

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: - (1972)
Heft: 1642

Rubrik: Comment

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: 26.12.2025

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

bravely, making good use of the terrain. On the confederate side it took the courageous personal intervention of the commander-in-chief before his frightened troops could be led to attack and to victory. At nightfall, the Sonderbund leaders fled with the Jesuits across the lake to Fluelen. On the evening of the following day, Lucerne, besieged on all sides, surrendered, and part of the victorious confederate army entered the town. A few days previously, Siegwart had implored Metternich to arrange for a military occupation of the Ticino: he now sent repeated formal appeals in the name of the war council for armed intervention by Austria. But no foreign help arrived, and Siegwart, with a few friends, escaped across the alps to Milan, where like many others he remained in exile and poverty. Valais was the last canton to lay down its arms; the members of the Sonderbund were obliged to pay the costs of the war and to set up new administrations.

The civil war had lasted twenty-five days. Dufour had manoeuvred rather than fought and thus spared many lives. On the side of the confederates were 78 dead and 260 wounded, on the Sonderbund side, 50 dead and 175 wounded. Dufour won the hearts of the defeated by his repeated appeals to his troops to spare the civil population of the enemy. It does the General the highest honour that he inflicted no fresh wounds on the body of the confederate state with the weapon it had placed in his hands, but healed those which already existed.

The attitude of the powers

While the powers were still considering how they would intervene in Switzerland, the Sonderbund had ceased to exist. Although certain governments regarded it with the greatest sympathy as the guardian of the Conservative principle, there were many obstacles in the way of intervention. Metternich had long advocated intervention and was endeavouring to bring about an understanding among the five powers in order to prevent the rise of a powerful Radical republic in Switzerland, but the British cabinet held severely aloof. Palmerston steadily upheld the principle of non-intervention and repeatedly offered his services for peaceful negotiation. He early branded the Sonderbund as illegal and congratulated Ochsenbein on his "well known firmness of character". He openly declared himself opposed to any interference and exerted his great diplomatic powers to frustrate it.

Palmerston's policy was supported by public opinion in England. True, both cabinet and public were at first on the side of the moderate Conservatives in Switzerland because they suspected the Radicals as enemies of Christianity and political extremists. *The Times*, for instance, at first re-

fused to print the Diet's proclamation to the Swiss people, but later sent a special correspondent to Dufour. The *Seven Letters concerning Politics in Switzerland* published by the historian George Grote in the *Spectator* did a great deal to bring about a change in public opinion in England. He sympathised with and understood the confederates and did all he could to win the educated public over to their side.

Siegwart's appeals to the powers for help had grown ever more urgent. Metternich sent money and arms and threatened the frontier cantons with reprisals, while the French Minister promised to bring pressure to bear by means of military demonstrations, but at the critical moment he was disowned by his government. Finally, after long negotiations among the powers, an identical note was sent by them to the Swiss government. By the time this reached Switzerland the war was over and the Sonderbund dissolved; the notes were delivered, but to the great indignation of the other states, without British support. Instead, Palmerston sent Stratford Canning, whose term of office at Berne won him universal respect, with instructions to do all he could in the cause of peace. When he arrived in Berne on 7th December, 1847, Stratford Canning found the war over. He could now advise a course of extreme moderation upon the Radicals so that hostile powers should be given no pretext for reprisals or blockade.

The government of the confederation was now able to inform the powers that an offer of mediation presupposed a state of war which no longer existed; further, this attempt at mediation was at variance with the position of Switzerland in Europe as recognised by treaty and also with the constitution of the confederation. For the last time the eastern powers attempted to frustrate the reform of the confederation, this time by presenting a collective note. The answer of the Diet, drawn up in firm but tactful terms by Jonas Furrer, burgo-master of Zurich, claimed for Switzerland the right to amend her constitution as she thought fit. There was a new tone of self-reliance in the document. Finally, as regards foreign policy, the Sonderbund War meant Switzerland's final release from tutelage and complete national independence.

Shortly after this exchange of notes the European crisis of 1848 broke out. Following the February Revolution in Paris, the Republican party in Neuchatel rose and overthrew the Royalist government by armed force, set up a republic, and thus cut the bond between Neuchatel and the king of Prussia. The powers were too busy with the troubles of their own countries to pursue their plans of intervention in Switzerland and the confederation was left undis-

turbed to establish a firm confederate state in the midst of a distracted Europe.

COMMENT

MILESTONE IN LABOUR RELATIONS

A new agreement has been signed between the Association of Swiss Machine Manufacturers, two engineering unions and the Swiss Mercantile Society on an extended form of co-operation between both sides of industry at plant level.

This agreement, concluded on 23rd June last, enhances two previous national agreements and is extremely encouraging for the future of labour relations. One of its main clauses is the setting up of "employee committees" representing both white and blue collar workers in negotiations with management. Their members get days off for special training in their new responsibilities, which they assume in a spirit of interest for the future of their company.

The new employee committees have access to all the information relevant to their new task, much of which may be confidential. They are entitled to discuss conditions of work, advancement, encouragement, technical suggestions, safety, hygiene, pension schemes and bonus payments with management during working hours. They are the spokesmen of all the workers in the plant.

The first paragraph in the text of the agreement says that the purpose of "co-operation" is to extend the activities of the work force beyond the simple execution of a given job so as to help each employee to fulfil himself at his work; to develop his sense of responsibilities, to create a favourable atmosphere at work and to promote interest in the aims and productivity of the employing company.

The principles expressed in this document are the best answer to the growing wave of militancy, which has fortunately had little effect so far in Swiss industry. It also falls in line with the principles established by "Peace of Labour" agreements and follows traditional Swiss trade unionism, which is more interested in securing the working man a decent living than in promoting class warfare.

The most interesting aspect of the document is that it provides for the training of worker representatives for up to a hundred days in four years. This means that these representatives are made aware of economic realities and can therefore be in a position to assume responsibilities. At a time where workers tend to scoff at explanations given to them by management

for refusing their claim and answer "your job is to manage and make sure that we get our demands", irrespective of their own responsibility in achiev-

ing this, this agreement points to the only way to make capitalism work, despite its shortcomings and injustice. (PMB)

ing the creation of new convents. The question will be put to the National Council this Autumn and then to the people. There is little doubt that the days of the "anti-Catholic" provisions of the Constitution are numbered.

SWISS EVENTS

FEDERAL

The defence of the Franc

Switzerland reacted very firmly to defend the Swiss Franc against the inflow of weak foreign currencies triggered off by the floating of the Pound. To begin with, the Swiss National Bank refused to support the Dollar, which fell way below its lower limit of 3.75 francs. Later the Federal Council took a series of firm steps to chase away unwanted foreign currency (mainly dollars and pounds) from the Swiss money market.

This was a situation which the country had faced before because of its strong currency. Any holder of a sizeable sum in Sterling or Dollars will these days be naturally inclined to convert it into something affording greater security, such as: Swiss francs, Swiss fixed interest securities and shares, and Swiss property. To counter alluvial masses of floating capital pressing into the Swiss haven, the Federal Council erected in about a week a treble line of defence.

It first stopped all foreigners from buying Swiss securities and buying into Swiss real estate. This immediately affected the Zurich Stock Exchange, which slumped badly, and moved a National Councillor into convening the National Assembly by demanding explanations to Mr. Nello Celio, Head of the Department of Finance and 1972 Federal President. Mr. Celio explained that despite restrictions on the building industry, planned construction was already up by 20 per cent over 1971 and that bank loans had increased threefold in the first five months of the year. It was necessary therefore to prevent banks from obtaining foreign funds to finance housing, which was the principal factor in the economy's overheat and tendency to excessive imports.

Earlier, Mr. Nello Celio had categorically rejected all idea of a revaluation of the Swiss Franc. This would have been unfair to our export industry, he said. As it is, with a *de facto* devaluation of the Pound of about 7 per cent, Swiss industries working with Great Britain will suffer to some extent. Although the U.K.'s share of Swiss export is only 1.5 billion francs out of 22 billion, watches will

feel the pinch. Machines shouldn't be hurt too badly, as Britain has already become one of the most difficult markets. Swiss tourism should hardly be affected owing to the declining importance of British tourists due to restrictions on foreign spending and the fall of Sterling. Having barred a new revaluation of the Franc, the Federal Council resorted to technically floating the Franc by refusing to preserve its Dollar parity and by taking the two aforementioned measures.

A new package was announced a few days later: All foreign capital deposited into Swiss banks after 30th June, 1972 must pay a 2 per cent negative interest every quarter; and all funds deposited in Switzerland since 31st July, 1971 are deprived of interest. These decisions, taken a day after 100 million floating dollars had swamped the Zurich money market, wafted these liquidities like a gale towards Frankfurt and other German financial markets. The Germans, who have mopped up about ten billion Marks worth of foreign currency this year took similar but more lenient measures. A spokesman in Bonn said that the Federal Republic lacked the legislative apparatus enabling it to impose a negative interest on foreign speculative funds.

The final package, decided on 5th July, compels banks in Switzerland to: a) have a deposit at the National Bank representing up to 90 per cent of new foreign funds and thus submit the exchange of these funds to the National Bank; b) be authorised by the National Bank to obtain foreign money with the purpose of hedging against monetary uncertainties and c) it prevents banks from buying foreign currency with a view to selling it back to the National Bank at speculative rates.

With these measures, Swiss exporters remained well protected and the Swiss franc was firmly defended against the onslaught of financial speculation.

Council of States abrogates anti-Jesuit article

The Council of States voted by 37 votes to nil for the abrogation of articles 51 and 52 banning the Jesuit order from Switzerland and prohibit-

Increased postal rates

The National Council debated in mid-June for two days on the increase of postal rates, a theme which had already been dealt with by the Council of States. It had to decide between price scales proposed by the Commission of the Council of States, the Council of States and the Federal Council. The main argument was centred on the level of rate increase to apply to heavy newspapers. The minimum cost of sending a letter in Switzerland will rise from 20 to 30 cents. Postcards are subjected to the same rates. Large letters will cost up to 60 cents.

New arms export bill adopted

The Council of States has rejected the popular initiative demanding a general ban on arms exports to all countries save neutral European countries and accepted in principle a counter-proposal by the Federal Council, whose text is to be redrafted by a special commission. More compromising than the Initiative Committee, the Federal Council suggests that the official authorisation to export war material will be subject to the condition that this material is not intended for countries recently involved in war or threatened by war.

Exports would also be forbidden in those cases where they would con-

YOUR TRAVEL IS OUR BUSINESS

by air - coach - rail - sea
ANYWHERE IN THE WORLD

just the ticket
package holidays
independent arrangements
coach tours
cruising
car ferries
motorail
self drive cars
party bookings
private coaches
hotel reservations

no booking fee

Ask for free brochure from
A. GANDON

HOWSHIP TRAVEL AGENCY

(Established 1934)

188 Uxbridge Road, Shepherds Bush
W12 7JP

(next to Metropolitan Station)

Tel.: 743 6268

MEMBER OF ABTA