

Zeitschrift: The Swiss observer : the journal of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK

Herausgeber: Federation of Swiss Societies in the United Kingdom

Band: - (1966)

Heft: 1501

Artikel: A happy whitsun

Autor: [s.n.]

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-694686>

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The Swiss Observer

FOUNDED IN 1919 BY PAUL F. BOEHRINGER.

The Official Organ of the Swiss Colony in Great Britain

Advisory Council: R. J. KELLER (Chairman), GOTTFRIED KELLER (Vice-Chairman), DR. E. M. BIRCHER, O. F. BOEHRINGER, J. EUSEBIO, A. KUNZ, G. E. SUTER.

EDITED BY MRS. MARIANN MEIER WITH THE CO-OPERATION OF MEMBERS OF THE SWISS COLONY IN GREAT BRITAIN

Telephone: CLERKENWELL 2321/2.

Published Twice Monthly at 23, LEONARD STREET, E.C.2.

Telegrams: FREPRINCO, LONDON.

Vol. 52 No. 1501

FRIDAY, 27th MAY 1966

"Peace is my parting gift to you, my own peace, such as the world cannot give. Set your troubled hearts at rest, and banish your fears. You heard me say 'I am going away, and coming back to you'. If you loved me you

would have been glad to hear that I was going to the Father; for the Father is greater than I. I have told you now, beforehand, so that when it happens you may have faith".

JOHN 14, 27-31.



Engadine
Sils

*By courtesy
S.N.T.O.*

A HAPPY WHITSUN

THE SOCIAL POSITION OF THE SWISS WOMAN

By Dr. H. THALMANN-ANTENNE

The Swiss woman has won questionable fame as the only woman in Europe today not to enjoy the same civic rights as the man. This undeniable fact might well lead foreign observers to misjudge her social position if the reasons of such discrimination are not duly considered in the light of the very special political situation found in Switzerland. If we speak of the woman's social position we do not mean her political rights only. There are other factors to be taken into account such as her status in general as determined by her training, both intellectual and vocational, by the part she plays in economic life, by her position in the family and by the regard paid her as human being. The legal status of the woman, as reflected by her political rights, need not necessarily tally with her social position as such. Legislation often is late in catching up with social facts, and this is particularly true of a direct democracy where the legislative apparatus is slow-paced and intricate. This, actually, is the case in Switzerland where equal political rights for the woman are concerned.

The origins of the Swiss democracy date back to the assemblies of free and valiant peasants, centuries ago. Throughout its history and despite steady evolution and modification it never gave up the principle of direct appeal to the people. It is built up from below: the base is formed by independent communities where matters are settled in the communal assemblies; next come the Cantons, sovereign states, some of which still abide by the so-called "Landsgemeinde", the assembly of the citizens for elections and votes held in the open. The overall organization which unites the twenty-five autonomous Cantons is the Confederation in which the people have also decisive word to say in the promulgation of laws, their acceptance or rejection being subject to popular vote. This state organization, evolved out of the traditions of a freedom loving people, calls for a policy which must respect the will of the individual citizen. It is this system which until today has prevented the Swiss women from attaining equality of status. While a bill on the introduction of women's suffrage has obtained a strong parliamentary