

Zeitschrift: Swiss review : the magazine for the Swiss abroad
Herausgeber: Organisation of the Swiss Abroad
Band: 9 (1982)
Heft: 3

Inhaltsverzeichnis

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Contents

Switzerland – a small Commonwealth in a Large World	2
Civics and Politics	6
Official Communications:	
– Federal Council	9
– Solidarity Fund	11
Local News	12–16
The Conference of the Swiss Abroad	17
New Items for the Swiss Abroad	20
Retirement of Minister Jaccard	21
Book reviews	22
Youth skiing camp	22

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Switzerland – a small Commonwealth in a Large World

I should like to formulate a few ideas regarding the position of Switzerland in the international concept, a Switzerland I might be tempted to call a small society in a big world.

At the same time, I want to demonstrate that Switzerland is not without some greatness in spite of her smallness in area. Indeed, just because Switzerland is small she has to strive after such greatness in order to survive in this world. That is why, as Charles-Ferdinand Ramuz expressed it, we have always had a real need of greatness.

I am deliberately not speaking of Switzerland as a community. The Swiss have only one thing in common: their diversity. Community implies that forces exist which unify, as for instance origins, language, faith or voluntary and total adaptation to the existing order or way of life. For Switzerland, however, centrifugal power is typical. Community always implies distribution. In Switzerland, though, everyone jealously guards his possessions, his inheritance, in short everything which he has collected in the course of his life. It follows that it is not the common characteristics which unite the Swiss, but the differences. Switzerland owes her nationhood to a conscious act of willpower. The political and social structure of our society rests on a concept of contract. It is not the result of a creation on a historic basis, but rather resembles the idea of a «contrat social» as Jean Jacques Rousseau formulated it two centuries ago.

Naturally, these contractual origins of our society have their effect



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on the political structure as it was later realized in Switzerland, that is to say on the Confederate State. Such a State is nothing but a contractual agreement at political level: On the one side one maintains one's rights, on the other one assumes duties and responsibilities. The Swiss Confederation is no myth, but a contract which was concluded for