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THE JURA PROBLEM

The inhabitants of that part of Canton Bern called the Jura are culturally and linguistically different from the majority of Bernese citizens. They are a minority in a canton to which they were annexed without their consent and those who resent this situation more strongly want to form a separate canton — a 23rd canton.

The Jura is divided into seven districts: the three anti-Separatist districts of Southern Jura (Courtelary, Neuveville and Moutier), the three Separatist districts of Northern Jura (Franches Montagnes, Porrentruy and Delemont), and the German-speaking district of Laufen, which has a common boundary with the cantons of Basle and Solothurn. Its total surface is 1468 square kilometres, which would put it, as a canton, in tenth position after Fribourg (1367 sq km) and Lucerne (1349 sq km). Its population, according to the 1960 census, would be 122,282 inhabitants, 10,874 for Laufen and 110,408 for the French-speaking districts.

THE PRESENT MOVEMENT

The present separist movement began immediately after the war, when the Bernese government shocked Jurassian feelings by Germanising schools in French-speaking areas. The real kick-off was given by the Moeckli affair in 1947. Mr Moeckli, a Jurassian councillor of state, was refused the post of head of public works in the Canton of Berne. Said a representative to the Great Council: "a department as important as that of public works cannot be directed by a French-speaking councillor of state", a point of view confirmed by two successive votes in the Council. From that year on, the Separatists of the Jura held yearly mass gatherings in Delemont. In 1948, the "Rassemblement Jurassien" was founded, and, somewhat later, its pro-Bernese counterpart, "l'Union des Patriotes Jurassiens", was created in reaction. In 1953, at the sixth Jurassian gathering at Delemont, 10,000 Separatists agreed to the Rassemblement Jurassien's "Declaration of Principle" in which a plebiscite was eventually organised in 1959: 15,000 Jurassians voted for separation, 16,000 against. The Rassemblement contested the validity of these results and ascribed them to massive Bernese interference and propaganda. In March 1967, the Separatists scored what they considered to be a great victory: the Bernese government conceded that, should every other possibility be exhausted, the Jurassians could, in principle, attain autonomy. Earlier this year, a federal commission of four, headed by former President Max Petitpierre, produced a report laying down four eventual solutions to the Jura problem. Unfortunately, the whole set-up was a "non-starter" in the eyes of the Rassemblement Jurassien and the Commission's proposals, accepted by the Great Council, were rejected outright by a hard-core Separatist leadership.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

To see why the Separatists failed in 1959, one must turn to the historical background of the Jura. This strongly gallic country, after having acclaimed the French Revolution and broken away from the prince-bishopric of Basle to which it had belonged since 990, was given to Berne at the Vienna Congress of 1815. Carefully chosen leading citizens of the Jura were convoked by the director-canton, Zurich, to the confederal diet of the same year, and, in the presence of the Bernese delegation, were made to sign the Jura's annexion to Berne and received gold snuff-boxes in recompense. Thus the Jura was arbitrarily given to Berne, without any consideration given to the feelings of its population. This is a point to which a Separatist will constantly turn back.

Having become the legal masters of the Jura, the Bernese set about assimilating their new subjects. This was the "kulturkampf", whereby the "inferior and degenerate" Jurassians (according to the Separatists) were to be "regenerated" by Germanic culture and hard-working ideals. "It is not our concern to Germanise the Jura. What we want is to infuse it with fresh, new, German blood, so that this part of Berne marches in pace with the other Germanic parts, that it be penetrated by German energy and German solidarity and above all, that it have a German heart and a German mind". This excerpt from an article written in the "Berner Jura" in 1904 by the pastor of St. Imier is the kind of quotation on which the Separatists like to hark back.

In 1873, the Federal Government asked Berne to end its attempt at cultural assimilation, but, according to the Separatists, the Bernese felonies did not end there. One effect of Bernese domination has been an important immigration from the Canton, so that today 27.2% of the inhabitants of the six French-speaking districts are of Bernese and only 54.2% of Jurassian origin.

The separation of the Jura in a northern and southern part existed before its annexion to Berne. The North was turned towards Porrentruy, which became the seat of hte prince-bishops of Basle after the reformation, and the South was attracted by Biel. There has, at all times, been a north-south distinction in the Jura due to geographical and economic factors. Both parts are however French-speaking (although, owing to Bernese immigration, 16.8% are German-speaking). The North is predominantly Catholic and the South is Protestant. The Jura is unique among Swiss cantons in that the two confessions have always existed side by side. Contrarily to cantons such as Geneva, Neuchatel, Basle and Zurich, the Jura did not abruptly switch over to Protestantism under the influence of a wilful reformer, but was exposed to both Catholicism (from neighbouring France and Porrentruy) and the ideas of the Reformation, oozing north from Biel and the reformed Canton of Berne. The Jura has always lived in a spirit of ecumenism and the actual catholic-protestant differences have been much overplayed. Whatever

strife there may have been, it has been subsequent to Bernese implantation and therefore the religious question does not overstep the political issue. Today, 53.4% of Jurassians are Protestant, 45.7% Catholic.

Another problem to be solved separately is that of the district of Laufen. As Basle had opened her bridges to the passage of the Allies in December 1813, the Congress of Vienna decided, in acknowledgment, to give her the German-speaking part of the old bishopric. The diplomats in Vienna, apparently incomplete in their geographical education, thought that the linguistic border lay at the cluse of Aesch, whereas it lay in fact some six miles to the west, at the cluse of Liesberg. In this way, Laufen was incorporated to the Jura and hence to Berne, instead of Basle. The Laufen Valley lies on the outer fringe of the hinterland centred on the metropolis of Basle known as the "Regio Bassiliensis". It is economically turned towards Basle and not Delemont, and the Rassemblement Jurassien is quite prepared to let its population determine freely whether it should join the cantons of Basle-Country or Solothurn. In the case of a created free Jura, it would be geographically severed from the Canton of Berne.

SEPARATIST FEELINGS

The Separatists see their land as having been colonised and alienated by their German-speaking master and occupant, Berne. Their manner of speech and, surprisingly, their feelings are com-

parable to those of nationalists in newly independent countries. One might argue that there is not so much difference between being part of Berne or a 23rd canton, since in both cases the Jura would be part of the Helvetic Confederation and not independent. Separatists don't see it that way. Although they have no intention of breaking away from Switzerland, of being independent (or joining France, as has been suggested), they view their future cantonal independence as something as tangible and worthy to be fought for as complete national independence. Leaders of the Rassemblement Jurassien constantly refer to Jura's cultural heritage, its language, its way of life and its glorious history. To them, the creation of a new canton is not only the sole way of securing the survival of the Jurassian people, but also of guaranteeing its harmonious development in all that makes life worth living for. "Nation" and "State" are two very different concepts for them. The former is primordial, it refers to the "people" (in French, **peuple**), whereas the latter is just a judicial construction which may or may not correspond to an ethnic reality. The Separatists have a champion in Charles de Gaulle. They fully support his Quebecan antics and fervently repeat one of his pompous statements on that occasion: "It is the genius of our age that people (**les peuples**) may freely decide on their fate". They willingly lean on the U.N. charter of human rights to support their cause and would contemplate appealing to international instances, although this has not been seriously undertaken up to now. The Rassemblement Jurassien has developed a distinct ideology, whose main signature is an anti-Bernese fanaticism of an almost Pasleyite character. This resentment against Berne evolves in a plain anti-Germanism and one of the Rassemblement's latest war-cries is for a holy alliance among French-speaking cantons to hedge the growing and unbalancing influence of German-speaking Switzerland. The most involved Separatist consider the Jura as the last outpost of latinity in a Germanic wilderness. The fact that Bernese immigration, influence from Biel and the "bernisation" of parts of the Jura have made the Separatists a practical minority has exacerbated their feelings. They view this evolution as one more proof of their alienation.

BERNE'S PACIFYING EFFORTS

Faced with such a climate in its northern reaches, the Canton of Berne has decided to set up an enquiry, which eventually became a federal enquiry, that of the "four wise men" (who were Max Petitpierre, Fritz T. Wahlen, Pierre Graber and Raymond Broger, two **Romands** and two German-Swiss). The Commission's findings were published in May of last year. Having situated the Jura problem in both its Bernese and Swiss context, the report suggests four solutions for a way out.

The first would be to ask the people of the Jura whether they would agree to form two half-cantons (the three northern districts

forming one half and the three southern ones forming the other). This theoretically seductive solution would, in the Commission's view, be rejected by those intent on having to remain Bernese citizens.

The second solution would be to ask the citizens of the three Separatist districts whether they would like to form a separate canton.

The third would be to divide Berne into two half-cantons. The Commission does not however believe that Berne, one of the largest and most populated cantons of the Confederation and the one that had played a most prominent role in its history would accept to become a half-canton.

The fourth solution, and this is the one on which the Commission lays the greatest hopes, is to devise a special statute for the Jura, which would be autonomous within the Canton of Berne. The Commission specifies how the Bernese Constitution could be amended to remain consistent with the new arrangement and provide, in particular, that five Jurassians (and not three, as at present) be represented in the National Council. The Commission believes that this solution is the one which would carry the greatest adhesion within the Jura.

THE RASSEMBLEMENT'S OBJECTIONS

Not so with the Rassemblement Jurassien. Right from the start, it has refused to credit the "four wise men Commission" with the partiality entitling it to the role of mediator. It is a fact that the idea of a Commission to enquire into the Jura problem originated in Bernese government circles and that, initially, the four wise men were to be paid for their services by the Canton. To acquire greater credibility and weight, the Commission and their enquiry became sponsored by the Confederation, so that in the view of its four members, the Commission was truly Federal, and not just a Bernese creation. This is disputed by the Rassemblement, who is now claiming for a "confederal" commission initiated by **all** the cantons. The fact that it was Berne, and not the whole Confederation, that had called for an enquiry has viciated its chances of acceptance from the outset. The Separatists pretend that Berne's endorsement of the Commission's report was just a show of weakness, and not a manifestation of good will. Their anti-Bernese intransigence is such that they will not hear of an autonomy which, they say, is to be "granted" to them. Freedom is a thing to be **fought** for! The whole country should disavow Berne and make the bear crawl!

Apart from its non-acceptance of the Commission's mediating quality, the Rassemblement differs from the four wise men on two major issues.

The four wise men say that the Jura should become independent from Berne only if it could be clearly proved that such was the wish of the majority. Owing to the existence of other pro-

Bernese and middle-of-the-road tendencies, the Jura problem could not be solved by a dialogue pursued solely between the Rassemblement and the authorities of Berne. The four wise men have refused to credit the Rassemblement with a fully representative quality and have insisted that the discusssion should be joined by all parties. The Separatists have wriggled out of their 1959 defeat, which showed that the majority of the Jura was anti-Separatist, by various theories. One of them is that Berne exerted massive psychological pressure on the non-gallic population of the Jura: the defeat just reflected the bad will of voters who were not even true Jura citizens. Another way to demonstrate that the 1959 results do not prove anything is to go back over a century in the Canton of Vaud, where, at one time, an initiative for the return of Vaud to Berne gathered 20,000 signatures. "Which of the descendants of these signatories would dream today of bringing Vaud back to Bern?" argue some Separatists . . . "in the same way, which of the descendants of those who have voted against separation would do so, in a few generations, when the Jura will have become free?"

The other point on which the four wise men and the Rassemblement disagree concerns those who should be entitled to vote for the creation of a new canton. The Federal Commission stays faithful to the Federal Constitution's 43rd article, which says that only those who have their domicile in a particular canton may vote there and that no-one may be a voter in two cantons. Any change of this rule should be preceded by a referendum aiming at a revision of this particular aspect of the Constitution. The Rassemblement agrees that the 43rd article is perfectly acceptable in the case of matters which concerns the resident-voters directly, such as local investments, but that an issue such as the very-existence of a canton ought to be submitted to all those who are its citizens, irrespective of whether they actually reside in it or not. Therefore the 47,000 Jurassians who live outside the Jura ought to be given the right to voice their opinion on the separation issue. As an example pointing to the justness of their views, the Separatists like to cite the case of Sarrebrücken, whose inhabitants were called to make known their wish concerning their eventual reannexation to Germany in 1935 and where Sarrebrücken citizens came from all parts of Germany to vote on their province's fate.

(Continued next issue.)

Laugh a little . . .

John asks Jack, whom he has not seen for a long time: "I seem to remember that you used to be much in love with a girl . . . is that still the case?"

Jack answers: "Oh, certainly not, I have married her".