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Obwalden

Obwalden is located in the centre of Switzerland. The population is just over 34,000, of which about 12% are foreigners. Its capital is Sarnen. The canton contains the geographical centre of Switzerland.



Sarnensee

The total area of the canton is 490.5 square kilometers. About 40% of the canton is wooded; almost 40% is used in agriculture. The highest elevation is Titlis, 3238 m.

The first settlements in Obwalden date back to the Celts and the Romans. After 700 AD the Alemanni moved into the area. In 1291 Obwalden joined Nidwalden to form an alliance with Uri and Schwyz, which is the basis of modern day Switzerland. Although it was politically independent, until approximately 1330 it had taken decisions on important matters together with Nidwalden during joint national assemblies.

In 1403 Obwalden partici-

pated in the search for markets for cattle and cheese in Uri's "cross-Alpine policy" and assisted in the acquisition of the Valle Leventina.

Around a hundred years later mercenary service for foreign

warlords attained significant economic importance. In this way, former mercenaries who had become wealthy and occupied positions of authority determined the political destiny of the country for hundreds of years.

During Napoleon's occupation between 1798 and 1803 Obwalden lost its independence, but, for the first time, ordinary people gained fundamental political rights.

In 1815 the monastery of Engelberg and the municipality of the same name joined Obwalden.

Within the Swiss Confederation Obwalden is a half canton. This gives Obwalden all the rights and duties of full cantons,



with the exception that the canton can only send one deputy to the Council of States. The small size of the canton allows a small government with only five members.

The autonomy of the municipalities in Obwalden is significant. Two thirds of the tax revenues flow to the municipalities, which for example pay for education without grants from the canton.

Small and middle-sized businesses dominate the economy of Obwalden. Many of them are specialists in areas such as miniature engines, synthetics, medical equipment or nano technology.

Traditional areas of employment are still of great importance. Forestry and related businesses are significant, as is agriculture. *from the internet*

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