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# TOPICS

## THE JURA PROBLEM

On March 1st of this year, the whole of Canton Bern passed a cantonal constitutional amendment which provided for the self-determination of the Jurassian people. Only 30 per cent of the electorate in the "Old Canton" turned up, but 70 per cent of the voters in the 6 French-speaking districts of the Jura showed their interest in this vital issue by going to the polls. Both parts of the Canton supported the essence of this new constitutional addition, but the Separatists had an important reserve—which was the 8th article laying down that only those voters domiciled in the Jura could be entitled to vote on the province's future.

The "Rassemblement Jurassien" had already made clear their opposition to this idea when the report of the Mediator Commission for the Jura was published last year. But neither Bern nor the Federal Council have so far changed their stand on this point, abiding by the 43rd article of the Constitution, which states that in any local and cantonal vote, only those domiciled in the regions concerned have a right of vote. Disagreement on this point has been increasing inexorably between Bern and the Separatist movement and will prove a major hindrance to any normalisation of the Jura situation.

Two recent events have strained the relations between the "Rassemblement Jurassien" and its followers with the rest of Switzerland. The first was the trial of 31 members of the "Groupe Bélier", a militant Separatist youth organisation, who had invaded the National Assembly earlier this year. This trial is to be held in the Federal Tribunal, but has been temporarily adjourned because the lawyers of the 11 main defendants have discharged themselves of the case after their petition to the National Council had been rejected. They had demanded that more key witnesses should be produced at the trial and that the film of the incriminated "invasion" of the Federal Assembly made by Ticino Television should be shown during the hearing. These demands had been turned down by Parliament, who wished to keep the political and penal aspects of the incident separated. A second, but rather minor and comic event, was the wording of a message by the Federal Council over its Jura policy. It was stated that "the Jura had not constituted a political entity before the vote of March 1st". This unleashed the impassioned reactions of Jurassian historians and politicians. They maintained that, with 800 years as an independent bishopric behind it, the Jura satisfied all the historical requirements of nationhood.

On September 12th, the Separatists held their annual mass gathering at

Délémont. Forty thousand Jurassians answered the call to demonstrate their attachment to this "Jurassian entity" for which the Rassemblement Jurassien has been militating for 22 years. This festival has indeed taken place regularly since 1948. There were processions, festoons, and speeches by Germain Donzé, Vice-President of the Rassemblement Jurassien, Roger Schaffter, President and Roland Béguelin, General Secretary. They spoke from the steps of the summer residence of the ancient prince bishops of Porrentruy.

The Popular Jurassian Assembly noted in its official communiqué the results of the 1st March vote with satisfaction. They had unambiguously put Bernese domination into question and were a big step towards the independence of the Jura. The assembly passed two resolutions. The first was that the 8th article of the constitutional addition passed in March "sabotaged" the road to Jurassian self-determination. The accepted principle of Jurassian self-determination should be put into practice within the framework of international law, and not of federal law. The Assembly seized this regular opportunity to denounce all the "manipulations" of the Bernese and called for a speedy application of the principles of justice and self-determination to the Jura. The second resolution was to condemn in the strongest words the current trial brought against the Groupe Bélier. The Popular Assembly declared that those who should be accused were the "oppressors".

In the course of his speech on the city square of Délémont and an ensuing Press conference, Roland Béguelin threw a legal bomb. He revealed that he had commissioned a world-reputed specialist on international law, Professor Theo Veiter from Vienna, to make a study of the Jurassian case and establish whether it could be handled with federal laws. He had concluded that the existing provision for a plebiscit could not really be applied to the case of the Jura and that the Separatists had a case. His verdict was that not every voting citizen of the Jura should be entitled to vote on the Jura's future, in fact only those of the third generation. He estimated that 17,000 persons of Jurassian extraction living outside the Jura should be legally entitled to have a say on this issue. He compared the Jura's predicament with that of other European minorities and admitted that a plebiscit for self-determination was an entirely new political case which as such eluded present federal provisions. These assertions constituted a kind of legal offensive which the Rassemblement will doubtless make full use of.

The Federal Council in Bern has, for its part, decided to entrust the Jura Problem in the caring hands of the Commission of Mediation for the Jura. The original "Four Wise Men" were eventually increased to five by a mem-

ber from Ticino, and Mr. Pierre Gruber was replaced upon becoming federal councillor. Present members are Mr. Max Petitpierre, Dr. Fritz T. Wahlen, Mr. Sandoz and Mr. Broger, both national councillors, and Prof. Bezzola. On September 30th they met the Jurassian representative at the Great Council of Bern in a round-table consultation in the episcopal palace of Porrentruy. Most of the Separatist delegates however decided to boycott the meeting and 11 men out of 36 were ostensibly absent. Despite this, the diverging views which transpired among the members present gave an idea of the difficulty of solving the problems that lay ahead. The object of this conference was to try to outline how the "statute of autonomy" put forward in the Mediator Commission's report last year should be implemented. Mr. Max Petitpierre, who was the only member of the Commission to speak out, enunciated the main points to be resolved before any plebiscit. He mentioned the creation of an electoral constituency for the Jura's representatives at the National Council and the amendment to the federal constitution that this would necessarily entail. He spoke of the election of Jurassian members to the Regierungsrat, the appointment of the Jura's judiciary, administrative decentralisation, the problems of Jura schools and the particular situation of Biel and the Laufental. This gathering allowed many fruitful exchanges of views, but no decisions were taken and the solution to the Jura dilemma has not been brought any nearer.

For the present there remains this unbridgeable divergence of views between the Separatist movement and the Old Canton on the ominous question of allowing outside Jurassians to take part in the future plebiscit on the statute of autonomy of the Jura and the eventual creation of a new canton. Besides two federal issues, there were three cantonal problems on which the people of Bern had to vote on September 27th. It was significant that voters from the six French-speaking districts of the Jura rejected these particular proposals by a strong majority whereas the rest of the cantons approved them and carried the day. This showed that, in a way, Jurassians tend to separate themselves from the people of the Old Canton and act as political outsiders.

The three forces of the Jura (the "unionists" or "Union des Patriotes Jurassiens" party, the Rassemblement Jurassien and the "Third Force" Movement) have all accepted the principle of putting the choice of a statute of autonomy (once it will have been worked out) or freedom from Bern or the status quo to the Jurassian people. The crunch is to establish who may vote and who may not. Many Swiss lawyers support the Separatists' legal case and Pierre Béguin, a Neuchâtel journalist established in Lausanne has said in a tele-

vision interview that, although domiciled in Vaud, he would certainly wish to have a say on a vote which would put the existence of the Canton of Neuchatel at stake. There will still be a long struggle over the "8th paragraph".

But the other camp, *l'Union des Patriotes Jurassiens*, held their 18th Annual Assembly in the anti-Separatist stronghold of Tramelan at the end of October. A thousand delegates heard no less than nine speeches. Mr. Marc Hounard, Central President of the UPJ, said that "the categorical refusal of the Chambers to accept the protest of the Béliers' defenders showed that this country is beginning to realise that the Rassemblement Jurassien is attempting to destroy the democratic regime in which we live. They are trying to seek support anywhere abroad where revolution is extolled. The murder of Mr. Pierre Laporte in Quebec is a tragic indication of what agitation can lead to and also by what kind of exalted criminals we too could be threatened".

Mr. Hounard then raised the legal aspects of the Separatist case and, having mentioned Professor Veiter's expertise, he stressed that "only Jurassians living and working in the Jura's seven districts, those who are at the heart of the Jura's magnificent industrial expansion will be the masters and the judges of the future of our Jura's motherland".

Another eminent Anti-Separatist, the Agrarian National Councillor, Henri Geiser, climbed on the rostrum and supplemented his colleague's statement on the Separatist's legal bravado. He said that Dr. Veiter's thesis couldn't be discussed before it had been published but stressed that the UPJ intended in any event to settle his problem by Swiss and Canon law and would not accept to endow foreign jurists with the competence of settling the Jura's local problem. The Liberal Radical delegate from Tramelan to the Great Council, Mr. Roland Staehli, declared: "It is an old habit of our opponents to cry victory when they are near to defeat and to pretend that they have the support of the majority of Jurassians, that the moribund UPJ movement gathers no more than a group of so-called 'Pro-Bernese' and 'Unassimilated', when they are not plainly called 'Traitors' and 'Sold-outs'. I urge you not to let yourself be impressed by the information broadcasted by the Christian Socialists of the Jura or by the inscriptions that some Separatist commando will have daubed on our roads with the favour of the night".

The Assembly passed three resolutions. They were: (1) To call for a unified Jura, considered as the essential condition to continued economic growth; (2) To condemn racism and side with the integration of the modern world; (3) To rely on the already existing and fruitful efforts of regionalisa-

tion undertaken in the Jura. The final paragraph of the Assembly's communiqué read as follows: "The participants to the 18th Congress of the Union des Patriotes Jurassiens calls on the common sense, the Christian, social and patriotic feelings of every Jurassian, so that the tireless efforts of the Federal Mediator Commission and of cantonal authorities will succeed. The Jura's future will be built neither on hatred, nor on violence, but on the foundation of goodwill and mutual understanding".

One would hardly believe that Tramelan and Delémont are in the same canton, yet this is so.

## BATTLE OF MORGARTEN

15th November, 1315

*In the second volume of "Switzerland Illustrated" published in 1836, our subscriber Mr. W. Zuber of Ventnor, I.O.W., discovered the following lines by William Beattie, M.D. Seeing that it is 665 years since the Battle of Morgarten, we feel this is the right moment to publish them.*

Helvetia, thine the prowess of the  
Spartan!  
Well had thy hand responded to thy  
heart:  
Deep have the fields of Morat and  
Morgarten  
Engraved thy name in glory's dazzling  
chart!  
What pulse but thrills—what spirit  
doth not start  
To tread the soil thy patriot champions  
freed!  
To list the tales thy Alps and lakes  
impart—  
The hallowed flame at Freedom's  
shrine to feed,  
And live like Tell, or die like  
Winkelried.

## THE WEALTH OF THE SWISS

A recent study by the Swiss Credit Bank showed that the high standard of living of the Swiss was due to their powerful tendency to save and to their propensity for hard work. Savings are traditionally high in Switzerland, a trait which fits with the thrifty mentality of the Swiss, and yet have increased strongly in recent years. In 1948 savings amounted to 16.8 per cent of the national income. They soared to a peak of 28.7 per cent in 1968, a figure only equalled by the Japanese. It is this exceptional volume of savings which has enabled the country to remain at the height of modern industrial and technological progress. In fact, it is the industries requiring the highest level of investment which have been mainly responsible for Switzerland's competitive position in the world. National savings not only cover the basic needs of Swiss industry but go for export. This gives our industries access to the international capital market and favours the setting-up of foreign subsidiaries—which altogether have brought in 1.9 billion francs of invisible earnings in 1968.

A remarkable trend noticeable since the end of the war has been the surge of the individual savers, who now account for a fifth of Switzerland's net savings. Today, every Swiss saves 9 per cent of his income, compared with 0.3 per cent in 1948. This is a fair measure of their individual prosperity, especially when one considers that they already have to pay Old Age Pension and Social Insurance premiums and that these institutions are heavy investors. But these sources of capital have somewhat diminished since the 1950's owing to the increases of old age and sickness allowances. But private Social Insurance and Old Age Pension institutions still yield sizeable funds for investment—about 2.4 billion francs annually—and constitute a quarter of capital supply in Switzerland. Investment by

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