

# The United States and Switzerland in the Nineteenth Century [Heinz K. Meier]

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HEINZ K. MEIER, *The United States and Switzerland in the Nineteenth Century*.  
Mouton & Co., The Hague 1963. 208 S.

Dr. Meier's study of a long and relatively busy period in the history of Switzerland makes a real contribution to our knowledge of Swiss foreign relations. The author has examined a great number of nineteenth century documents, both in the United States and Switzerland, and has been able to draw many new facts to our attention.

Throughout his book, Dr. Meier maintains that, although some points of disagreement did arise during the hundred-year period, relations between the United States and Switzerland were friendly in nature. The official diplomatic record began some years after the 1815 peace settlement, prompted by Swiss immigration to the United States and by a growing trade between the two countries. By the middle of the century, treaty regulation of certain questions, such as extradition and tariffs, became desirable. Negotiation of an acceptable treaty text was a long process, taking nearly five years (1850—1855), not because of any basic hostility, but because both governments are federal in form, and thus limited in competence. In 1853, as a sign of its sympathy and concern for the only republican government in Europe, the United States appointed its first minister to Switzerland, Theodore S. Fay. This envoy, a very conscientious person, attempted to work out solutions to questions directly affecting the United States, such as the status of Jews in Switzerland and conditions of immigration; he also concerned himself with questions of less direct interest to the United States, particularly the Neuchâtel crisis, which threatened the Swiss position in Europe. Switzerland, of course, took no official part in the American Civil War, but Swiss did participate, on both sides, and Dr. Meier has been able to recount some of their adventures. Toward the end of the century, new agreements were made about postal rates, about some problems of immigration and naturalization, and, in 1908, about arbitration. In a final chapter, the author discusses briefly the commodities, patterns and volume of Swiss-American trade.

To attempt to survey nearly a century of activity between two busy countries is an enormous undertaking, so that it is not at all surprising that, after studying the work, the reader feels some frustration because of a few unanswered questions. Did the American government make any moves in other European capitals to encourage respect for Swiss independence and neutrality, for example, during the Franco-Prussian War? What was the Swiss attitude toward the Spanish-American War? What proportion of Swiss trade was with the United States, and, similarly, what proportion of total American foreign trade was with Switzerland? How did these figures change between, let us say, 1855, when the treaty was ratified, and the end of the century, when tariff agreements were in serious jeopardy?

Perhaps this slight frustration for the reader also stems from the author's

treatment of his material. Dr. Meier has made extensive use of direct quotations, whereas, by paraphrasing in many instances, he might have been led to analyze the mainsprings of policy for the two countries more closely. Undoubtedly, ideological sympathies were important elements of policy, but for the cynic, friendship as «the *Leitmotiv* and basic content of American-Swiss relations» seems much too easy an explanation. The geographic separation between Switzerland and the United States also removed much cause for suspicion. The Swiss minority in the United States might have influenced both American and Swiss policies, and the extent of trade relations likewise is relevant to policy formation on both sides of the Atlantic. Furthermore, the relations of each country with the rest of the world must be considered, since the Swiss-American relationship was surely tempered by many outside forces.

Nonetheless, Dr. Meier provides a good foundation of information, not only in his text, but in his useful appendices, and it is to be hoped that he and others will continue to build on it.

Washington, D. C.

Ann G. Imlah

## ALLGEMEINE GESCHICHTE HISTOIRE GÉNÉRALE

ROLAND GANGHOFFER, *L'évolution des institutions municipales en Occident et en Orient au Bas-Empire*. Paris, Pichon & Durand-Auzias, 1963, in-8°, 259 p. (Bibliothèque d'histoire du droit et droit romain, IX.)

Après une introduction sur les conditions politiques, économiques et sociales dans lesquelles se sont élaborées les institutions du Bas-Empire, l'auteur étudie l'organisation des curies, constatant que la vie de la cité se réduit de plus en plus à l'activité d'un groupe qui assume, à corps défendant, les charges municipales. Comme chacun cherchait à se dérober, l'Etat impose la fonction aux individus capables de la remplir, pratiquement à une classe, les curiales, dont la charge devenait héréditaire. Le sénat local se confond avec une classe sociale, fermée et spécialisée. Cependant il faut distinguer l'Orient et l'Occident. En Orient les curiales s'évadent par le fonctionnariat, restant au service de l'Etat qu'ils renforcent; en Occident ils désertent pour grossir les rangs des féodaux adversaires de l'autorité, donc des curies qu'ils empêchent de remplir leurs devoirs. L'Etat réagit, se substitue aux curies, leur enlève leurs attributions financières au profit d'organes de contrôle: *curator*, *defensor civitatis* qui, conjointement avec les agents de l'Etat, font concurrence à l'institution, la supplantent et précipitent sa décadence.

Que devenait dans cette évolution le patronat? En Orient il disparaît, inutile, remplacé par les gouverneurs, protecteurs fonctionnarisés. En Occi-