

Zeitschrift: Swiss review : the magazine for the Swiss abroad
Herausgeber: Organisation of the Swiss Abroad
Band: 1 (1974)
Heft: 1

Artikel: The Canton of Aargau
Autor: Salvini-Kim, Dorothea / Pro Helvetia
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-906346>

Nutzungsbedingungen

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. [Mehr erfahren](#)

Conditions d'utilisation

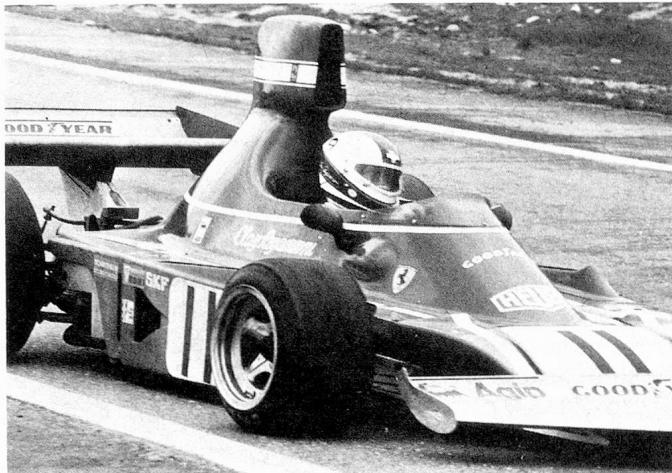
L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. [En savoir plus](#)

Terms of use

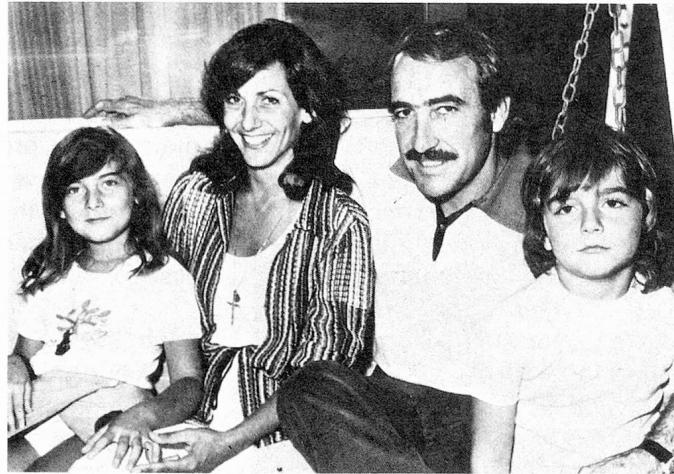
The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. [Find out more](#)

Download PDF: 31.01.2026

ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>



Clay Regazzoni, world vice-champion in 1974...



surrounded by his family (Keystone)

13th October

At the 23rd International Film Week in Mannheim, two Swiss films received awards. They are «The first lie or Victor and education» by June Kovach and «Swiss in the Spanish Civil War» by Richard Dindo.

15th October

The Federal Military Department announced that it was compiling a new one-time card-index PISA («Personnel Information System of the Army»). It will contain all information regarding persons liable for military service.

20th October

The Initiative against «Over-Foreignisation of People and Country» launched by the «National Action» group, was rejected by the Swiss people by 1,689,870 to 878,739 votes. All 25 Cantons rejected the Initiative unanimously.

The Canton of Aargau

Mrs Dorothea Salvini-Kim was born in Aarau, the daughter of a distinguished statesman. In 1961, she got her doctorate at the University of Zurich with a thesis on the poet Paul Celan. She worked at the secretariat of the Foundation «Pro Helvetia» and now she lives in the Grisons (Misox), married to a farmer. She is engaged in publicity work.

Like every other Canton, the Aargau has its clichés: it is called the «Ruebliland», the land where carrots grow; the Canton of Culture,

too. And as with every cliché, there is some truth attached to it. The sandy soil favours the growth of carrots, and that is why the Aargau people cultivate carrots full of vitamin A for clear eyesight; they eat carrots, they have clear vision. They opened a factory at Lenzburg, «Hero», founded many years ago by two clear-sighted men Henkel and Roth. That is where carrots, as well as many other vegetables and fruit, are canned for gourmets and dispatched to all parts of the world. Yes, the Aargau people know why they cultivate carrots.

The nickname Cultural Canton is

probably due to the special fighting activities the Aargau indulged in during the denominational strife of the 19th century, even before the actual «cultural fight» of the 'seventies. The nickname serves as a stimulus to live up to the implied reputation, and at the same time, it provides protection. Behind the broad back of irony and self-irony, the people of the Aargau, quietly and undisturbed, live for their culture, i.e. their enjoyment. Notable achievements of this retirement are the Foundation «Pro Argovia», the Philipp Albert Stapfer House and the law on culture.

«Pro Argovia» was created by three friends, a highly successful prank! Cultural events, theatre performances, concerts and lectures often and in social get-togethers. Informal discussion over a glass of wine can also express culture at its highest level, the way the Aargau people hold dear: Joy of living which is visibly creative and becomes a work of art. Apart from individual events, «Pro Argovia» promotes typically Argovian talents of all kinds and provides stimulus and inspiration for artists and lovers of the arts. It has taken on the part of an art centre so far lacking in the Canton. In its rather vagabond fashion, it makes it clear to the Aargau people: everywhere can be a centre. The people themselves are *in* the centre, and they *are* a centre themselves.

The Philipp Albert Stapfer House at Castle Lenzbourg, «place of encounter», is a child of «Pro Argovia», created together with other foundations. The warden of the House said «I want to awake understanding in one for the other. Understanding? In truth it is love, sympathy. The Stapfer House provides aid towards understanding one another.»

Love, trying to understand, are the core of Argovian culture. Perhaps that is the reason why it is sometimes ridiculed, why even we are sometimes a little ashamed of it. Thanks to the law on culture, financial means are released for the promotion of education, science and art.

It needed love and understanding right from the early years when the Aargau became a Canton (1803), in order to keep together the four so vastly different regions; the rather quick-tempered Fricktaler the other side of the Jura, the proud inhabitants of the Freiamt, the individualists of the country of Baden, the tractable and yet proud Bernese to which group the inhabitants of the cantonal capital

belonged. Love and understanding were needed not to have the three denominations at loggerheads and to keep the different streams within the Protestant movement in a reasonable Christian attitude. State and Religion, however, were so much in unison that Karl Barth, who was minister at Safenwil for ten years, exclaimed: «O Aargau, o State religion, God have mercy!» With this he pointed out the rather negative aspect of understanding: to give in for the sake of peace where one's own convictions should have been affirmed. In 1930, God showed His mercy, and the State Church of the 19th century was abolished also in the Aargau.

Just for the sake of a feather given
to me, I readily forget birds and
angels.

(Erika Burkhart)

This satisfaction with one given feather is typical of the Argovian people. The *paris pro toto* law is inherent in us. It allows us latitude and the freedom of renunciation. No other freedom exists. It is perhaps the reason for our restraint, the melancholy key-note of our character, which resounds in every piece of art, be it a poem, a picture or a musical composition. It is dangerous, however, to generalise and to talk about «us» and «our character», all the more so as the Canton of Aargau is given the label now and then of «Switzerland in miniature», not only by linguists, geographers and sociologists, but also by politicians, for normally plebiscite results of the Canton of Aargau reflect those of the whole of Switzerland. Yet it is true that certain characteristics are common to all Argovian people. There is no cantonal centre. They lack Paris to indicate fashion trends; they have no Mecca for their daily prayers. They are content with their immediate surroundings:

My knee looks for the head of a dog.
A child admits me into his game.
I do not want to trouble any gods.
I live.

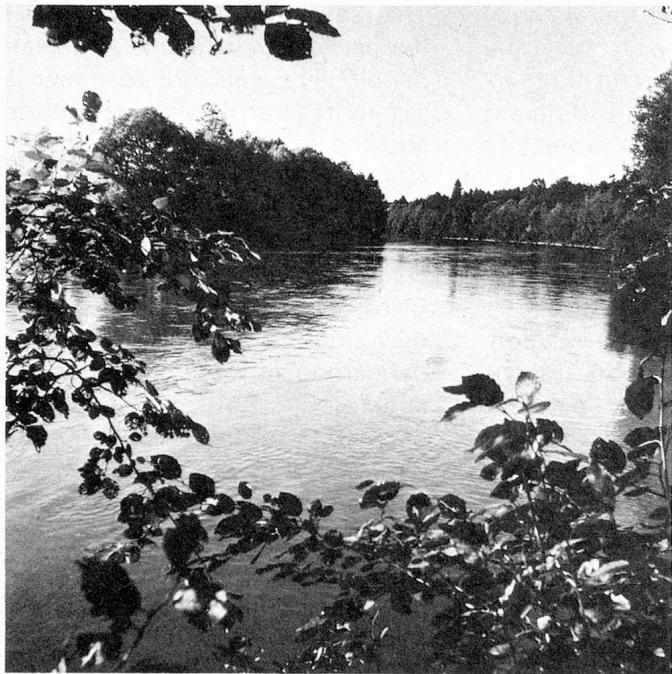
(Erika Burkhart)

In the old quarter of Baden (ONST Zürich)

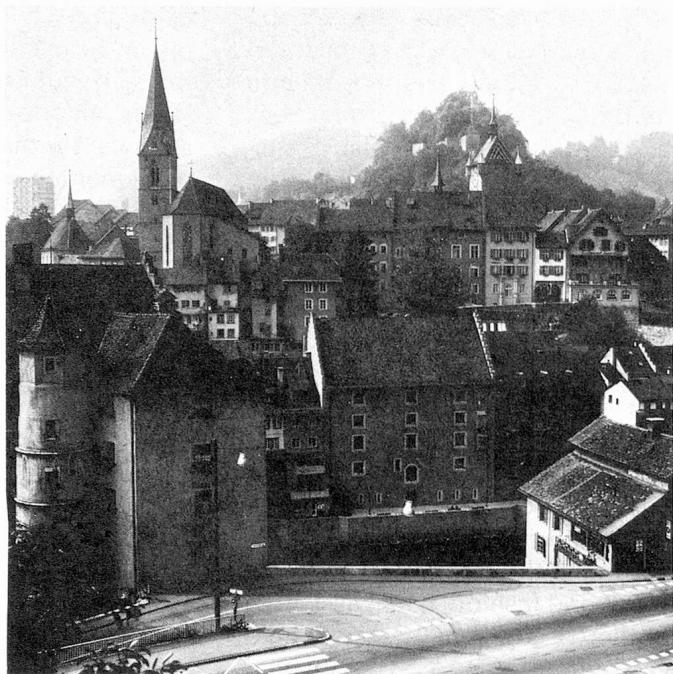


The Aargovian citizen passes his day with realism and common sense. He does not trouble the Gods, yet the affection of a dog or the trust of a child move him, burst the confinement of restraint, so that the whole appears in the fragment.

The scenery stamps the inhabitants. In the Aargau, it is the Jura and the Aar which mark the hearts, even though both are not unique to our Canton, but run across the whole of Switzerland from East to West and from South to North.



The «Reuss» near Unterlunkofen



Medieval city of Baden on the edge of the Limmat

Paul Haller, probably our most talented dialect writer (1882–1920), again and again mentions the Jura:

And ever the same
Are the Jura mountains on the
right,
They go on with their wide slopes,
their long ridges and masses
of rock
Which reach, audacious and
beautiful, up to the blue skied.

And he tells of the Aar:

And we two
Squatted on the steps in front of
the hut,
Where is was cool an one can
see the Aar.
Where one could compose poetry,
if only there were someone
to understand it.
One can see how the water ap-
proaches from afar,
And does not know if one feels
nostalgia or not.

Just how much the Jura and the Aar belong to us, we realise only once one is separated from them for good. The might of the Alps, the heat of the South, every impressive landscape awakens nostalgia for the quiet rhythm of the Jura, the gentle waters of the Aar which here has lost the tumultuous strength of the mountain stream and has not yet acquired that of the mighty river. We from the Aargau like the average, the moderate. And the third we love like mountain and water is our dialect. It is neither unmistakable like Bernese or «Baseldytsch», nor polished like the Zurich idiom. It lacks the clear sound of Eastern Switzerland or the singing tone of the Cantons around the Lake of Lucerne. Different from village to village, from valley to valley, it is nothing spectacular. But its rich vocabulary is striking and distinguishes it from other dialects. Thus it may happen that a man from Zurich irritably reminds his compatriot from the Aargau to talk German at last.

Pestalozzi was one of us. It may be that the good reputation of the Argovian educational system is a last radiation of the great educationalist. Felix Hoffmann illustrator and world-renowned painter of picturebooks, Ernst Haefliger, famous talented singer above all as interpreter of the Evangelist in oratoria, both hail from the Aargau. But it is not our way to call upon the past and to live on the achievements of famous compatriots. We are far more concerned with the present and its influence on the future. It may not be the Aargau or its people who will fashion the world of tomorrow, but it may well be sufficient if we remain true to ourselves, so that the world will not go to rack and ruin. Perhaps it is enough to think like Luther: «And even if the end of the world came tomorrow, I should still plant an apple-tree today!» And if not an apple-tree, at least carrots!

Dorothea Salvini-Kim
in cooperation with
Pro Helvetia