

A condensed review of main-events of the past Century in Switzerland

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Editorial

The old year is gone, the new has begun and the transition did no harm! - The year 2000 holds the same hidden promises for you and me that every new year has ever contained since mankind has divided time into measurable slots.

- Soon we will have difficulty remembering what day of the week New Year's day 2000 fell upon. - Soon I will wonder if it was 'Y2K' or '2YK' we called the 'bug' that was to strike at computers and all computer-controlled 'inventions'!

And what about all those New Year's resolutions that have been made?

- If they should bring us success, then we might well remember that success is to be measured not so much by the position one has reached in life, as by the obstacles which we have overcome while trying to succeed.

- If we expect more happiness to come our way during this the first year of the new Century, we may well remember that happiness is never found on its own, but is a by-product of 'living and giving'.

It has been defined as a state of mind, or a quality of the heart, an attribute of the soul. And I like especially the following description; Happiness is a perfume that you can't pour out on others without spilling a few drops on yourself!

So let's not be worried, those of us

who made no New Year's resolutions, let's remember that even a smile of friendliness can be rewarding. And smiling is possible in any language!

To put it simply; the happiness we get out of life is in direct proportion to the happiness we give to others.

- But then, you probably have known that all along and it remains for me but to wish you many occasions to give of yourself during the year 2000!

Editor.

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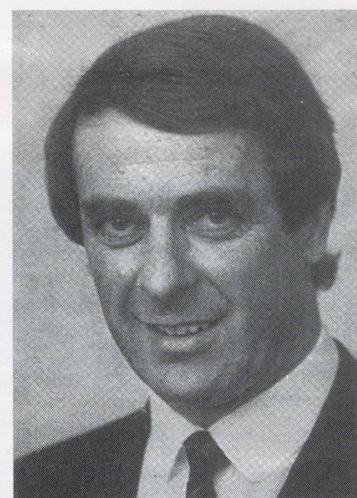
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*The new Swiss Federal
President for the year
2000*

Adolf Ogi, SVP

**A condensed review
of main-events of the past
Century in Switzerland**
as broadcast by Swiss Radio
International

When the first world war erupted in 1914 Switzerland had to defend its neutrality and independence. Foreign visitors and workers left.

There was a general strike immediately after the war in 1918. War-time-mobilisation of the then-un-paid Swiss citizen's army had drastically cut incomes, while food-prices had more than doubled. Social tensions became evident with some people finding it hard to obtain daily food, or getting enough money to pay for rent and necessities of life.

The strike brought the industry to a standstill, but the authorities called in the army and after just 3 days the strike was over. One concession won however was the 48 hour-week. The authorities accused Marxists of organising the protests and closed the Soviet Embassy. But it is thought that the striker's demands laid the foundations to the modern Swiss State and it's social market-economy.

The years between the 2 world wars were a time of economical and political turmoil across Europe marked by a global depression and the rise of Hitler, Mussolini and Stalin. There was a wave of bankruptcies in Switzerland and social conditions deteriorated as a result of the depression. The aggressive new dictatorships in Germany and Italy provoked alarm as did demonstrations by Marxists in Switzerland. During one of these in Geneva in 1931, sixteen people were killed and dozens injured. The Swiss felt especially threatened by the Nazis because of their claim to rule over all German-speaking countries, while Hitler promised respect for all neutral countries. But despite his re-assurances within months he had moved against Denmark, Norway, the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxemburg. In Switzerland the authorities mobilised more than 430,000 citizens to defend the country's territorial integrity. After the war Switzerland came in for heavy criticism because of its refusal to allow entry to thousands of Jews, many of whom died later in the holocaust. Switzerland has in recent years also been condemned for its gold-dealings with Nazi-Germany.

But Historians want to remind the world that Switzerland was obliged to collaborate to a limited extent in order to keep the Nazis at bay. The mobilisation had a profound effect on a generation of men and women. These people dedicated their lives to defend the country and after the war they counted themselves among the winners of the war. After the war there was general hostility towards the German race and it is thought that this was due mainly to the fact that Switzerland had been forced to accept everything the war burdened them with, unlike people that were directly involved in fighting.

After the hardships of the war-years life improved for many Swiss. Concerned that there should not be another strike, authorities gradually introduced many of the benefits of the welfare state including Old-age-pensions (AHV) and various kinds of social insurances.

7. of Feb. 1971 was a momentous day for at least one half of the population. After decades of campaigning, a referendum finally granted women the right to vote at federal level. In 1984 Parliament elected the radical Elisabeth Kopp as the first women-cabinet Minister. She stepped down 5 years later amid allegations of possible wrong-doing by her husband. In 1993 the social democrat Ruth Dreifuss became the second women-cabinet Minister and in 1999 she took over Switzerland's rotating Presidency. 1999 also saw the Christian Democrat Ruth Metzler joining her in the cabinet. Why did it take Swiss women so long to get voting rights? Cynics would have it that it is because the men had to give women the vote. In most other countries it was Parliament who had to decide such matters.

- Some 40 years ago the magic formula with 7 members to comprise the federal council was initiated. This formula has ensured political stability to this day. The then-Secretary-General of the Christian Democratic Party, Martin Rosenberg, hit on this magic formula of two, two, two, one. Two Cabinet-seats each for the 3 biggest parties, the Christian Democrats, the Radicals and the Social Democrats, and one seat for the Swiss People's Party. This is a form of proportional representation. The formula is very popular and may hopefully stay in place for many years to come.

As far as foreign affairs is concerned Switzerland has become 'home' to a host of international institutions! The United Nations chose Geneva as its head-quarters in Europe. Switzerland participates fully in key-agencies.

However in 1986 more than ¾ of voters said 'no' to Swiss entry into the UN, believing it would subvert the country's policy of neutrality. In 1992 the Swiss people also voted against membership of the European Economic Union. Switzerland joined the European Free Trade Area EFTA in 1960. Members of

this organisation had no interest in ultimate political union. In the 1970th EFTA-countries secured multi-lateral free trade agreements with the Common Market. By-lateral agreements with the European Union and Switzerland have been ratified by the Swiss Parliament earlier in 1999 and they become effective in 2001 in the fields of agriculture, transport and the free movement of people. One event with profound repercussions on Switzerland was the 'fall of the Berlin wall' in 1989. This signaled the end of hostilities between the 'Eastern and Western Blocks'. The end of the 'cold war' forced Switzerland to re-think its security and defence policies. This in turn brought about the reform of the Swiss Army in 1995. The 'end of the cold war' also brought about the idea (an idea that the general Swiss public was not aware of., Edit.) that Switzerland had never fully accounted for its actions towards Nazi-Germany and the implications in the Jewish Holocaust. Switzerland is now well on its way to restore it's tarnished image. Swiss business feared very much that the accusations would be a real factor and so they finally agreed to a 'global settlement'

Looking forward to the 21. Century the incoming Federal President Adolph Ogi recently urged Switzerland to learn from history and avoid making the same mistakes.

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