

# Berne incognito

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# BERNE INCOGNITO

Equally important is the Blériot single-decker from 1913. It is with this machine that the well-known Swiss aviator Oscar Bider crossed the Pyrenees in 1913 and soon afterwards made the memorable flight from Berne to Milan. As representative of more modern times, there is the Messerschmitt fighter ME 109 which was one of the most successful piston engine fighters in the service of the Swiss Air Force from 1939 to 1949.

Various aircraft engines are exhibited and there is a very comprehensive collection of skillfully made models of all aircraft in the service of Swiss civil and military aviation. All models are at a scale 1:40 and thus allow comparison of size and performance between the various aircraft types. A continuously running tape recorder and slide show by Swissair effectively complete the air transport exhibition. The other sectors of aviation (history, airports, security, fighting force, instruction) are also represented. Another part is reserved for space travel.

Lake and river navigation has been divided into regional parts within which old and new inventions are shown side by side. There is a particularly interesting and unique collection of ship models. The beautifully worked models of French frigates, Maltese galleys, freight sailing boats and men-of-war of all times cause enthusiasm with every friend of ships and convey something of the greatness which has always been inherent in vessels crossing the waters.

The steamer "Rigi" exhibited in the garden also belongs to this sector of the museum. It is the oldest steamboat in Switzerland, built in England in 1847 and in service on the Lake of Lucerne. During the 105 years it was operational, it covered 1,250,554 km until it was transferred to the Transport Museum to be overhauled. The saloon, foredeck and cabins were adapted as a restaurant.

Apart from a pavilion for tourism showing the various stages of development in this field so important for Switzerland from the 14th century to the present, the Transport Museum also houses the Planetarium "Longines".

The Planetarium is neither an observatory nor an astronomical look out, but a real planetary theatre which shows an artificial sky to experiment with. In the centre of the semi-circular cupola, 18 m in diameter, is situated a projector developed by the Carl-Zeiss works at Oberkochen (Western Germany). This apparatus is a miracle of optics and precision, is 5 m high, weighs 2½ tons and consists of over 30,000 units. It projects onto the cupola the Northern and Southern skies in such perfect imitation, that one can normally see the firmament in this way only on a clear winter's night. At the Planetarium, 300 people may watch the spectacle in comfortable arm-chairs.

The Swiss Transport Museum in Lucerne is certainly well worth a visit.

The unusually large number of participants at the 50th Assembly of the Swiss Abroad and their happy faces showed once again the deep impression

Berne made on Swiss compatriots resident outside their homeland. Berne is the epitome of a Swiss town and a centre of Swiss characteristics. That is why we should like to give all those readers unable to visit Berne at the end of August a small, unofficial glimpse of the essence of our town.

## A Capital different from all others

Berne is certainly that capital of which foreigners have the wrong idea most often. Some expect bears to dance to the tune of alphorns in Berne's squares; others imagine that the capital of a country representing the world's coffers should at harbour banks and finance trusts. Fortunately, reality is quite different. Our heraldic animal dwells safely behind the walls of the bear pit. This, as well as Berne Cathedral, often lies immediately at the foot of the Jungfrau glacier thanks to the cunning telescopic lenses of press photographers. Nevertheless, the federal capital is situated 50 km away from the Alpine chain and the folklore of the mountains. On the other hand, Berne is purely a political capital of Switzerland, neither its banking nor industrial centre.

Berne is a gently, dreamy, medium-sized town whose population is slightly on the decline and whose few larger factories are taken over one after the other by important industrial concerns in other centres in Switzerland. It is probably the only European capital—San Marino, Monaco and the "capitals" of other minor states excluded—which has no international airport.

Yet Berne is worth a visit, and the Bernese by no means mourn the lack of international hubbub (with the possible exception of the business people), and they still enjoy relative peace and quiet.

The town is situated on a long, rocky strip flanked by the waters of the Aar on three sides. The picture of the old town with its arcades, turrets and fountains shows an unmistakable Gothic character, and they are unique in our time. The Bernese take exceptional care to keep this heritage intact. The only inroad took place in 1848 when the Federal Houses of Parliament were built after Berne was chosen capital. The two older wings are copies of Florentine palaces and are just about acceptable. The centre building, however, is a problematical cross between a Renaissance Cathedral and a casino of a mundane spa at the turn of the century. It is unnecessary to state that the responsible architect most likely came from Swiss regions further East.

## Heroic Times

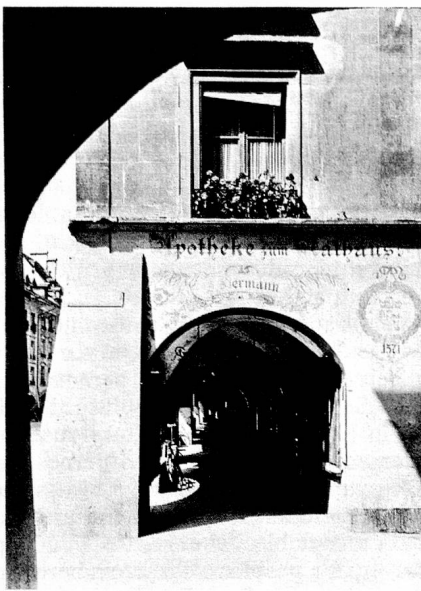
Although surrounded by one of the richest agricultural lands of Switzerland, Berne can look back on a typically urban past. Our town is by no means an oversized village as many unkind tongues would have it. Its architecture, its cultural life and even its "Society" image easily stand comparison with much larger cities. This is due not only to its position as capital, but also to its historical importance.

In the fifteenth century, Berne grew from a modest bridgehead to the largest town in Europe thanks to clever politics. Its territories extended from the gates of Geneva almost to Zurich. This position Berne was able to hold until 1798, when the French invaded the old Confederation and also conquered the Bernese, took their State treasure and even carried off the silver of the old families to Paris.

The 300 years of dominating extensive territories were only possible because

*Federal Councillor Tschudi shopping in the market*





Example of old Bernese family tradition

### Craftsmanship Tradition

Another result of the patrician rule which was maintained more or less up to 1848, was the lack of major industries. Craftsmanship, however, played an important part. It rests on rich tradition and still enjoys a high reputation. Bernese gold and silversmiths and cabinet makers created pieces of their craft in previous centuries, which today fetch top prices on the international art markets.

This tradition is highly regarded still today. Two silversmiths in Berne can even today replace old table silver by copying drawings and models of their predecessors. It is by no means rare to find paper hangers, silk weavers and decorators who carry out their craft on the same premises as generations before them. The same applies to dispensing chemists, confectioners, butchers, etc.

### What about Night Life?

Berne may be quite an elegant and cultured city, but life follows rather puritanical lines. As late as the eighteenth century, every inhabitant found at night without a lantern was fined, and even in the twentieth century, no night life has developed. The only two night clubs are so "demure" that even the strictest parents may safely take their teenage daughters there.

According to the latest information, the "sex wave" is said to have reached even Berne. A shop is supposed to be hidden somewhere behind a heavy arcade pillar where one may apparently buy all sorts of things not exactly suitable for children . . .

Incidentally, the lack of frivolity by no means worries the Bernese. They have their own idea of fun. If they want to be really merry, they sing about their "Vreneli ab em Guggisbärg" who was not to find herself with her "Simeli änet am Bär".

### Gastronomy with a capital G

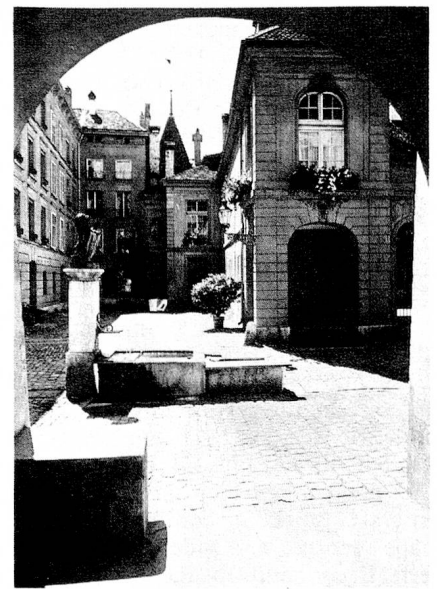
The Bernese compensate the lack of hurly-burly fun by good and rich eating. An old tradition demands that the dining

of a stern yet circumspect government. This was limited to a few dozen "regimentsfähige" families. This patrician rule also had its good sides. The administration was considered exemplary, and the subjected territories were only too ready to keep to the old order even after "liberation". The rural population was treated with respect by the town.

This is still evident today by a mutual and friendly relationship. To be convinced of this, one only has to saunter through the market on any Tuesday or Saturday. This takes over the most distinguished street of the town and even spreads out on the Bundesplatz immediately below the windows of the Government. It gives an opportunity to the high dignitaries occasionally to be photographed having a friendly chat with a market woman. Even if this sometimes looks a bit too much like a public relations stunt, one must admit that many less pleasant means are used for publicity.

### Ties with French Culture

The rule of the patrician families gave the city an elegant mark which it has kept to the present. The relationship with France was particularly cordial. The young Bernese served with preference in the Royal Guard. This resulted in fluent French being spoken in Berne, though the town was on German-speaking ground. Like in Alsace, the French was often mixed amusingly with "Schwyzerdütsch". One frequently hears terms like "Guete Bonjour" and "merci vielmal". And if one watches a "mehbesseri" Bernese daughter play tennis, one might hear something like this: "Wemme halt so im lancieren isch, cha me sich nid empechiere hie und da es falsches Mouvement z'mache". Until not so long ago, the street names in the old town were given in French as well as German. The "rue des Avoyers" was the equivalent to "Herrengasse"; the "Kesslergasse" became the "rue des Chaudronniers" and the "Schauplatzgasse" even the "rue du Spectacle".



Berne à la française

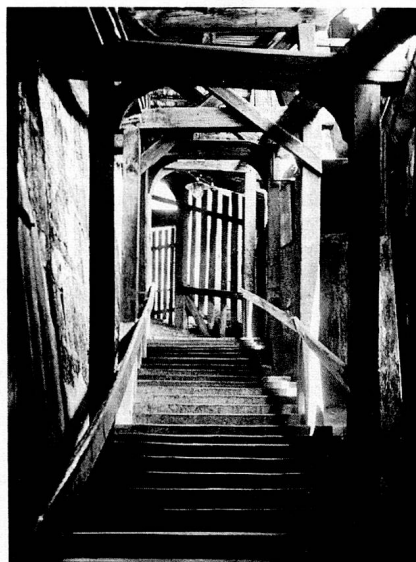
table at home is as richly laden on the departure of the guests as on their arrival. This enables the hosts to invite their more intimate friends again on the following day. In former times, anything which was sure to be left over then, used to be sent to the orphanage.

At this point readers will surely appreciate a typical Bernese recipe. In every household of repute the acme of culinary art is the "Berne Kugelpastete", a dish made of fine short pastry stuffed with minced veal and beef suet. Most important are the thymus of veal, button mushrooms, truffle slices, cockscombs and crab tails, all served with the stuffed pastry in a delicious white wine sauce. Unfortunately, this superb dish seems to be in the course of a slow decline. The last time the writer of this narrative was offered the said delicacy was in 1952, and already then the cockscombs had to be sent by express from a delicatessen shop in Basle, and the crab tails were of even more dubious origin.

Thus we had better refer to a more commonplace dish, the real Bernese "Chumichueche". A piece of puff pastry is rolled out thinly to a large round shape. The pastry is sprinkled with caraway seeds and a little salt and pricked all over with a fork. It is then placed in a fairly hot oven. The secret is not to bake it right through, for then the pastry can still be rolled up easily.

### Berne's surroundings must not be forgotten

So much has been written about Berne's places of interest that we may safely leave them aside here. Instead, we should like to point out the many side lanes of the old part of the town, which house many hidden treasures. What would the city be without its surroundings? The banks of the Aar with its many meanderings, the large forests and hilly landscape of the Frienisberg and the Schwarzenburgerland, its magnificent viewpoints towards the Alps, the lakes of the Midlands



Quiet steps in the "Matte"



and the Jura, the quiet foothills of the Emmental—they all provide a host of the most beautiful walks and rambles. In the last mentioned district, at the start of the Emmental, we should like to visit a typical Bernese country inn which serves as an example of many similar ones.

It is the Ruttihubelbad known all along for its good cuisine as well as for its waters. This inn—how could it be otherwise in the Canton of Berne—has been in the same family for generations. We enter the inn parlour between the byre and the stables. The room is in rural style, but kept in excellent condition. We shall be served river trout, salmon coloured and of firm aromatic texture, which has nothing in common with its sisters from breeding tanks. It will be followed by a clear soup with finely cut pancake strips, “Geschnetzeltes Kalbfleisch” in a cream sauce and “Roschti” as can only be served in Berne. And what will the reader think of a sweet such as a *meringue* with fresh blackberries? If this should be too much for you, you can always drink an excellent, home-made *Schnaps* to aid digestion.

We should be pleased if this article and the accompanying pictures were to encourage you to visit Berne. We hope that you will then also pay a visit to the Secretariat of the Swiss Abroad at 26 Alpenstrasse where a warm welcome awaits you.

*Uf Wiederluege z'Bärn!*

*Marcel Ney*



*The Junkergasse, one of Berne's old streets*

# THE NOUVELLE SOCIÉTÉ HELVÉTIQUE'S ORGANISATION OF THE SWISS ABROAD



*The President*

When, in 1916, some far-sighted personalities of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique in Switzerland founded the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad, the Commission of the Swiss Abroad was formed as its legislative organ. Originally, members of this body were chosen exclusively by the Nouvelle Société Helvétique, and there was a preponderance of Swiss from inside Switzerland. This was probably due to Europe being at war at the time. According to today's regulations of the Commission, at least half the members must come from abroad, but not more than two-thirds, the rest must be resident in Switzerland.

Today's strength of the Commission stands at 38 delegates and 30 official deputies, plus 24 Swiss from home who represent the cultural, political and economic life of the country. Amongst them are several Swiss formerly resident abroad. The collaboration between the two sections *Inland/Ausland* has stood the test in the best possible way, for it is in the main personalities in Switzerland who, thanks to their positions and connections, are able to help their compatriots from abroad in solving their problems.

The members from abroad are elected by the umbrella organisations of Swiss groups recognised by the Nouvelle Société Helvétique in the various countries. Where no such federation exists, the Commission itself may, after consulting the Swiss groups concerned, appoint representatives. Members from within Switzerland are chosen by the Central Council of the N.S.H. The term of office for every member is three years, with the right to be re-elected. The Commission deals with important questions of policy regarding the Swiss abroad. It represents them in Swiss public life and with the authorities

in Switzerland. It also supervises the activities of the Secretariat of the Swiss in Berne and promotes its work.

The Commission's task includes discussion and acceptance of the Secretariat's budget and annual accounts, as well as the annual report.

The Commission meets at least twice yearly, in spring and again at the end of August on the occasion of the *Journée des Suisses de l'Etranger*. Decisions are taken by simple majority vote of members present. Representatives are under no compulsion from their societies and vote according to their own opinion formed during deliberations.

Part of the Commission is the *Arbeitsausschuss* or *Bureau*, a working group in charge between sessions of the Commission. It consists of President, Vice-President, Hon. Treasurer and one to four members of the Commission. At present, the following gentlemen are on the *Ausschuss*:

Councillor of States, Dr. Louis Guisan, Lausanne, President of the Organisation and Chairman of the Commission.

Mr. Jean Heer, Vevey, Vice-President.

Dr. David von Wyss, Basle, Hon. Treasurer.

*Fürsprecher* Philippe Garraux, Berne.

Mr. Marcel Gehrig, Marseille, President of the Union of Swiss Societies in France.

Dr. Emilio Steffen, Milan, President of the *Collegamento* of Swiss Societies in Italy.

Mr. Ernst Ammann, Bregenz.

At the moment, there is no woman in the *Ausschuss*, but one must point out that there are four women members on the Commission of the Swiss Abroad. Female representation goes well back before official introduction of women's suffrage in Switzerland. (This serves as proof of the progressiveness of Swiss communities abroad as opposed to the Swiss at home!)

The *Arbeitsausschuss* is entitled to conclude all legal business necessary and advisable to run and finance the Secretariat of the Swiss Abroad. It issues directions for the activities of the Secretariat and supervises it.

The most important work being dealt with by the Commission at the moment is legislation under the Federal Constitutional Article 45bis for the Swiss