

Zeitschrift: Helvetia : magazine of the Swiss Society of New Zealand
Herausgeber: Swiss Society of New Zealand
Band: 6 (1940-1941)
Heft: 4

Artikel: The Swiss University
Autor: [s.n.]
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-943018>

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: 06.01.2026

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

battalions and auxiliary services, both male and female, are ever ready.

Switzerland has no "war aims," but should war come every Swiss will know why he is fighting: to safeguard a six-centuries-old independence, a small but precious homeland. And every inch of soil will be defended to the end.

Thus Switzerland, with a firm determination to maintain the country's historic independence found in every class of her population, possesses strength in defense, both technically and morally.

+++++

TOLD SWISS IDEAL WILL LAST FOREVER.

"The ideal of individual freedom shared by America and Switzerland will last as long as Switzerland's mountains; as long as human conscience clings to justice and right," said Dr. Charles Bruggmann, Swiss minister to the United States. Dr. Bruggmann said that Switzerland had founded its federal government on a recognition of the personality of the individual man. The Swiss moral and political conscience demanded, he said, that every citizen must be respected, educated and trained to accept civic responsibility.

"Only when the idea becomes general will peace come to the world," he said. "Only justice and federacy can cure the re-opening wounds of war."

Dr. Bruggmann described how the Swiss spirit of political unity had overcome barriers in religion, language and customs and had given the world an example of a unified nation.

Although the war has caused Switzerland to mobilize an army of 500,000 and has greatly injured its trade, Bruggmann said he was confident Switzerland would remain neutral.

+++++

THE SWISS UNIVERSITY.

Switzerland has seven cantonal universities, and one federal higher seat of learning: the Polytechnical College of Zurich. Eight higher schools of learning in a country with less than half the population of London! This is another proof that Switzerland not only exerted an important influence on contemporary education through the work of Rousseau, the philosopher, and Pestalozzi, the educator, but also that the Swiss people as a whole are ready to consent any sacrifice in view of the education of their own children, and of the children of the world's intellectual elite.

The Swiss universities received the definite impetus for their development from the 19th century idealism. One of them, the University of Basle, was founded forty years before Columbus discovered America. Basle's university was the child of the Renaissance which revived the classical spirit and marked a turning point in the history of mankind. The other Swiss universities came into existence as a result of the second wave of humanitariasm, an intellectual movement which followed in the wake of the French Revolution. The European regeneration of the beginning of the 19th century was not only political in its scope, but spiritual and scholastic as well.

All the Swiss universities are located in the principal old cultural centers of the country, that is to say, in the most important of the canton capitals. Four of them are found in the Germanic part of Switzerland: at Basle, Berne, and Zurich - both a university and a Polytechnical College being located in this latter city. The remaining four universities are to be found in the French-speaking section of Switzerland: at Geneva, Lausanne, Neuchatel, and Fribourg. Thus in educational matters, as in the other realms of Swiss life, there are no unprivileged minorities.

But what about the Italian part of Switzerland: you may ask. If your statement is correct, there ought to be four universities in Italian Switzerland also, and you have not mentioned even one. It may seem paradoxical, but the apparent lack of a higher seat of learning for the Italian section of Switzerland is but another proof that there are no unprivileged minorities in Switzerland. Our Italian-speaking population is small. It is also poor economically and could not at all afford to keep up a higher seat of learning in its cantonal capital. However, this difficulty has been eliminated by the co-operation of some of the other Swiss universities which have consented to employ the Italian language as well as their own for certain courses. The youth of Ticino can finish their university education in one of these institutions, thus blending their own Latin culture with the culture of the French and German sections of their country. In this way, an added zest and savor is given to their instruction. Our late foreign minister Mr. Giuseppe Motta, was a typical example of this blending of the three European cultures represented within our frontiers. His ability to express the most sublime thoughts with equal ease in all three of the continental languages - the French, German, and Italian - won for him the admiration of world statesmen who, in bygone days, met regularly on the shores of Lake Geneva.

It was Swiss individualism which gave birth to this almost extravagant number of higher centers of training. Yet all of them serve faithfully the same fundamental ideal: mutual tolerance and collaboration, the harmonious development of mind and soul, and the principles of individual, local and national liberty. The first of these ideals, mutual tolerance and collaboration, already has been treated. The second, which has had a very definite influence on the prosperous development of Swiss university life, is fittingly expressed in the following words found in the Charter act of the University of Basle: "Among God's good gifts to mankind, the ability to acquire science by patient learning is not to be considered of least importance. Science leads to a good and happy life, and its excellency causes the learned to emerge from the mass of humanity and to become more like unto the image of their divine model." And it can be stated that the Swiss universities remained faithful to the ideal of a harmonious development of mind and soul through the stormy period of materialistic conceptions of life. They refused to bow down to Mammon, but have remained the servants of the Spirit which, according to Holy Script, quickeneth mankind.

The third ideal, that of liberty, shines as a precious stone in our Constitution. The liberty of thought, of faith, of study are essential elements in the teaching of the university. "By the will of the people," such is the inscription to be found on the entrance door of the University of Zurich. These words are the very embodiment of the principles of Swiss education. They bespeak liberty, the necessity of discipline and well-balanced orderly conduct in all phases of activity. They also mean that science is not a national end in itself, but that it must serve the nation, the community, and the individual by the persevering toil of those who are afforded the privilege of acquiring it.

Thus we can rightly say that the Swiss university is the heir of a culture which, in many countries, appears to be threatened with destruction, if it already has not been destroyed. Our universities remain as havens of mankind's highest ideals: good will, mutual understanding, individual and collective liberty, and unstinted zeal in the conscientious accomplishment of duty toward self and in behalf of community welfare - these ideals which stand out above the chaos of our time. Indeed, the number is legion today of those who reject what our democracy considers to be its most valuable contribution: efficient organization of public life without servitude to a chosen few, nor cowardice to the people, but a government of the people, by the people, and for the people under the direction of a group of men whose conscientiousness and scrupulous endeavor qualify them as representatives and servants of the national community. But the faith of the Swiss people remains unshaken in these high ideals of humanity which find life and expression in the Swiss university.