

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: - (1969)
Heft: 1579

Rubrik: Swiss news

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: 15.09.2025

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

therefore it is well run and there is no vital need to make one's individual voice heard.

Another important development is the transformation of Swiss patriotism. Just as in Great Britain, there has been a loosening of the sense of the old values, including the cult of the fatherland, among the younger Swiss. In a minority of cases, this has been a negative attitude, left unreplaced by anything constructive, but in general it has meant that people have been more interested in what is happening in the outside world. They might not bother voting on the price of milk but would insist on having their say on the problem of Switzerland's adhesion to the U.N.

Industrialisation, urbanisation, mass medias and competition, specialisation, competition and all that characterizes our modern way of life has had a subtle influence on the voting behaviour of the Swiss. It has tended to deaden their sense of civic responsibilities, or, at least, the feeling that voting was one of those responsibilities.

Many of our leading citizens are appalled by this situation. I wonder whether we should be as apprehensive as they are. After all, this is the natural outcome of definite causes. One cannot expect people not to behave differently under changing circumstances, and this applies to the simple act of going to the polls. Present sociological circumstances are such that direct democracy, as it was traditionally conceived in Switzerland, has lost a great deal of its freshness.

Another aspect which I have omitted to mention is that people's education, or at any rate their brains' capacities, have not increased at the same rate as the volume of technicality and general knowledge necessary to grasp some of today's new legislation. The last two federal votations were, after all, of a highly technical nature and required of the voter a good deal of preliminary study. What does the "statute of the Lausanne Polytechnic" mean without prior investigation, and what is the full bearing of a constitutional amendment on land development when this is a strange notion, whose meaning to the economy escapes many a layman. As government and legislation get more complicated, voters have to be more educated and better informed; they should devote a fixed fraction of their time in studying the underlying problems of their country. Unfortunately, the fact that a lot of time is spent nowadays in taking in information fits more often than not in a general drive towards entertainment. The amount of work and entertainment that distract the common citizen is another factor explaining his absence at the polls.

One reason why we shouldn't be pessimistic in front of this situation however is that the Swiss are broadly

and fully represented both on the cantonal and the federal level. Another is that, when the country will begin not satisfying all they want, they will wake up and express their discontent at the polls. In the meanwhile, votations on all levels are to go on, with their often pathetic attendance. One way to improve this is to submit live issues only to electors. But there should be no question of doing away with the system, all citizens would stand up if this were attempted. Such a venture would deface Switzerland, which would become another country!

SWISS NEWS

A COMMITTEE AGAINST SWITZERLAND'S ADHESION TO THE NUCLEAR NON-PROLIFERATION TREATY HAS BEEN CREATED

An action committee aiming at preventing Swiss adhesion to the world nuclear non-proliferation treaty has been set up in Zurich and has 62 members coming from political, journalistic, economic and military life. Among them, one finds national councillors R. Etter and H. R. Meyer, president of the city of Lucern, State councillor W. Jauslin, army corps commander Gygli, professors Grossman of Zurich and Wuhrman of Winterthur and the industrialist Max Schmidheiny.

In a declaration, the committee has expressed its satisfaction at the efforts undertaken to limit the number of nuclear weapons. "It approves all efforts which can lead to a reduction of the use of such weapons, but the non-proliferation treaty makes for two categories of states. Nuclear powers, two of them (France and China) not even adhering to the treaty, which are free to keep their immense stocks of nuclear weapons and even augment and perfect them. They are authorised to pursue underground atomic tests. On the other hand, non-nuclear countries, which comprise the immense majority of nations, have to renounce all such weaponry and must submit to numerous commitments". The committee specified that "in asking Switzerland to forego its adhesion to the treaty, the committee meant in no way to see Switzerland equipped with nuclear weapons. But the treaty is concluded for 25 years and there are practically no ways of denouncing it nor of revising it. Non-nuclear countries, due to this fact, are at the mercy of nuclear powers for twenty-five years. In addition to the political and security shortcomings of the treaty,

the reasons commanding a Swiss abstention are of economic order in the first place. There is the danger that nuclear powers interpret a non-proliferation treaty in their favour, which could result in serious disadvantages for the research efforts and the economy of non-nuclear countries. Moreover, an arbitration procedure to sanction defaulting countries, claimed by the Federal Council, is lacking completely".

The committee concludes by stating: "A Swiss adhesion can only be envisaged when concrete agreement will have been reached between Soviet Russian and the United States, when the interpretation of the economic meaning of the treaty will have been clarified and when the International Tribunal's rôle on settling differences of interpretation will have been defined".

The committee further underlines that any eventual Swiss adhesion ought to be submitted to an optional referendum. This would only be giving respect to the will of the people, who have already twice expressed their desire to keep Swiss freedom of action in this field.

(A.T.S.)

ANTI-FOREIGNER LAW 'UNTHINKABLE'

—SAYS THE GOVERNMENT

After long discussions, the Government is officially recommending to Parliament and the electorate the rejection of the "over-foreignization" initiative which calls for measures to prevent the foreign population of any canton, except Geneva, exceeding 10% of the Swiss inhabitants.

The Government's emphatic rejection—which was already foreshadowed by blunt comments from various Cabinet Ministers—is based on economic, political and humanitarian motives.

Along with employers, the Government is convinced that the provisions of the initiative would cripple the economy.

It argues that the initiative's object would be defeated because many firms would have to reduce activities or even shut down, throwing Swiss citizens out of work.

Politically, the Government wants to stress that it would be difficult to carry out the terms of the initiative. These could not be applied to the large numbers of foreigners with permanent residence permits because the granting of these permits is the subject of agreements with other countries.

The Government regards it as unthinkable that international obligations should be broken. Also, if measures were taken against permanent foreign residents, Swiss residing abroad would be exposed to reprisals.