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trying to achieve: namely, ideal building blocks in the sense of a patchwork or lego game.

Scarcity of examples

But patchwork has to be very carefully sewn together, and a lego game requires concentrated effort. The new family form has to respect different emotional worlds, spatial claims, educational principles. These experiments in living have few past examples to build upon. With the exception of Christiane Brunner, last year's candidate to the Federal Council, scarcely any prominent Swiss citizen has departed from the traditional small family unit. In addition, there are as yet no statistics, since no official book-keeping has been carried out about the number of successful and unsuccessful follow-on families. "We know more about hen houses than we know about families", Ruth Ruttmann, head of the Education Division of Pro Juventute Switzerland, told a newspaper interviewer. Estimates based on figures from neighbouring countries would suggest that about 20% of the Swiss population is involved in these new family forms.

What actually is a family? Pro Juventute has worked out the following definition: "A family exists when adults

live together with children and young people in a responsible and caring way with the intention of permanence". The meaning is as simple as it is plausible: it is not the form but the quality that counts. A family is where you feel at home.

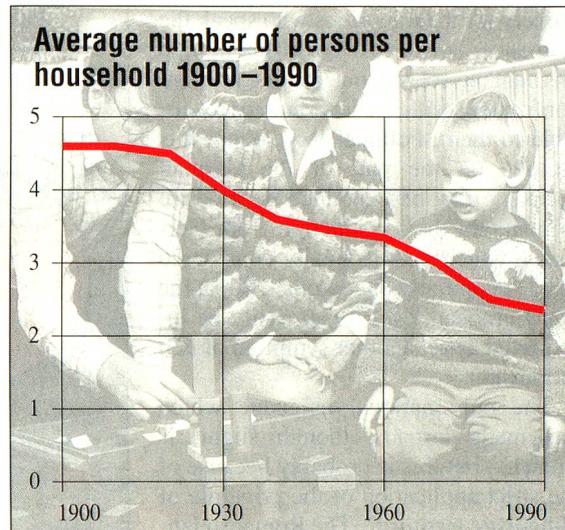
Only 200 years old

After all, the small or basic family – the institution on which so much value has been laid – has only existed for the last 200 years. So the family is not the rock of ages or an indestructible fortress, but rather a form of living together marked by economic, social, cultural and political circumstances. In central Europe during the pre-industrial era, there was no real separation between work, home life and leisure nor between relations and friends. People who lived together under one roof formed an economic community.

In the 18th and 19th centuries, industrialisation and the division of work led to a

dissolution of this form of domestic life. The economic community was replaced by one based on emotion. The sentiments of privacy and intimacy which are typical of the modern family arose from this development. But it also had its dark side: while professional life outside the home and political activity were re-served for men, women were restricted to the family.

The position of women in society has changed and is still changing, and family reality will follow in its wake. ■



Language and religion

Language diversity grows – church attendance sinks

For the first time in Swiss history, non-national languages (at 8.9%) have overtaken Italian (7.6%). This is one of the central linguistic facts to emerge from the 1990 census. As to religion, the number of people not belonging to any denomination has sharply increased.

The census shows that within the total population of Switzerland – including Swiss and resident foreigners – significant changes have taken place in the language sphere. This is mainly due to three distinct factors.

The first is that the number of immigrants from traditional European countries of origin has dropped, and some of those who immigrated previously have been naturalised – particularly in German-speaking Switzerland. This is one reason for the 2.2% drop in the propor-

tion of people claiming Italian as their mother tongue. The fact that Italian has ebbed outside its traditional language area is because for very many second or third generation Italian immigrants it is no longer their mother tongue. But the census nevertheless shows that 14.5% of Switzerland's population are able to speak Italian.

The second factor is that the proportion of foreign residents from other European and non-European countries has gone up. Compared with 1980, the

share of those who speak non-national languages has increased by 2.9%. Turkish and Serbo-Croat speakers account for most of this rise.

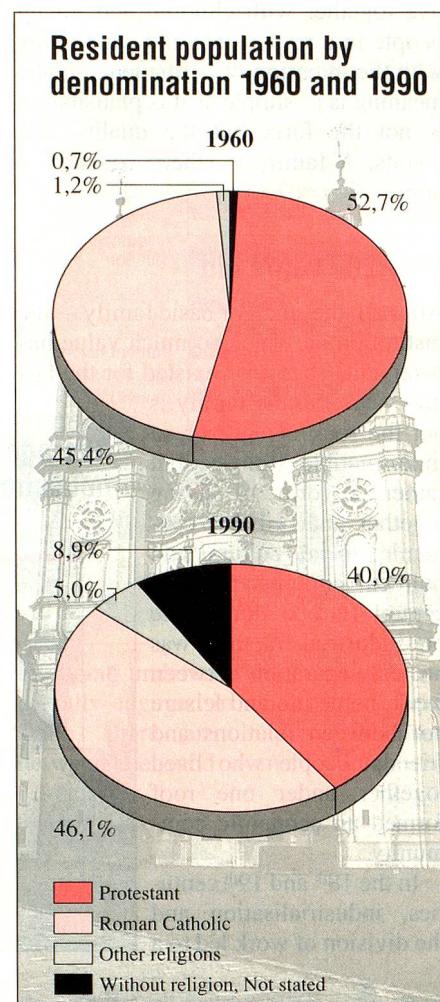
Thirdly, 10.9% of the resident population claim they speak English, although only 0.9% are native speakers. The former is a category which is increasing not only in Switzerland but also internationally. It is no coincidence that a survey of young people recently made shows that in the French and German language areas English is the preferred foreign language – although in Ticino French and German are ranked above it. Worries voiced by some people suggest that English may soon become the language in which Swiss from different ends of the country will be best able to communicate – particularly if

the German speakers continue to prefer their dialect to high German. This will have serious consequences not only for Italian, but for all three official national languages.

Dialect gaining popularity

In German-speaking Switzerland, dialect has grown in importance. Indeed, 66.4% of German speakers claim that they speak only dialect. It may easily be understood that this is a source of anxiety for the minorities who speak the Romance languages: these learn high German at school but in practice are confronted with dialect incomprehensible to them. Politically speaking, this attitude on the part of the German speakers may be explained by a desire to maintain their distinction from Germany, which is still widely considered to be "potentially dangerous". But at the pan-European level it can easily be interpreted as yet another symptom of isolationism.

The only national language which has made inroads, though slight, is French – but this is probably because of the strict application of the principle of "linguistic territory". The Romansh language is still declining. About 0.9% of the resident population – or just



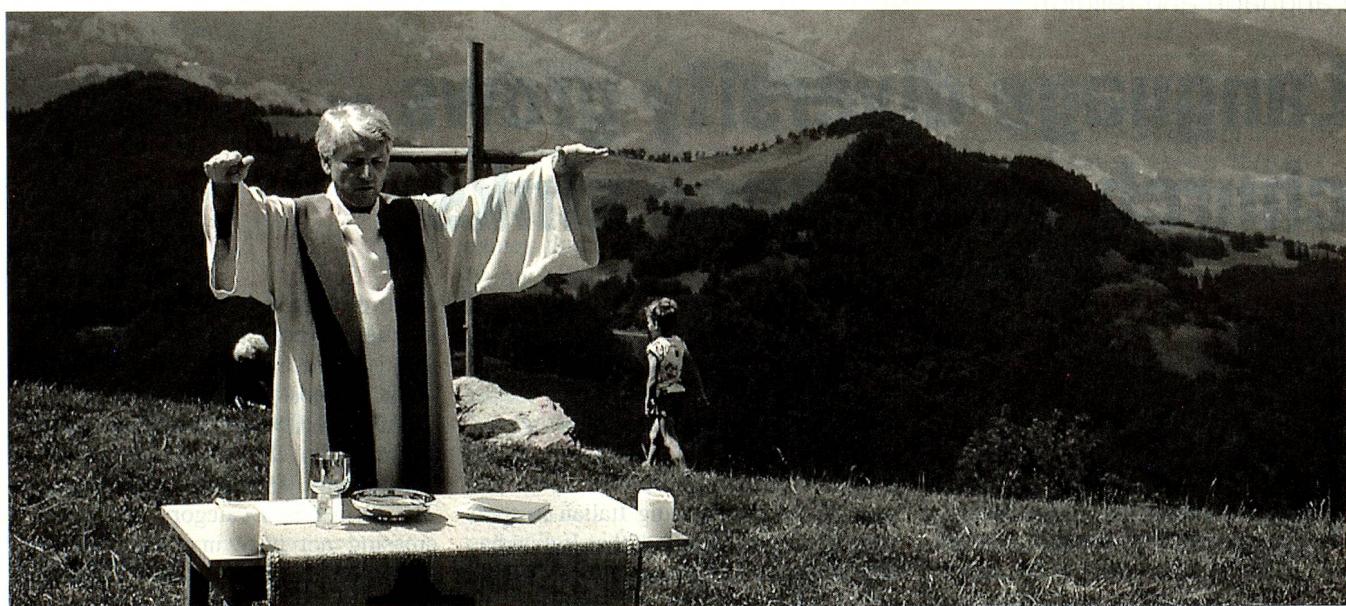
66,000 people – claim to speak it fluently.

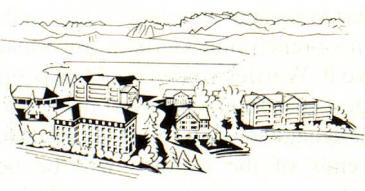
Flight from the churches

As to religion, the number of people who do not belong to a denomination has increased substantially, and there is a definite trend away from the established churches. Between 1980 and 1990, the number of people not practising religion doubled to 7.4%. Of particular significance is the number of such people in the cities of Basle (34.5%) and Geneva (18.97%). The reformed churches have suffered more from this phenomenon (down 4.3%) than the Roman Catholics (down 1.4%). The latter have benefited from the large number of immigrants from Italy, Spain and Portugal. It is also possible that the greater solidarity which reigns amongst Roman Catholics may have played a positive role.

The decline of the established churches has been accompanied by growth in the so-called free Christian and non-Christian communities. There has been an increase in the number of Orthodox and Muslim believers, whose share in the resident population has risen three-fold and now amounts to about 160,000. It will probably continue growing.

Giuseppe Rusconi





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