

Zeitschrift: Helvetia : magazine of the Swiss Society of New Zealand
Band: 14 (1949)
Heft: 4

Artikel: Swiss federalism
Autor: [s.n.]
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-942881>

Nutzungsbedingungen

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. [Siehe Rechtliche Hinweise.](#)

Conditions d'utilisation

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. [Voir Informations légales.](#)

Terms of use

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. [See Legal notice.](#)

Download PDF: 15.10.2024

ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>

style, splendidly represented in the cathedral and the many fine family houses along Junkergasse. During the 17th century, many great "Baroque" style mansions were built; in these times Berne was rich and mighty. All these historical buildings and monuments are still the pride of the city, and can be seen by anybody who has interest to delve in history. We spent much time admiring the famous Clock-Tower; mansions such as the Erlacherhof, the Dissbachs, and the von Tscharners; or else the Kornhauskeller and, of course, the great, dignified Bundeshaus was always a source of attraction.

The shops generally are a revelation, compared with New Zealand or England. Every commodity imaginable is available, no matter what type. Goods from every corner of the globe are displayed and we were specially pleased to see a great deal of British products. America is well represented with luxurious motor-cars, tinned foods, typewriters, etc. Prices as a whole are probably somewhat higher than in New Zealand although here staple food is fairly highly subsidised and it would therefore be difficult to compare; then also, wages are much higher in Switzerland. For instance, a locomotive-driver receives now Fr.900 per month, or a skilled office typiste up to Fr.600.

Marked progress is noticeable in the national crafts such as Ceramic and porcelain, principally produced in Langenthal and Thun. Some of the China exhibited at the Mustermesse was very exquisite and artistic. The type of new building seems to change from the old pretty Chalet or the once rather popular "streamlined" houses, to a distinct Southern style with lovely heavy tiled roofs and overhanging eaves and heavily carved wooden doors. This of course, refers only to private buildings and not to the city apartment houses, or the many co-operative settlements put up by large private associations. In Zurich for instance, which by the way is soon reaching a population of 400,000, we found very impressive office buildings, such as the famous "Claridenhof" with over 1,000 rooms large and small, or the Kongress House with its large convention-halls and the spacious Restaurant, - accommodating 2,000 people comfortably.

(To be continued....)

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
 XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
 XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
 SWISS FEDERALISM.
 XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
 XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

In the following article we shall endeavour to explain why Swiss Federalism is not only different from any other kind of Federalism, but even unique. The people of the Swiss Confederation, ever since its inception 658 years ago, have had to fight for their freedom, be it in bloody battles or be it by their wits. Often the question is asked "How was it possible for the Swiss Confederation to survive?" It was by the deep sense of freedom and justice that the "miracle of the Swiss Confederation" as it is often called, has been brought about; in fact, many an historian attributes the success to law enforcement, which plays a paramount part in the life of the Swiss Confederation.

LIBERTY, THE STAPLE RAW MATERIAL.

The fact that Switzerland, so insignificant a country from the economic standpoint, should have become the home of 4½ million people is due entirely to intelligence and hard work. Without the peculiar political attitude of the Swiss, it would have been quite impossible to raise the public economy of the country to such a level. Only a free people could attain this standard of living and only as a free state could Switzerland, remote from the sea coast and without her own sources of raw materials, succeed in commanding the respect of the whole world and in taking a prominent part in world trade. We have therefore every reason to regard the independence of the Swiss people as having the significance of a "staple raw material."

We must therefore enquire into the origins of that freedom. In the 13th century, under the Holy Roman Empire, the three communities of Uri, Schwyz

Fuessgänger ond Automobiliste

Viel Lüüt säget d'Automobiliste seiet die grösste Egoiste,
die wo die ganz Stross für sich selber wänd,
ond of d'Fuessgänger kei Rücksicht nänd,
die machet de Fuessgänger s'Lebe so schwär,
sie tüend wie d'Stross eres Eigetum wär,
wenn du nöd vermagst es Auto z'chaufe,
muesst halt im Strossegrabe ine laufe,
die Autler mached en G'stank ond en Staub,
do werd en jede Fuessgänger taub,
kein Arbeiter ond kein Professor,
ist sicher vor dene Kilometerfresser,
Sonntig wie Werchtig, sei's troche oder nass,
s'Kilometerfresse, das macht ne Spass,
sie hocked im Stüürrad, wie ä Chrot of em Tüüchel,
die egoistische Schnelligkeitstüüfel,
sei's ä Henne, en Ente, ä Chatz oder en Hond,
alles werd überfahre, was ne in Weg ine chonnt,
kuum häst d'Nase verhebet, wegem Staub ond G'stank,
do chonnt scho wieder so en Säuhond om de Rank,
do chonnt eine vo hine ond eine vo vorhe,
vo alle Siite g'hörst duute ond horne,
Ziit sei Geld, das ist jo bekannt,
die Autler händ au am Sonntig pressant,
do schimpfed denn d'Fuessgänger ond mached denn Füüst,
wenn so eh Grosshans om's Egg ome schüsst,
äppen ämol bliibt es Auto b'hange,
an ere dicke Telephonstange,
denn chonnt d'Ambulanz met eme Bese,
cho dere Brallige zäme lese,
ond wenn so en Blagör ober ä Bort abe g'heit,
heisst's g'wöhnli, d'Stüürig hei em verseit,
d'Stüürig muess d'Schold sii, das ist jo famos,
aber meistens ist am Führrer ä Schruube los.

A. Moosberger.

En Bettler chlpfed bii me junge Ehepaar, die junge Frau
flüsteret zo ehrem Ehemaa, dä Maa hät scho en ganze Tag
nüt z'esse gha, i geb em en Teller Soppe, do seit de
Ehemaa, wit em nöd lieber ä halbs Fränkli geh, ond d'Soppe
no spare bis eine chonnt, wo scho ä ganzi Woche nüt me
z'esse gha hät.

A. Moosberger.

and Unterwalden found themselves compelled to take up their own defence against the ambitions of the House of Hapsburg. The Empire was falling to pieces and could offer no protection. The three states therefore, formed an alliance in August 1291 for the defence of their independence by their combined forces. Here a new political principle was put into action. The Empire's mission had been to maintain rights and uphold peace; when its protection weakened, there arose in its place this alliance of free peoples whose tradition of self-government had become very strong in the interregnum between the death of Frederick II in 1250 and the accession of Rudolf of Hapsburg in 1287.

The principle of this alliance was to ensure the independence of each separate member by the joint efforts of all. It established a complete and

unconditional solidarity, diplomatic, economic and military. The enemy of one was the enemy of all, and when one was attacked, all were attacked. The idea of collective security had entered the world.

The "Everlasting League" sworn to by the three states in 1291 and renewed at Brunnen in 1315 became the true foundation stone of the Swiss nation. It controlled the important route, between north and south over the Gotthard, and Switzerland's position as guardian of the Alpine passes has given her a peculiar political, strategic and economic importance. This importance was further increased by the building of the Gotthard railway in the 19th century.

The League of the three states in the central region of the Alps was strengthened by other communities which joined it. All had their powers and duties within the League laid down in special charters. The originals of these charters are preserved in the State Record Office at Schwyz; that of 1291 is written in Latin, while those drawn up from 1315 on are in German. The League had to struggle hard for its existence. Gradually it began to expand and to eliminate the influence of neighbouring lords, until finally the original founders had formed a solid League with Lucerne, Zurich, Berne, Glarus and Zug; later, in the 16th century, it was increased by Fribourg, Soleure, Basle and Schaffhouse and then Appenzell. In this form it remained for three centuries as the League of Thirteen Members.

The city and abbey of St. Gall, Bienne, Neuchatel, Geneva, the Rhaetian Leagues and part of the Valais came in as "associate districts" with lesser privileges than full confederates.

The solidarity of the League and the courage of its members were put to severe tests by renewed attacks from outside. At Morgarten, in 1315, the Swiss forces crushed the Hapsburg army, and at Sempach, where Winkelried sacrificed his life, they again defeated an army of Austrian knights. In the second half of the 15th century, a threat came from the West, and it was Charles the Bold, Duke of Burgundy, who fell victim to Swiss arms. Sooner or later, however, the clash with the Empire was inevitable, the more so as Switzerland was feeling increasingly alien within its slackening bonds. At the moment when the Empire set about reforming itself and restoring its power by the institution of an Imperial Court, when, moreover, it imposed an imperial tax, the League came into open conflict with it. In 1499, the victory in the Swabian War against the Emperor Maximilian meant the effective separation from the Empire, the final stage of a long development. The Peace of Westphalia which brought the Thirty Years' War to an end in 1648 formally recognised what had been for long past an accomplished fact.

However much these great feats of arms had succeeded in inspiring the confederates with a feeling of their own strength, the League itself could never be used as an instrument of power politics, for it had come into being for the protection of each of its members and not for a common increase of power. If, however, a power policy was put into action, it became the concern of single members - for instance, the conquest of Vaud by Berne in 1536. The conquest of the Duchy of Milan at the beginning of the 16th century, which ended with the disastrous Swiss retreat from Marignano in 1515, was a drastic confirmation of this principle. The Confederation learned its lesson and thus decided to retreat from world history.

This vital law of abstinence in foreign policy was reinforced by inner necessity when the religious cleavage of the Reformation and the multiplicity of languages within the League imposed the principle which was later to issue in that of permanent neutrality.

Once again Switzerland was seriously threatened when Napoleon set about changing the face of Europe with a total disregard for the facts of history. He unified Switzerland and called it "The Helvetic Republic," annexed part of its territory to France and divided the rest into cantons by a scheme which took in the former associate districts and subject lands. The experiment was short-lived. It is true that the old Federation of States could not withstand the reforms thrust upon it at the point of French bayonets and with the help of Swiss zealots; moreover, armed resistance was brutally suppressed by

Napoleon's Army. The Confederation broke up in 1798, but the idea of federation survived the victory of foreign arms. Hardly five years later, Napoleon himself, by the "Act of Mediation" replaced the moribund "Helvetic Republic, one and indivisible" by a new union. After his fall, the independence of the Confederation was formally confirmed and its independence recognised by the Great Powers of Europe.

After the treaty of Vienna in 1815, the inner development continued, and the adaptation to changed conditions was made by the adoption of the Federal Constitution in 1848. The old federation of states was replaced by the Federal state which offered all the advantages of a uniform currency and customs duties, a common postal service, a centralized army and a progressive unification of law, civil and criminal. Above all, a common organ was created for forming the public will and putting it into action.....
(To be continued)

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
X SUNDRY NEWS X
XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

SWISS ALPINE EXPEDITION.

The members of the "Swiss Fund for Alpine Exploration" have once more organized a Himalyan Expedition. The target of explorations is the frontier territory to the east of Nepal. Those taking part in the Expedition are:-

- Alfred Sutter (head-man) Münchwilen ... Mrs. Annelie Lohner, Grindelwald,
- Dr. Ed. Wyss-Dunant, Geneva ... René Dittert, Geneva.

as well as two alpine guides from Grindelwald, Adolf Rubi and Jakob Pargätzi.

COMMUNISTS IN SWITZERLAND ARE LOSING GROUND.

Communism in Western Europe is losing ground fast. At every election in Switzerland they are losing a large number, if not all, of their seats. This has been the case in the cantons of Aargau and Vaud. In the cantonal elections of the Grand Council of Aargau there were notable changes. The socialists, who hitherto claimed 67 out of 193 seats, lost 5. The communists, formerly represented by two, have lost both seats. The radical Democrats are moving up from 37 to 40 and the Catholic Conservatives moved up from 42 to 44. On the other hand the party of the Farmers and Citizens receded from 34 to 32. The Christian Social Democrats have now two representatives instead of one, and the Independent Party of the Landesring will be represented by 7 members instead of 4. The only other change is the appearance of a representative of the Liberal Socialist (free economist) Party.

The re-election of the Grand Council of the Canton of Vaud has been followed with the greatest interest, not only by the people of that Canton, but by the people of Switzerland as a whole. The question was - "Will the Communists be able to obtain their strong position or will they lose ground?" The answer was given in no uncertain terms. The Communists lost ground, in fact plenty of ground. The 211 out of 217 seats are distributed as follows (the figures in parenthesis indicate seats occupied in the former Grand Council):-

- 108 (101) Radical Democrats ... 38 (35) Liberals ... 31 (27) Socialists
- 19 (41) Communists ... 7 (8) Agrarians ... 4 (5) Independents
- 3 (0) Christian Socialists (Catholic Conservatives).
- 1 (0) Middle Classes.

The rapid decline of Communism in Switzerland follows the declaration by the French Communist leader, Thorez, to the effect that the French Communists would welcome the Russian troops in a conflict between East and West, which declaration was fully approved by the Swiss Communist leader, Nicole of Geneva.

THE NEW MAYOR OF BURGDORF.

Burgdorf elected a new Mayor. In place of the retired Radical Democrat the Socialist candidate, Councillor Franz Patzen, has been successful.

PURCHASE OF 100 PLANES OF THE "VAMPIRE" TYPE.

The purchase of these aeroplanes has caused a great deal of discussion in