

# Strikes in Switzerland

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politics are concerned with man, and thus historical science is of considerable service to political science, even to politics themselves. It classifies examples, points out generally valid criteria and sharpens the eye for analogies. It is true that no historic manifestation completely equals any other, but history teaches how previous generations mastered their problems. We must, however, not expect salvation from statisticians and technocrats only: we depend on the aid given by those who are knowledgeable as to the human soul, the conscious and the unconscious.

### Head of the Foundation "Pro Helvetia"

Does the State have a soul? In ordinary good or bad times any inner values are denied it. But in times of emergency one senses something of a closer bond between members of one nation. By nation we mean neither mere blood language relationship – the very make-up and characteristics of this Nation of Confederates speaking four languages prevents us from thinking thus. Prof. von Salis loved the playing together of languages and, like Rilke in his years in the Valais, he used French as well as German. With his work on "Rainer Maria Rilke's Swiss Years" he made a mark, too, in literature.

After the presidency of former Federal Councillor Haeberlin (1939–1943) and Mr. Paul Lachenal (1944–1952) the authorities looked for a third President of the Foundation "Pro Helvetia", and in Prof. von Salis they found an admirably endowed personality. Culture means cultivation. The activities of the Foundation cover literature, dialect research, folklore and ethnological studies, popular theatre, adult education, academic questions; they comprise all the arts and the Foundation promotes cultural exchanges inside Switzerland, with special attention to the regions of the Italian and Rhaeto-Romanic languages. In addition, "Pro Helvetia" represents Swiss creative work abroad and endeavours to make it known adequately and – at the most favourable – effective in a worldwide sense. Thus "Pro Helvetia" is not an administrative body in the usual sense; that would not have been in accordance with the ideas of the first Presidents, nor of those of the two General Secretaries Dr. Karl Naef (1939–1959) or Mr. Luc Boissonas (since 1959). Both the second and the fourth President, Dr. Michael Stettler (1964–1970), as well as Mr. Boissonas have close connections with the arts. Dr. Naef was an expert in literature. Thus Prof. von Salis was in his element in this field of activities. Not the State as such creates culture. But where there is

genuine creation, it can be fostered by public enterprise.

To supervise such an extensive field of activities and to dispose of the means intelligently is a confidential task and requires profound education, deep reverence for creative work, and above all, knowledge of human nature. Prof. von Salis liked to call the Foundation "Pro Helvetia" his child, he took care of its worries in a fatherly way and was happy when efforts were rewarded, when a supported enterprise became independent, when a creator succeeded.

Whoever was lucky to work together with Prof. von Salis anywhere, is grateful to him for much encouragement,

all the more since conditions in Switzerland are not always easily discernible, and even less easy to mould. "Difficult Switzerland" is the title of one of the more recent works of Prof. von Salis, now a septuagenarian. Our Confederation is gift and obligation at the same time; again and again it needs counsellors and personalities of the order of a Jean-Rodolphe von Salis. May he be able to arrange his eighth decade in such a way as to enjoy leisure and creative work in balanced measure.

Georg Thuerer  
Collection "Pro Helvetia".

## STRIKES IN SWITZERLAND

When one talks about LABOUR PEACE in Switzerland, one thinks of the agreement signed on 19th July, 1937 between the Employers' Federation of the Machine and Metall Industry on one hand and the Union of Metal and Watch Workers on the other. This agreement contains a renunciation of "every kind of industrial action such as closed shop tactics, strikes or lockouts" to settle collective disputes.

Each party to the contract deposited a sum of a quarter of a million francs with the National Bank, and that sum is lost in case of breach of agreement. A method of arbitration has been worked out for the solution of any conflict which cannot be solved by negotiation. In the course of years, this labour peace has been extended practically to the whole of Swiss industry.

Thanks to this industrial peace, but also due to the continued boom, labour conflicts have gone back steadily since 1937:

From 1928 to 1937 there were an annual average of 32 labour conflicts with 4,325 participants losing 86,840 working days. Between 1958 and 1967, 320 working men on average were in-

involved in 3 conflicts every year causing the loss of 8,358 working days. 1970 saw three labour conflicts involving 320 persons who lost 2,623 working days.

Such labour conditions may no doubt be called gratifying, especially when compared to other industrial states. But even so one cannot help putting the question whether "Industrial peace is any more than employers' peace" – one of the accusations sometimes made against the collective peace instrument of 1937.

Almost imperceptibly, the number of complaints by employers to industrial courts has gone up by a quarter between 1955 and 1970, whilst the number of complaints by employees have gone down by 20%. Altogether, however, there has been an unmistakable falling off. Nevertheless, the shift in accent seems to prove that tensions continue to exist, even though in different ways. It has happened that employers have become advocates on behalf of their employees who had to go to court for various offences – this just so as not to suffer a reduction in staff! The economic state has also had its influence on sociology.



Scene from the General Strike of 1918: The Army takes over the running of the Post Office.