

# "Switzerland and European integration"

Autor(en): **[s.n.]**

Objektyp: **Article**

Zeitschrift: **Helvetia : magazine of the Swiss Society of New Zealand**

Band (Jahr): **18 (1954)**

Heft [3]

PDF erstellt am: **31.05.2024**

Persistenter Link: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-942631>

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We had the honour of having with us Miss B. Blunk, Heiden, Switzerland, who is on a world tour, and has been visiting New Zealand. It was an excellent opportunity for her to meet the maximum number of Swiss people on a single occasion.

Quite a number of different sports were practised in a picnic-like fashion; races for children and young people, nail-driving, etc. The highlight of the sports, however, was the competition for the Swiss Social Club Challenge Cup for the old Swiss fashion "Steistossen." An ordinary stone of about 30 lbs. weight was used and some excellent feats were recorded. Quite a bit of practice must have been done all over the country, because the improvement from last year was considerable. I am sure that next year will hold some more surprises in store for us; with plenty of practice it does not need a big man to put up a record. This year's winners were:—

John Kuriger, Oaonui, winner of the Cup.

A. Muller, Eltham, second prize, £1.

Fr. Gwerder, Opunake, third prize, 10/-.

A very pleasing sight also was the numerous youngsters of all ages who enjoyed the free ice creams, lolly scrambles and so forth; and last, but not least, the music for all. "Alphornblasen," accordion and "Fahnenschwingen" de luxe, as you could not see it any better in dear old Switzerland on an "Aelpplerkilbi." "Auf Wiedersehen" and "Wiederhoren" in 1955.

J.W.R.

## "SWITZERLAND AND EUROPEAN INTEGRATION"

Since the end of the war, and at an increasingly accelerated rhythm, the countries of Western Europe have been striving, during these last few years, to become organised, to pool certain of their preoccupations, and to solve certain problems not solely on the European plan but on that of the Continent. These tendencies are becoming all the more affirmative, because our Old World fears the Soviet imperialism and because its obligated ally, the United States, expects from its partner, in exchange for the material and military aid which it grants, that measures should be taken for its organisation and, even, integration.

Face to face with these new events, Switzerland's position is not an easy one. Speaking objectively, it may be said that the citizens of this country find themselves divided between contradictory sentiments or convictions. On the one hand, their attachment to the traditional neutrality of the Swiss Confederation is very real and profound, knowing the truth of the fact that fidelity to this principle has constituted during a

century and a half—and over a still longer period—one of the essential safeguards of our independence. On the other hand, there are a great number of our citizens who have a great desire to see Europe surmount its traditional divisions and once more recover its strength, autonomy and independence in a close union of those elements of which it is composed. Nor, can it be disguised that Switzerland can only live and subsist within a world which resembles her and which demands for itself identical values. One may even go so far as to say that Swiss neutrality will become so much the more of a reality if it can find support in a strong and healthy world, and not in a weakened Continent, whose part in the direction of world affairs declines with each day.

All this will show that the European situation and its evolution raises a number of questions in our country. And, as you are aware, foreign countries are also interested in our attitude which they do not always understand and ask themselves whether, sooner or later, we will not perhaps have to attenuate it in a number of respects. Others even go so far as to wish that we will make a definite change in our attitude.

Thus, it was not without serious reasons that our Minister for Foreign Affairs, Federal Councillor Petitpierre, Head of the Federal Political Department, took the opportunity at a recent Parliamentary debate to make a clear statement on Switzerland's position in regard to European integration. And, we would hasten to add that his declaration—which was of particular interest in that it came after a long silence—obtained the practically unanimous approval of Parliament, only a few Communist deputies opposing the Government's point of view. However, their remarks are listened to less than ever.

In his statement, Monsieur Petitpierre remained faithful to the formula which he has never ceased to repeat and which he has made into the major principle of his foreign policy. He no longer says, as did certain of his predecessors: "Neutrality" and nothing more, but he speaks of "neutrality and solidarity." This signifies quite clearly that Switzerland is determined to remain attached to her international statute, that she is just as neutral as she was before, but that she is also conscious of those duties of solidarity which bind her to other countries and that it is with all her heart that she is willing to collaborate in all international organisations having a technical character. This also means that she has no intention of belonging to any organisations, when such adherence might compromise or lessen her independence, from the political or military standpoint. Moreover, on this occasion, Monsieur Petitpierre pronounced a new formula which will doubtless achieve great success. What he said was: by remaining neutral we do not com-

mit any sin against Europe, just as by collaborating with Europe in the way of organisation we do not commit any sin against neutrality.

From this it will be seen that the Swiss authorities, at one in this with the overwhelming majority of public opinion, are not changing their attitude. For us, neutrality is a reality and a principle which maintains all its value. But we also know that European organisation, that is to say in our close neighbourhood, is also a reality that we cannot ignore and must take largely into account.

This plainly shows that there is nothing doctrinary about Swiss policy. It is, above all, realistic and pragmatic.

### TELEVISION IN SWITZERLAND

It had been decided a year or two ago that Switzerland would proceed warily in the matter of introducing television because it was thought that the geographical position and the difficult natural contours of the country would present technical problems of a high order and it was anticipated that it would be a number of years before television could become a practical possibility in Switzerland.

The tremendous strides that have been made in television have, however, made the Swiss authorities revise their attitude, particularly since a transmitter station has been taken into regular operation in Zurich, furnishing a daily, if rather restricted, programme.

As far back as 1950, when the question of television was first mooted, Swiss manufacturers began to investigate the possibility of producing television equipment because they quite rightly foresaw the vast possibilities in this new industry. Naturally, before Swiss manufacturers could begin to construct equipment, they had to know what kind of service would be expected and particularly the number of "lines" on which transmissions would take place. The standard used in the United Kingdom is a picture of 405 lines, and, in France, pictures are transmitted on the old standard of 441 lines and the new standard of 819 lines. In the United States of America the standard is 525 lines. However, except for the countries mentioned and those behind the Iron Curtain, the standard laid down by the C.C.I.R. (Comite Consultatif International des Radiocommunications) provides for a standard of 625 lines.

It had been realised from the very beginning in Switzerland that a purely Swiss domestic programme would not meet the needs of the Swiss population which would expect to have access

to programmes transmitted by large neighbouring countries and by other countries, e.g., the United Kingdom, within reasonable distance for reception purposes. There are now about half a dozen Swiss firms able to manufacture television receivers but, as might be expected, prices are extremely high in view of the costly adjustments which must be made to enable reception to be effected from transmitters sending out pictures on varying lines.

One problem facing Switzerland is that with which other countries have had to deal as well and it is the question of paid advertising. At present, the Swiss Government frowns severely on paid advertising in the wireless transmission services and it also intends to prohibit the use of television for such purposes, although it is felt that the licence fee for possessors of television sets will have to be fairly high if administrative costs are to be covered from that source alone. The Swiss Government has recently authorised television to be shown publicly in cafes and restaurants, but this has brought the inevitable protest from cinema interests which threaten to retaliate by boycotting the Swiss-produced weekly newsreel shown in all cinemas more from a prestige point of view than from that of public interest. The introduction of television is, of course, one of the burning problems of the day in all countries but it has particular significance in a country like Switzerland where education interests play such a large part in the national economy, and it is therefore to be expected that the Swiss authorities will exercise strict control over the use of television as a public service.

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