fastenopfer/Brot für alle/Helvetas/Caritas die Mitgliedschaft unter Bedingungen wie beispielsweise die Schaffung eines begleitenden Konsultativorgans, um die Einhaltung von entwicklungspolitischen Leitplanken in der

BWI-Tätigkeit der Schweiz zu gewährleisten. Heute ist die Arbeitsgemeinschaft in dieser Kommission vertreten, deren Auftrag es ist, die schweizerische Regierung in Bretton Woods-Angelegenheiten zu beraten sowie die schweizerischen Positionen in den Gremien von IWF und Weltbank zu verfolgen. Über die Einsicht in vertrauliche BWI-Dokumente werden Stellungnahmen der Arbeitsgemeinschaft und deren Trägerorganisationen zuhanden der Verwaltung verfaßt und so eine Verbindung zwischen Mikro- und Makroebene geschaffen. Während die Weltbank strukturelle und politische Reformen in Angriff genommen hat, stehen diese beim IWF noch aus. Deshalb ist es der Arbeitsgemeinschaft ein Anliegen, vermehrt Einfluß auf IWF-Geschäfte zu nehmen, was unter anderem über die jährlichen Art. IV-Konsultationen möglich ist.

The Swiss development policy is based on the principle of solidarity among nations and people. Concretely it is expressed through grants or preferential terms allocated to the partner. On May 17, 1992, Switzerland joined the Bretton Woods Institutions, not without raising a lively debate on the role of the BWI. The Swiss Coalition of Development Organizations has supported the membership, on some conditions. One of the conditions was the establishment of a special BWI Committee – to which the Swiss Coalition is actively participating – which not only advises the Swiss authorities on BWI matters but also monitors the Swiss position before the respective Boards. The Swiss Coalition thus beneficiates of confidential IMF and World Bank documents on which it can comment. Its statements, drawn up by the Swiss Coalition and its member organizations, are handed to the Swiss Government, representing a link between micro and macro issues. Whereas the World Bank is starting structural and political reforms, similar steps have yet to be taken in the IMF. Therefore, the Swiss Coalition suggests to focus more on the IMF and its Art. IV Consultation.

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Die folgenden Hefte

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Zeitschriftenschau

blätter des iz3w, Nr. 213

Schwerpunkt: Entwicklungspolitik und -theorie der 90er Jahre

Da im Niedergang des Realsozialismus die Systemkonkurrenz entfallen ist, bestimmen wohlfeile Schlagworte wie Demokratie und Menschenrechte, Zivilgesellschaft und Partizipation, Nachhaltigkeit und Frauenförderung den Diskurs. Ehemalige Kontrahenten treten gemeinsame Kampagnen für die finanzielle Aufwertung der »Entwicklungszusammenarbeit« los. Die Beiträge des Heftes stellen diesen »unheimlichen Gleichschritt« in Frage.

Themen: Die neue Entwicklungspolitik – Geschichte eines Theorieverzichts; Regulationstheorie – Eine andere Theorie kapitalistischer Entwicklung; Modediskurse – Das neue Vokabular in der entwicklungspolitischen Praxis; Frauen – Genderansätze in der Weltbankpolitik; NGOs zwischen Geldgebern und gesellschaftlicher Basis; Modethema Zivilgesellschaft – Über die Integration der ägyptischen Opposition; Fortschrittskritik – fiktives Interview mit Vandana Shiva und Gustavo Esteva.

Bezug: iz3w, Aktion Dritte Welt e.V., Postfach 5328, 79020 Freiburg.

Forum entwicklungspolitischer Aktionsgruppen (Nr. 202/203)

Schwerpunkt: Herrschende Nachhaltigkeit - nachhaltige Herrschaft

Das Heft setzt sich kritisch mit dem schillernden Begriff der "nachhaltigen Entwicklung" auseinander. Themen: Ein politisches Chamäleon - Die Vieldeutigkeit der Nachhaltigkeit, die Debatte im BUKO über die Studie des Wuppertal Institutes "Zukunftsfähiges Deutschland", Ansätze einer alternativen Politik, sozial-ökonomischer Schlußverkauf auf den Binnenmärkten, Welthandel light, Der Markt in den Köpfen, KonsumentInnenwiderstand/Boykottaktionen u.a.

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ila, Nr. 195 (Mai 96)

Schwerpunkt: Chiapas/Mexiko

Mit der 16seitigen Beilage der Fotoserie »Der lange Weg vom Schmerz zur Hoffnung, Fotos und Texte zu Chiapas/Mexiko« steht ein zentrales Thema innerhalb der Internationalismusbewegung im Mittelpunkt, ergänzt um einige Beiträge zur Geschichte und Gegenwart deutschstämmiger Kaffeeplanzer und ihrer Praktiken in Chiapas. Berichte und Hintergründe

zur Dienstleistungswirtschaft in der Dominikanischen Republik; zu den zynisch »sozialen Säuberungen« genannten Morden an Angehörigen gesellschaftlicher Randgruppen in Kolumbien, zur Bankenkrise und zur Konzeption der Schule der Zukunft in Brasilien, über die BSE-genährten Hoffnungen argentinischer und uruguayischer Rindfleischproduzenten auf wachsende Nachfrage aus Europa und den Optimismus des Menschenrechtlers Ramón Custodio angesichts der Lage in Honduras. In der Reihe »Eine Welt Wirtschaft« geht es um die Frauenarbeit in der Landwirtschaft Brasiliens.

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Südwind Nr. 6 (Juni 1996)

Das Magazin für Entwicklungspolitik

Schwerpunkt: Biodiversität: Die grüne Vielfalt

Das Heft bringt zum Schwerpunktthema folgende Beiträge: Weltkultur im Gemüsebeet. – Die biologische Vielfalt verschwindet; Verborgene Ernte – Vom unschätzbaren Wert des Unkrautes; Wem gehören die Pflanzengene? – zur FAO-Konferenz über pflanzengenetische Ressourcen. Außerdem bietet das Heft u.a. ein Interview mit Sylvia Chant zu HABITAT mit dem Titel Sprengstoff Megastädte. Wenn Popidole Zivilisationskritik üben, erreichen sie mehr Publikum als NGOs Mitglieder haben. Doch hinter dem Soli-Engagement steht oft ein gut durchdachtes Marketing-Konzept. Ein Portrait des berühmten Popmusikers Sting zeigt den Widerspruch zwischen Kommerz und Karitas auf.

Bezug: Südwind-Magazin, Berggasse 7, A-1090 Wien.

Widerspruch Nr. 30

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Die Geschlechtertrennung bei den Zara in Bobo-Dioulasso, Burkina Faso.

224 S., Paperback, ISBN 3-86099-252-X

Roths ethnologische Studie der Zara, Burkina Faso, zeigt: Die Trennung der Geschlechter eröffnet den Frauen in einer patriarchalen Gesellschaft eigene Bereiche. Die Zara-Frauen handeln eigenständig, ihre Kultur wird auch von Männern anerkannt. »Das Buch, obwohl ein wissenschaftlicher Text, ist leicht und spannend zu lesen und sehr schön illustriert...« (*Frauezeitig, Zürich*)

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