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COMMENT

A HIGHLY ADAPTABLE PARTY SYSTEM

The news that two parties have merged in the Canton of Lucerne must sound strange on this side of the channel. Imagine each English county having a number of separate political parties, or the Conservative and Labour Parties deciding to merge into one single party.

The Swiss political system has a great number of parties, so that if two of them decide to merge in a particular canton, there are still plenty of them elsewhere. But in spite of her multiple-party system, Switzerland cannot be compared to countries such as France, which also has far more parties than the British and the Americans.

The difference is due, of course, to the fact that the Swiss State is a decentralised Confederation consisting of 22 autonomous states. Political parties therefore act on the local level before reaching out on the federal plane.

There are a number of historical and well established parties represented throughout the country. To name them, these are the Radical-Democratic Party, which held the absolute majority in Parliament until the introduction of the proportional system of election for the National Council in 1919, the Conservative and Christian-Social Parties, and the Social-Democratic Party. The first has been compared to the American Republican party (in spite of its "Democratic" description) because it stood for liberalism and tended to be identified with the propertied class. The party was at one time more progressive than it is today. The Conservatives are Catholic in their majority, federalistic,

and naturally have a conservative attitude. The Christian-Social and Social-Democratic Parties both represent Swiss Socialism. The first bases its action on the social teaching of the church, the second is more closely allied to the working-classes and has adopted the Marxist principles of class-war and even revolution in times past (more especially after the First World War).

Some parties are confined to one or two cantons. The Liberal-Conservatives, for example, are restricted to a few Protestant cantons. The Democrats mainly to Zurich and the Grisons. The Agrarian Party, which stands for the interests of peasantry, is more widespread. The Communists, who now call themselves the Labour Party, have increased their following at the end of the Second World War, but their success in the stable political conditions of Switzerland is very small. A recent development was the creation of the Independent Alliance Party, which stands for the consumers.

Other parties are limited to just one canton or city and may not even have a voice in Parliament. Examples are the extreme-right "Vigilant" party in Geneva, the extreme-left "Maoist" party in Ticino, the anti-foreigner "Liberal" party of Zurich, the "third-force" party of Jura. It is probably hardly any more difficult to create a political party in Switzerland than it is to found a company.

In a book on the "Parteien in der Schweiz", the Bernese sociologist E. Gruner defines a political party as "a political organisation gathering, either by ideological affinity or by community of interests, those who would like to have an influence on the will of the people". This is a very broad definition, but entirely applicable to Switzerland. Any group of citizens feeling the same way on a particular political question can unite and form a party whose aim will be to attract the interest of the voters and influence the making of decisions on the local, cantonal or federal levels either by having its members elected to responsible political positions or by canvassing a particular cause.

Dr. Gruner's definition of a party is too general to be applied to the anglo-saxon two-or-three party system. It is hard to picture a body of young citizens who, disagreeing with the Liberal, the Labour, the Communist and the Conservative Parties, decide to create a new party on the spur of the moment. The ruling parties are so well established (one could almost say "constitutional") that they could not be considered as bare associations grouping common interests. This is what some of the Swiss parties are. Some of them, like the Agrarian Party, are little different from professional associations and the Independent Parties (such as the "Migros" party) which support the consumer, are glorified consumers' associations.

(PMB)

SWISS NEWS

FEDERAL

The National Council in favour of student demand

Switzerland had traditionally one institution of higher technical and scientific education, the "Polytechnic" of Zurich. This school stood apart from the universities, which were under the care of the cantons. The technical faculties of the University of Lausanne, called the "Ecole Polytechnique de l'Université de Lausanne" had served for a long time as a polytechnic school to French-speaking Switzerland, but it was not federally-backed and did not enjoy equality of treatment with the Zurich school. Parliament, having decided that it was time for the two institutions to be considered as equivalent, voted a new law which put both of the schools at par. In October of last year, the students filed their first initiative to block this law, which, they thought, did not provide adequately in the way of student government. The Federal Council has now submitted an interim arrangement, valid for five years, during which an appropriate legislation will be devised. The submitted arrangement has been accepted by the National Council's educational commission. The students get some satisfaction in being given the right to voice their opinions at the working-assemblies of their schools. The way is also to be cleared for the future merger of the two polytechnics.

New travel facilities to the US

It will be easier for a category of Swiss businessmen to travel to the United States. The American authorities will in future deliver a so-called "treaty-investor-visa" to Swiss investors in the US and Swiss citizens interested in investing there. Employees of Swiss firms with subsidiaries in the US will also benefit from the new facility, so will their families. This new visa is renewable annually and ends the necessity of applying for an immigrant's visa.

Agreement with Lichtenstein

Mr. Willy Spühler, out-going head of the Political Department, has signed a convention with Count Mario Ledebur, chargé d'affaires of the Principality of Lichtenstein, making legal decisions (related to civil law or arbitration) binding in both countries, whether they are made in Switzerland or in Lichtenstein. This will help to develop commercial relations between the two states (who form one custom's union) and deepen their neighbourly relations.

Switzerland and hijacking

Switzerland has signed an international treaty which binds every nation to adopt a common attitude in the face of a new problem — the hijacking of airliners. The treaty stipu-

lates that the legal competence in a hijacking enquiry belongs to the country in which the stricken airliner is registered. All pilots should react in certain prescribed ways, giving full priority to passenger-security, when they are threatened by hijackers. Following the committal of a hijack, the countries concerned are held to co-operate in bringing the situation back to normal.

Constitutional reform

The Swiss Society of Officers has answered to the Wahlen questionnaire on the ways of amending the Federal Constitution. The officers believe that the constitutional notion of compulsory military service should be modified to include other forms of service. The present terminology breaks with the essentially liberal spirit of Constitution. An expanded compulsory service would include the role that could be played by women (their particular interests being respected) and by foreigners with a permanent residency permit. Regarding conscientious objectors, the Society of Officers considers that these individual cases cannot be dealt with in the Constitution but should be provided for by federal legislation. The principle of a militia army must be retained, but the Constitution ought to allow for exceptions made unavoidable by the developments of technology.

Arms exports

The committee for a ban of Swiss arms exports has declared itself "very disappointed" by the Weber report on the Swiss armaments business (see last Swiss Observer). The report was com-

misioned by the Federal Council after the revelations of the Buehrle inquest and pleads for a continuation of the present system of licensing and control, with minor restrictions. The arms-ban committee finds the report "insufficient" and wants a new one, produced "scientifically and independently". It has already collected 35,000 signatures for the initiative that it plans to launch. The main supporters of the movement are the former national councillor from Geneva George Borel, Professor Heinrich Ott from Basle-country, the Rev. Roland Dumartheray from Basle. They contend that a ban on arms-exports would not damage our war industry (as argued in the Weber report) and are very much concerned with the moral aspects of exporting arms to developing countries.

ECONOMY

The beer industry and its strife with the Denner discount supermarkets

The 60-odd breweries of Switzerland are getting into financial difficulties for the reason that, with a per-capita consumption of 75 litres of beer a year, Swiss thirst is adequately quenched and the expansion of the beer business must therefore be tethered to a lagging demographic expansion. Breweries cannot improve their outputs significantly by rationalisation because the possibilities in this domain are quickly exhausted. In these circumstances, their safest bet was to merge with each other, and this is what they have been doing recently. For example, "Zum Gurten" has taken over "Gass-

man", "Cardinal" has taken over "Hess Brau" and then formed a holding company with "Beauregard" and "Bièrre d'Orbe". "Feldschlösschen" has bought the "Gurten" breweries and then formed a pact with "Eichhof", "War-teck" and the "Rhätische Actien-brauerei", thus building up the "Bier-Interessengemeinschaft". If the trend continues, there will soon be no more but two or three giant brewers catering for the whole of the country.

The Federal Court in Lausanne has ordered the Association of Brewers to stop their boycott of the Denner chain of discount shops. The Association had fixed the minimum price of the standard bottle of beer at 70 centimes, but Denner had slashed it to 50 centimes. The boycott was implemented as a punishment. Denner is well known for its price actions, accomplished in the best Dutweiler tradition.

Swissair's progress

Our national airline carried 3,571,442 passengers in 1969, a 17% increase on the previous year. In addition it transported 87,538 tons of cargo, up by 38%. 53% of passenger seats on scheduled services were utilised, compared with 53.1% the previous year, and 54% of cargo capacity, up 1.8%. Mail revenue went up by 12% to 17.2 million francs.

At the end of 1969 Swissair's fleet comprised 40 aircraft (including the all-cargo DC-9F), providing altogether 3,780 passenger seats. The year's main events included the order for DC-10-30 wide body tri-jets, the introduction of

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the PARS computerised seat reservations system, the opening of a new route to Colombo and Singapore, the replacement of Coronados by DC-8s on all four weekly Tokyo flights and the introduction of mixed passenger/cargo DC-8-62F Jet Traders on the Far East route.

The PARS (programmed airlines reservation system) constitutes a very important improvement and will simplify the work of Swissair reservation agencies enormously. Their daily task, controlling 200 daily flights, booking 15,000 immediate reservations and 200,000 future ones was hitherto achieved manually and in a decentralised way. Now, the complete information regarding reservations, passenger registration and freight weight is stored in a central computer at Balsberg, near Kloten airport. Agencies in New York, Paris, Nice, Basle and Zurich are connected to this machine, which permits them to have immediate information on any flight displayed on a television screen in the booking bureau.

The cost of living

The index of the cost of living, calculated by the Industrial Office, has risen by 2.3% last year. The index measures the overall price of consumer goods used in a normal household. If the index is put at 100 in 1966, it had risen to 107.8 in December 1968 and continued its slow increase to 109.9 last December. Household expenses are divided into nine categories. They have increased since 1966 in the following way: food, 6.1%; drink and tobacco, 6.6%; clothing 3.3%; rent, 26.8%; heating and lighting 17.6%; household durables have decreased in cost by 0.2%; transport, up 11.9%; health services and personal care, 9.8%; education and entertainment, 6.6%.

Fluvial navigation

The European network of navigable waterways in being enlarged from year to year. Examples are: The complete navigability of the Neckar and the Moselle, the progress in harnessing the Main and in joining this river to the Danube, the works undertaken by the Land of Baden-Württemberg in making the upper Rhine navigable up to Walshut. Italy has inaugurated her first inland port at Cremona. The locks that have recently been built there will link the Po, which is navigable for 80 miles down to the Adriatic, to the future Cremona-Milan canal. Thanks to this canal, Milan will have a port in 1973. The canal will be prolonged to Lake Maggiore and, if Switzerland is prepared to pay, Lake Locarno.

In Switzerland, no decision has yet been taken over the harnessing of the Aar. Eleven cantons have confirmed their interest in a navigable waterway that would join Yverdon to Basle. Most of the laps are today navigable, but the stretch at Brugg must be cleared. Switzerland takes part financially in the improvement of the Rhine and has spent 66 million francs in the past two years. The expense is fully justified by

the economic importance of the river. There is however an undeniable contradiction between the official recognition of the use of river navigation abroad, and the denial of its utility at home. It is necessary to join important industrial centres to the sea and there is no reason why the Rhine should stop at Basle. Swiss economy would benefit greatly from a lengthening of this great artery further inland.

The Swiss Company of Navigation has edited a history of navigation on the Rhine on the occasion of its jubilee. The book depicts the eventful developments of Swiss Rhine navigation from its beginning in 1840 to the present day.

Motor-car licenses

According to the Federal Bureau of Statistics, there are 1.27 million private cars in Switzerland and 127,000 transport vehicles. This amounts to one vehicle for four inhabitants. The Swiss bought 92,000 cars and 5,600 utility vehicles in 1969, an increase of 8% and 4% respectively. The number of motorcycles has increased by 9,000, reaching 149,000. The total number of motor-vehicles has increased from 1,461,768 to 1,548,000.

Watch exports

The organ of the Chamber of Watch Industries, la "Suisse Horlogère", has estimated watch exports in 1969 at about two billion 450 million francs, an increase of 130 million on the previous annual figure. This represented 69 million watches, as against 66.6 million the year before. Expansion for 1969 can then be reckoned at 4%, identical to the 1968 result, but inferior to the achievements of previous years.

Sixth year of the foundation for consumer protection

The foundation for consumer protection was created five years ago by four organisations: the "Union Syndicale Suisse", the "Union Fédérative", the Co-op chain-stores and the Federation of societies of employees. They were paying for the foundation which, in collaboration with the Federation of Consumers, was testing every new product appearing on the market and publishing its findings. It has recently passed a gentleman's agreement with "Promarca", the union of producers, following which it will receive federal aid. The idea of an officially recognised institution to protect consumers from faulty consumer goods took some time to be accepted. The Press and, naturally, the producers showed some strong opposition at the beginning. But now their attitude has changed, companies are no longer exerting pressure on the analysts of the Foundation and threats of legal complaint can usually be amiably arranged. The public had definitely proved its appreciation for the work of the Foundation.

(ATS)

CRIME AND ACCIDENTS

In Rickenbach, Schwytz, a 75-year old peasant, Joseph Buegler, took out his double-barrel hunting gun in a fit of rage and shot his son-in-law point

blank in the chest, leaving his 12-year-old grandson to see his father die. After threatening to kill off the whole family, he escaped into the woods, where the police lay in wait for him during the whole night. They found him dead in a nearby stable. He had taken his life. The motives for the crime appear to have been the disunion between his victim and his own daughter.

* * *

A resident of Rorschach (St. Gall) had a grudge against an Italian couple. He chose an unusual vengeance: inviting their children to the station, he bought them tickets for Italy and sent them off to a far-away destination, telling them that their grand-parents were expecting them there. In broadcasting the disappearance, the police soon learnt that the children had been seen in a red car accompanied by an unknown man. This information led to his arrest. But by this time the children were well outside Switzerland and it took some formalities and plenty of worry to have them back home again.

* * *

A young man of 26 from Wilersgut near Alterswil, Fribourg, loved the daughter of a local contractor against the will of her father. The two lovers had planned to live together at the young man's home in the absence of his mother, but the girl's father had come to fetch her on the very first night of the elopement. At 1.30 in the morning, the impassioned lover called at the father's home armed with his service rifle with the intention of recovering his love. He broke a window-pane and woke up the father, who sprang up with a revolver and hit the groping hands of the young man with the butt. He let fire a volley with his rifle but hurt no one. Alerted by the noise, a neighbour called the police who, when they arrived, found the body of the young man who had ended his life. The couple had apparently formed the project of putting an end to their lives and large quantities of sleeping drugs were found in the girl's room.

* * *

A mad fox entered a farm in Haslen, Appenzell, fought with the tenant's dog and attacked a cat. He was later tracked down and killed. The cantonal veterinary surgeon has launched an urgent appeal not to let cats and dogs loose in the area, since a case of rabies had already been discovered there a year ago.

* * *

A mother of Thayngen (Sh) put her children to sleep one late afternoon and left for a speedy errand in the village. When her husband returned home he found smoke billowing from the children's room. He rushed in and managed to save his two young daughters, but the baby had already died of suffocation. The two children, aged two and three, had started a fire by playing with matches.

Letter to the Editor

Sir,

While congratulating you on your efforts to acquaint your readers with material which is highly topical in Switzerland, I nevertheless take umbrage at one of the paragraphs in your recent Editorial "Was Mr. von Moos an anti-semit?" (No. 1585, Vol. 56).

In that Editorial you are sermonising about the journalistic profession, both Swiss and British, accusing both sides of "playing tricks" and then you go on to make the following statement:

"That's the job of journalists—to transform events into something interesting by improving them". As one who has soon spent a life-time in this profession, I disagree with you strongly and dissociate myself totally from this weird notion. It is not—repeat, not—"the job of journalists to transform events".

If you had stated that a seemingly uninteresting event can be rendered interesting by the gift of a good journalist to comment intelligently and in very readable style on it, then I would have gone along with you. But between that and your allegation that it is a journalist's job to "doctor" (my words) the news or events, there is a world of difference.

Generalisations like the one you have made can be dangerous. In this case, at any rate, while you may have spoken for yourself and about your own conception of a "journalist's job", you have certainly not uttered such opinions on my behalf.

Somehow I don't think I would still represent the "Agence Télégraphique Suisse" in Berne and the "Basler Nachrichten" in Basle, if I had "transformed events" according to your prescription.

Yours faithfully,
Gottfried Keller.

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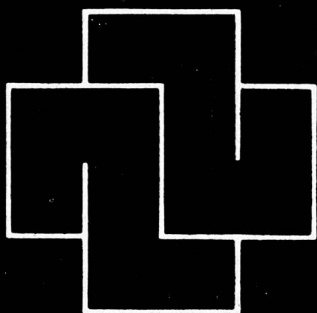


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Two 11-year-old schoolboys discovered the body of a 70-year-old pensioner in a public lavatory of the Lindenberg district of Basle. The man had been sought by the police for four months. He lived in an old people's home run by the Salvation Army and had probably died of a heart attack or from the cold. The exact causes of death being unknown. The police have ruled out the possibility of foul play.

* * *

A little girl of four was playing with her five-year-old brother 50 yards away from home when her toy fell in a bordering canal. Trying to retrieve it, she fell in it herself and disappeared. The little boy rushed to alert his mother, who immediately called the police. All the efforts undertaken by friends and frogmen to find her body were in vain.

(ATS)

CANTONAL

Espionage

A queer but petty case of spying was reported in Basle. A 30-year-old female employee of an important chemical firm was to leave her job and take up employment in a Swiss Embassy abroad. But her husband, while being tried for misappropriation of funds, revealed that he had spent the money on paying an East German agent who had been importuning his wife. It was further disclosed that the woman had engaged in an illegal commerce with this person. She was to have undertaken espionage activities in her new job for the Swiss diplomatic service. The authorities are not particularly worried, but they would like to know whether she has been giving information about her company to the East Germans. The couple were in instance of divorce and this explains why the husband compromised his wife so easily.

139 million francs necessary for the enlargement of Kloten Airport

Zurich's airport became an "inter-continental" airport through popular vote on May 5th 1946. It has been enlarged twice since then and has absorbed investments of over 420 million francs. In spite of its modernity, it is already working to full capacity and is even overburdened during the worst peaks in traffic. The State Council of Zurich has accordingly submitted the proposed expenditure of 139 million francs for the further development of the airport to the legislative council and made the case persuasive by handing out a memorandum on the meaning of Kloten Airport for Zurich. This memorandum pointed out that Zurich was not alone in being overwhelmed by the surge of modern air traffic. Frankfurt, Cologne, Vienna and even Geneva airport were in the same position and will have to spend far more than 139 million francs in order to be in line with future necessities. The money would be the necessary remainder after Swissair, the Confederation and Kloten Airport Authority had given their contribu-

Karl Barth and Kary Jaspers honoured

The crossing of Hardstrasse and St. Albanring in Basle will bear the name of "Karl Barth Square", and the stretch on the Hardstrasse delimited by the St. Albanring and Neusatzweg will be called the "Jaspers Alley". Karl Barth was a great theologian, Karl Jaspers a great philosopher. Both of them taught at Basle and both died last year. The decision to honour them by physically inscribing their names in the town was taken by the State Council of Basle.

Decisions in favour of the Magadino plain in Tessin

Nature-lovers and farmers in Ticino are in disagreement over the future of the beautiful "bolle de Magadino" in the southern end of the Magadino plain. Nature-lovers and conservationists have tabled a motion to the Great Council of Ticino, asking the Canton to buy land as a contribution to the international conservation year (1970 having been decreed as such by the Council of Europe). A generation of toil and millions in public expense have dried out the swamps of the Magadino plain and chased malaria. These swamps have given place to beautiful ponds, called *bolle*, which are a haven for the rarest species of birds.

The peasants of the plain have one main desire: that no more *bolle* be artificially created. The valley being full of alluvial gravel, contractors working on the motorways had bought plots of land near Giubiasco, Sementina and Gudo and, in digging for gravel, had hewn out gigantic holes and then abandoned them. These holes were soon filled up with underground waters. They were a considerable nuisance to the peasants dwelling in their vicinity because they were festering quickly. The peasants therefore want a cantonal intervention of a different kind.

The epilogue of a heart transplant

Mr. Paul Gautschi, father of Switzerland's first heart donor, who

died in April of last year, is taking action against the Swedish professor who performed the heart transplant, Dr. Ake Senning, and Professor Krayenbühl, responsible for public health in Zurich.

His complaint is that he was never consulted about the donation of his dead son's heart. He only learnt of it on television, when it was an accomplished fact.

Mr. Gautschi says that he is not fighting this case to win damages but because he believes justice has to be done. Due to his material situation, the president of Zurich's supreme court has granted him legal assistance. This means that he considers Mr. Gautschi's case as acceptable.

The merger of two parties in Lucerne

Two important parties of the Canton of Lucerne are planning to merge. They are the Conservative and Christian-Social parties and the coalition is to be called the "popular party of Lucerne" (Volkspartei des Kantons Luzern). This may well be an important precedent.

The reasons for the merger are not purely electoral. It had been felt that the conservative party was not quite in line with our present day and age and that a reapproachment with the left wing would give it a new lease of life and a face-lift. The Christian-Social party had been losing ground in the recent past and is making an attempt not to appear as an exclusively Catholic formation.

International contest of chamber music

The eliminatory and final performances of the 14th contest of the young Swiss musicians will take place between 31st March and 19th April 1970. The contest has been created for the promotion of chamber music. It will display the talents of young duet-ists performing duos for violin and piano, alto and piano or cello and piano. For the first time, the contest is divided in a professional and a non-professional category.

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