

**At first Lorenz Hilfiker from Bern in Switzerland describes the opinions of the Swiss governmental parties and the only opposition party “the Green”. He also considers the changed attitudes after Fukushima. Finally we get information about the points of view of the Swiss Churches.**

## **Opinions on Energy and Nuclear Energy in particular**

### **Switzerland**

The issue is very current in Switzerland at the moment because an energy supply shortfall is to be expected in the next years as all four nuclear power plants have to be shut down soon. They account for about 40 % of Swiss electricity production. The debate on Nuclear Power has restarted a while ago. In 2003 the Swiss declined the prolongation of the moratorium for construction of new NPP's. In February 2011, there was a first consultative voting in the Canton Bern about a new NPP designed to replace the old 1971 reactor at Mühleberg (which is, by the way, of the same type as the Fukushima reactor). This voting was considered to be a first test for the expected binding national referendum on new NPP's in 2013. The supporters narrowly won by 51%.

The situation is certainly going to change after the current catastrophe in Fukushima. Therefore it is to be expected that some of the following positions of the various political players may already have shifted in the last days or may completely change sooner or later. If already available in media, I have tried to include some of the first concise reactions on the Japanese reactor catastrophes.

### **The Bundesrat**

The government. Great coalition of SVP, SP, FDP, CVP, BDP (all big parties without the Green)

*„(...) the Bundesrat has approved two action schedules in February 2008. Those contain measures to improve energy efficiency and to increase the energy production from renewable resources.*

*In order to uphold the security of supply, the Bundesrat considers the replacement and the construction of new nuclear power plants inevitable. The decision (...) is subject to the facultative referendum.”*

Website of the Federal Department of the Environment, Transport, Energy and Communications

Reaction on Fukushima accident:

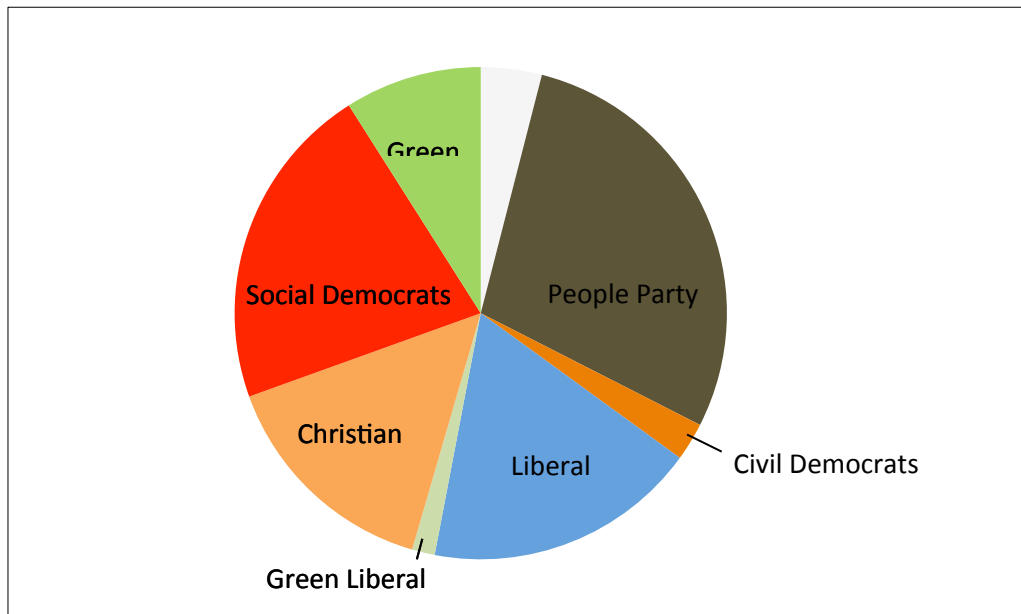
*“We don't have enough secured information yet as to draw any conclusions on measures in other reactors – as the Swiss ones.”*

Doris Leuthard (CVP), Swiss energy minister (14. 3. 2011)

One day later the Bundesrat stopped the current authorisation process for new NPPs. A detailed security check-up is ordered.

### **The Parties**

Overview on the Swiss political landscape (next elections in fall 2011):



### Die Grünen (Green)

*“The Green Party intends to secure the energy supply of Switzerland from 100% renewable. The nuclear energy needs to be quitted completely.*

*The continuous increase of electricity consumption in Switzerland has to be stopped. Finally, the consumption must decrease. A radical decrease of consumption can be achieved: In California the launch of decoupling has brought a stabilisation of consumption leading to the saving of 5 NPPs.*

*On the other hand particularly inefficient technologies must vanish from the range of products: In winter, electric heating consume the complete power of the NPPs Mühleberg, Beznau I and Beznau II. At great cold even all five Swiss NPPs run for electric heating only.”*

*Program „Grüner Strom – Kein Atom“ (2010)*

First reaction on the Fukushima accident:

*“Our NPPs would only endure earthquakes of magnitude 5 at the most – Mühleberg and Beznau probably not even that.”*

Gerit Müller, national deputy of the Green, online magazine “cash” (12. 3. 2011)

### SP (Social Democrats)

*“Switzerland has all prerequisites to secure its supply from renewables only in future. The potential of easily available resources until 2030 alone is (...) three or four times as much as the generation of electricity from NPPs today.*

*The nuclear strategy of the atomic companies is no realistic option. The construction of new NPPs enhances the present bulk risk. The renewables fall back. Switzerland will get dependent from abroad regarding technique (reactors), primary resources (Uranium) and know-how (fuel rods, waste disposal).*

*The risks of nuclear energy are still uncontrollable and non-insurable. The consequent costs for later generations are unclear. NPPs are hardly acceptable to a majority of the people as long as there are clean alternatives which are intensively exploited in the neighbouring counties, but not here.*

*Switzerland’s actions concerning renewables are extremely poor in comparison to the EU. The new technologies here have for decades been and are still fought by the nuclear-focussed electricity companies in harmony with the trade associations. The amount of photovoltaic built in Switzerland in one year is the same as is built in Germany within one day.”*

Position paper Rudolf Rechsteiner, deputy and „energy pope“ of the left (2009)

*“The SP calls for a complete nuclear power phase-out. The operation of the NPPs must be limited and a binding phase-out plan (...) has to be developed.*

*The insurance has to be increased to the level of effectively expected costs in case of a reactor catastrophe with a large amount of nuclear fallout.*

*Renewables as well as energy efficiency must be supported within an adequate framework and must be massively strengthened with the goal of complete supply from renewables.*

*In addition, measures have to be taken in order to provoke an effective reduction of consumption.”*

Resolution paper “Atomkraftwerke sind Atomzeitbomben – Erneuerbare Energien jetzt!”, Social Democratic Party Conference (2006)

*„In the context of the heavy nuclear incidents in Japan the SP Canton Bern calls for the dilapidated NPP Mühleberg to shut down soon. The forces of nature and the threat by terroristic attacks make nuclear energy a high risk technology.”*

Press release, SP Canton Bern (12. 3. 2011)

### **CVP (Christian People Party)**

*“The CVP calls for a massive increase of energy efficiency in all areas of consumptions in order to make use of the still great saving potential.*

*The average annual electricity generation from renewables is to be enhanced to at least 5400 GWh by 2030 (...) according to the energy law. The CVP supports this aim but wants to overmatch it (...).*

*Domestic production shall ensure the security of supply. Thus nuclear power plants are still necessary at present. Existing NPPs shall be replaced by safer and more powerful plants if the prolongation of the existing NPPs is impossible due to safety considerations.*

*In 10 years Switzerland must stand at the top of Europe concerning innovation and research in the area of renewable and innovative energy technologies.*

*The long term aim remains a Switzerland of renewable energies and the lowest possible CO2 emission. Therefore the CVP ultimately speaks up for the Swiss electricity supply to reach independency of fossil fuel until 2050 (...)."*

Position paper (2011)

The opinions on NPPs however seem to diverge slightly within the CVP:

*"The CVP is astonished by the government's statement, which counts nuclear energy among the „climate-friendly“ energy sources. Nuclear energy is indeed CO2 neutral, but radioactive. Therefore it must be our aim to go without nuclear energy. Nuclear energy is thus but a temporary solution for us. The government's ordering of two new NPPs is therefore premature."*

Press release, section CVP Zürich (2010)

Note that the Swiss energy minister Doris Leuthard belongs to the CVP.

A reaction on Fukushima:

*"I don't understand why mister Büttiker [see below] now puts all into question. This spontaneous reaction is exaggerated. We first of all have to stay calm. Nobody has suspected such a catastrophe."*

Markus Zemp, national deputy and member of board of the NPP Leibstadt, newspaper "Basler Zeitung" (13. 3. 2011)

### **Grünliberale (Green Liberal)**

*"The present energy consumption in Switzerland is not sustainable: We consume more than we can provide by means of regenerative sources. At many places energy is used unnecessarily, so that more environmental damages are caused by the preparation of energy and more risks are accepted than necessary. Moreover, we depend – regarding oil and gas (and partly Uranium) imports – to a great extent on politically instable regions. The challenges of climate change, decreasing resources and increasing environmental stress force us to arrange the consumption in a more efficient way and to change to ways of production. But we Green Liberals clearly take this as a chance: Switzerland can*

*gain technological leadership in industry and energy, play an international leading role and at the same time reduce the risks of the current production.*

*The Green Liberals call for all decision makers to keep up cost transparency: The whole life cycle of products and energy forms shall be considered, the information are to be made transparent and to be included in the prices. Urgent is this for the Green Liberals in the case of nuclear power which today benefits from hidden subsidiaries (unsolved waste disposal and lack of specific insurance).*

*The Green Liberals advocate for stimulations of energy efficiency and energy saving, moreover we want to boost the renewables. Financial stimulations via steering taxes, bonus/malus systems (...) lead – together with standards adjusted to the most recent developments – to an ecological, profitable and safe energy supply. In view of the limited resources quality is to be preferred to quantity in production as well as consumption. Better transparency and a higher standard of environmental education support corresponding consume decisions.*

*Capacities of electricity production, which will drop out step by step in the next years, don't have to be replaced due to energy savings. That way we don't need new nuclear power plants. The Green Liberals completely stand behind the vision of a 2000 Watt society and support all related measures. As the Bundesamt für Energie [Swiss Federal Office of Energy] has shown with its scenario IV, this target is realistic until 2100, if we set off today. The Green Liberals will on all levels call for the necessary steps."*

Website Grünliberale

### **FDP.DieLiberalen (Liberal)**

*"Indeed there will be enough fossil fuel in the foreseeable future. However, accidents increasing in number, the more and more expensive exploitation of fossil fuel and the risk of political conflicts in the exploited regions endanger the security of supply. Therefore, and also for ecological reasons, a reduction of the dependency on fossil fuel is a central aim. The key to reach this aim is technological progress and a consequent usage. Swiss qualities such as innovation and high technology are central in this regard. On one hand they allow the most efficient usage of energy and on the other hand they lead to more and more affordable methods of alternative electricity and heat generation. Therefore energy policy is always also innovation policy for the FDP.DieLiberalen.*

*Electric current is getting more and more important in climate protection: A growing population, increasing living space per inhabitant and the replacement of fossil energy (...) will make the electricity consumption increase further (...). However, the domestic production will not be able to keep pace with the consumption. The most important strategy to secure the supply of our country with electricity thus remains a wide mix of water power, nuclear power and renewable energy.*

*Now, the decision has to be taken whether market economy and freedom is preferred to governmental control. The "ecological modernisation" of economy and society will succeed effectively only if it successfully competes and is subordinate to the rules and standards of market economy. It prejudices the success of an ecological development if this field of innovation becomes a romping place of permanent interventionism. For this reason the FDP.DieLiberalen refuse any subsidations."*

Position paper (2010)

*“It is disgusting that the human catastrophe in Japan is abused for political interests.”*

Christa Markwalder, national deputy (15. 3. 2011)

*“If we should come to the conclusion that the risks of nuclear energy have grown too much, we must renounce on building new NPPs.”*

Rolf Büttiker, deputy in the Council of States and member of board of the NPP Leibstadt, newspaper “Sonntag” (13. 3. 2011)

### **SVP (Swiss People Party)**

*“On nuclear energy can and must not be renounced since at present it contributes highly efficiently and safely to Swiss independency. Alternative and renewable forms of energy production shall develop under the conditions of the market without additive taxes and redistributions.*

*New NPPs have to be planned and built immediately (...) in order to replace the existing plants at the end of their lifetime.*

*Increase of energy efficiency and saving measures are not enough to cover the future demand for electricity. The increasing demand has to be satisfied by domestic production. The idea of additional electricity imports has to be declined due to lack of network capacities and particularly a dangerous dependency from abroad and international market prices.*

*Due to its outstanding properties regarding price, availability, independence and ecology, the current electricity mix of about 55% water power and 40% nuclear energy remains the basis of our supply. The SVP declines and fights initiatives, motions as well as additive taxes and fees which serve the purpose of corrupting the conditions for those energy resources.*

*New renewables such as geothermal energy, wind energy, solar energy and biomass energy shall contribute to a better diversification of the Swiss electricity mix. However, its production and its amount (...) are limited and cannot cover the increasing demand for domestic electricity. The energy sources are to establish themselves on the market without further governmental subsidies. Research and realisation of such projects on private initiative are welcome.”*

Resolution paper “Genügend preiswerter Strom für alle!”, assembly of delegates (2010)

First reaction on the Fukushima accident:

*“The events in Japan have no influence on Switzerland. There is always a risk.”*

Rudolf Joder, national deputy and president of the SVP Canton Bern, winner of the recent voting on a new nuclear power plant near Bern, 13. 3. 2011

## **BDP (Civil Democratic Party)**

*“We support the energy strategy of the Bundesrat, whose aim it is to support the renewables and energy efficiency. For the long term securing of energy supply and network stability we also support the realisation of large technological production facilities which contribute to the attainment of the CO2 reduction targets. The domestic production has to obtain priority. Energy supply based on imports is not desirable since with this solution the investments and the creation of value would be exported and in case of supply shortfall supply difficulties were to be expected.”*

Website BDP

First reaction on the Fukushima accident:

*“Japan shows: The way towards nuclear phase-out must be shorter.”*

Hans Grunder, president BDP (13. 3. 2011)

## **The churches**

There are three principal Christian players in Switzerland: The official evangelic church, the Catholic Church and the VFG (Organisation of Free Churches). The majority of the evangelic church seems to be against NPPs, but still very heterogeneous. Just two examples:

*„Die Atomtechnik erlaubt keine groben Fehler: Mit dem radioaktiven Abfall und der Möglichkeit einer Kernschmelze birgt sie Risiken, die uns als Menschen überfordern. Wir fahren besser mit risikoärmeren Technologien und der Veränderung der Konsummuster. Das ist menschengerechter.“*

Kurt Zaugg, head of the Ecumenical Office of Energy and Environment, quote from the magazine “reformiert”, 28. 2. 2011

*“The Church Board has no consolidated opinion yet.”*

Andreas Zeller, president of the Synodal Council Bern, same source.

The Catholic Church has never officially taken position as far as I know.

The Free Churches have – apart from some general set phrases – no common position either. In their general political position paper we only read the following lapidary sentences:

*“Measures:*

- (...)
- *Take a decision upon the long term replacement of the existing NPPs (further development of new NPPs or Gas/Combi-plants?).*
- *Ultimately solve the problem of radioactive waste.*
- (...)”

Position paper on Swiss politics, VFG (2006)