

**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:** - (1973)  
**Heft:** 1665

**Artikel:** What's in store for Switzerland in the future?  
**Autor:** [s.n.]  
**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-690032>

### **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:** 13.01.2026

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

# The Swiss Observer

FOUNDED IN 1919 BY PAUL F. BOEHRINGER

The Official Organ of the Swiss Colony in Great Britain

Vol. 59 No. 1665

FRIDAY 13th JULY, 1973

## WHAT'S IN STORE FOR SWITZERLAND IN THE FUTURE?

*This was the title of a talk Dr. Hans Rudolf Boeckli, Berne, gave to the London Group of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique in London on 17th May. Dr. Boeckli is Editor and Parliamentary Correspondent of the "St. Galler Tagblatt". He spent several years in London and was an active member of the N.S.H. from 1963 to 1969. He then went to Korea as a member of the Neutral Supervisory Commission.*

He opened his talk by making it clear that his surmises were personal statements and he would in no way be prophetic. He then talked about Switzerland's political future.

"As to the internal political developments we can clearly see strains and stresses in the present structure, which are a challenge soon to be faced. For instance, the federal structure with 25 semi-sovereign Cantons and a federal super structure appears to become less effective. The Cantons, formally, continue to live in their traditional state-like shells. But at the same time, in the course of the last 125 years, we can clearly observe that their *raison d'être* is withering away, and this at an ever faster pace. For one, the economic unity and the following factual interdependence of all parts of Switzerland has done its predictable job of eroding the base of true cantonal autonomy. The closely-knit network of communications, telephone, railways, roads and lately the construction of an extended system of motorways across the country, with no regard for cantonal boundaries and internal structures of their own set-up has eroded the autonomy of the Cantons to a point where many modern Swiss live in one Canton and work in another, and where an even greater number of them move their homes from one part of the country to another. This to such an extent that Switzerland has become one great melting pot of her whole population. The democratic mobility on horizontal lines still increases. More and more citizens of one Canton are born and brought up in another. Intermarriage has become the rule; and even the number of marriages across the traditional linguistic and religious boundaries is increasing tremendously. The urban centres are attracting ever more

Swiss from the rural Cantons. And the more technologically and industrially advanced parts of the country grow partially at the expense of the less developed Cantons. One of them, at the last census, actually showed a decrease in population whilst another Canton showed a population growth of more than 30% in one single decade.

### Federalism must be re-thought

"This tremendous mobility, of course, is poor pasture for the growth and maintenance of a strong feeling of cantonal allegiance and loyalty, of what we used to call, in a rather pejorative sense *Kantönligeist*. However, nothing less than this cantonal patriotism has, for centuries, made Switzerland a quite exceptional country in a world of otherwise centralized unitary nation-states. This typical Swiss distinction with all that has gone with it, good and bad, is now fast on the way out. In addition, more and more Cantons are in real financial trouble nowadays. They become dependent on subsidies from the Federal Treasury, some of them in a really alarming way."

The speaker stressed that it would be impossible to continue without a far-reaching adaptation of the political structure of Switzerland. The problem of federalism and of the federal structure of Switzerland would have to be rethought and a truly new allocation worked out of tasks and competences between Cantons and federal power, and that in a manner which would prevent the conventional federalism from becoming a stumbling block for the further evolution of Switzerland as a whole. As things were, Dr. Boeckli did not think that federalism was a dangerous hindrance to necessary federal policies, but in some instances it threatened to make Switzerland ungovernable. "Inevitably, some of the measures which a modern State necessarily has to take, become inefficient. The cantonal execution of federal measures has sometimes become grotesque; one Canton loyally follows directives from Berne, whilst others were and are capable of sabotaging a federal law by simply ignoring it or giving it an interpretation of their own." As

an example, Dr. Boeckli gave the "Lex von Moos" which was a failure because of this.

The speaker stressed that he did not think that the Cantons should be done away with nor should they be turned into purely administrative organs of the federal State. But the whole federal structure would have to be adapted to new necessities. The structure of the Confederation before 1798 became inadequate, and the one of 1848 or 1874 was now no longer adequate in view of the changes which have been taking place. Reminding his audience of a recent parliamentary motion dealing with urgent structural and fiscal reforms, Dr. Boeckli asserted that a move towards a strengthening of the central power was inevitable. The stronger Cantons would resent this and there would be tension.

### More efficiency required

"*Ces Messieurs de Berne*", continued the speaker, do not govern the country as efficiently as was desirable. The federal administration, and above all the collective body of the Government itself surely merits good marks. But the seven Federal Councillors, each heading one department or ministry, are clearly overloaded with work. The question arises whether the collective body should be increased from seven to nine or even eleven members. The creation of nine departments and nine Federal Councillors does not create great problems except for a new demarcation of their respective field of activities. With eleven members, however, the Federal Council would probably have to be structured afresh. In that case, the post of a constitutionally well-defined new presidency would become necessary. As it is today, the President of the Confederation has not much to say. One of the seven members simply serves one year at a time as President. The creation of eleven ministerial departments would bring about a presidential department and a President concerned mainly with the coordination of all government work and the representative duties of a Chief of State. This, of course, would liken the Swiss governmental structure to that of parliamentary

# The Swiss Observer

HON. PRESIDENT: Robert J. Keller  
HON. VICE-PRESIDENT:  
Gottfried Keller  
EDITOR: Pierre-Michel Béguin

## Advisory Council:

F. Burri (Chairman)  
Dr. C. Jagmetti (Vice-Chairman)  
O. F. Boehringer, J.P., (Hon. Sec.)  
J. Eusebio, A. Kunz, R. M. Suess,  
B. Simon, B. Feller, Mrs. M. Meier

Editor's telephone: 01-602 1378

Published Twice Monthly at  
63/67 TABERNACLE STREET  
LONDON E.C.2  
Tel: 01-253 2321

Telegrams: Paperwyse London

## PREPAID SUBSCRIPTION RATES (POST FREE)

### UNITED KINGDOM

24 issues	£2.40
12 issues	£1.25
6 issues	£0.65

### SWITZERLAND and elsewhere

12 issues	Frs. 13—or £1.30
24 issues	Frs. 25—or £2.50

Swiss subscriptions may be paid into  
Postcheck Konto Basle 40-5718

democracies with a Prime Minister as well as a figure head at the top."

The speaker stressed the tremendous impact such a change would have on the style of Swiss Government and pointed out the dangers of a "personal regime" as in France and USA. He did not believe that this system would be acceptable to the majority of the Swiss. He considered a rise from seven to nine members without a more institutionalised Presidency. But he did not rule out even such a solution at a later stage.

Next Dr. Boeckli referred to the urgent problem of "checks and balances" of the separation of State powers becoming more and more ineffective. He saw the reason in the gradual weakening of the Swiss Parliament. Both a more forceful position of the Government and a strengthening of the executive power of the legislative were important. Parliament in Switzerland today was only a shadow of what it had been 70 years ago. "In a recent Motion, Dr. Binder could go as far as labelling the present situation as a 'dictatorship of the Federal Council without dictators'." The frequent method of legislation is contrary to the system the Fathers of the Swiss Constitution envisaged. First of all, the executive (administration) puts up most blueprints for legislation. Then these are gone over by a body of experts nominated by the executive or a Department. Then a curious extra-parliamentary procedure takes place in which a number of important organisations have a say. Their views are, if possible, incorporated in the draft law, again by the administration. Only then Parliament starts to look into the matter, late and often too late! The result is that Parliament is in danger of adding nothing but a few trivial changes to the project and putting its rubber stamp on it. This in time could easily mean death to the democratic concept of legislation. Drastic steps must be taken to strengthen the role of Parliament."

## The burden of a part-time Parliament

Dr. Boeckli thought that this was going to happen soon since the situation was becoming grotesque. Whether Switzerland should give up the militia concept of Parliament and create a professional one which would prevent a continuous and more accentuated shedding

of power from the legislative to the executive, was under serious discussion with as yet an uncertain outcome. The status of the political Parties, too, was under discussion, and there was a good chance that at least those Parties represented in Parliament would receive substantial State subsidies in order to carry out their functions more efficiently.

"An important issue", continued the speaker, is the question of foreign labour. At this moment, there are roughly one million foreigners in Switzerland with a 'native' population of about five million. This gigantic foreign labour force has been gradually built up over the last 15 years, the cause being an unprecedented economic boom and a severe scarcity of Swiss labour. Tremendous problems have resulted. Manual labour, especially the 'dirty work' is now mainly done by Italians, Spaniards, Yugoslavs and Turks etc. The point has been reached where the foreign labour force creates enormous problems of which the psychological are the most spectacular, though not the most important ones."

The speaker wondered whether there would be a Switzerland literally submerged in a sea of foreigners claiming equal standards and rights. A decision was becoming urgent whether immigration on that scale ought to be accepted forever, or whether the migration problem should be solved by means of reducing the influx and by abandoning some of the present economic patterns. A political force had made much headway based on this controversial issue. He reminded the audience of Switzerland's Enoch Powell, James Schwarzenbach and his "republicans" who could possibly catch 10% or more of the popular vote and succeed in a Popular Initiative aimed at a reduction of foreign labour. Dr. Boeckli thought that the major battle on this issue had not yet been fought and that considerable disruptive effects were to be expected, not only on the political scene.

The speaker then referred to a less disruptive but possibly more explosive problem, that of the Jura where, in his opinion a considerable amount of political dynamite was stored. He likened the Jura to Northern Ireland, especially the northern parts where the radicals, though not the extremists of the "Front de Libération du Jura", had made re-

markable advances. He could not exclude an ultimate solution of a Canton of the Jura and he mentioned the young group "Béliers" doing everything to give the problem constant publicity.

Turning to the international scene, Dr. Boeckli could see even bigger imponderabilities than internally. But after the Referendum on the EEC treaty issue in December, there was hardly any doubt that Switzerland was slowly taking the road to Europe. It was uncertain whether this was only economically or whether a more genuine integration would take place. At the moment, the popular feeling was that the Free Trade agreements should not lead to political integration. But it was doubtful if Switzerland could manage to keep out of Europe once the whole continent this side of the Iron Curtain was one effective political union.

## EEC and UN membership

"The hindrance to join a United Europe would be the traditional policy of neutrality going back as far as 1515. But I have the impression that this policy is and has always been more rooted in the national interest of the Swiss than in a firm ideological principle which would stand with no regard to this 'ultima ratio' of any state concept. This means that any potential aggressor inside and outside of Europe would have it in his own hand not only to strengthen and hasten the unity movement on this continent, but he would at the same time have a decisive influence by his political and military attitudes on whether the neutrality concept of Switzerland would ever be revised and on whether Switzerland would be willing to move closer towards Europe or not. There is not much of an European movement inside Switzerland at the moment; but international developments may, if Europe is exposed to a real threat, give much impetus to this."

Dr. Boeckli next turned to the question-mark of the United Nations. He said that Switzerland would soon be one of the very few States in the world remaining outside this international body, though of course not with regard to the UN Specialised Agencies where Swiss participation and cooperation was very active indeed. The Federal Council and a large part of the political establishment were clearly in favour of joining UN. There may be a Referendum similar to that on the EEC treaty with a possible Swiss entry by about 1975. The popular feeling was still adverse to such a move, mainly because the role of the UN in world politics was unknown or wrongly appreciated by the public at large. The status of neutrality was still considered a hindrance. The trouble Switzerland got into because of the sanction clause in the League of Nations treaty in connection with the Italian attack on Ethiopia in 1935 still produced much concern as to similar sanction obligations tied to UN membership. But the reluctance to join was disappearing, and in Dr. Boeckli's opinion the Swiss Govern-



ment would carry the day once the crucial decision would have to be taken. Obviously there were many tricky problems involved, especially if Switzerland were called upon to take a stand in controversial international problems of no direct national interest to her. The Swiss diplomats would have to operate with extreme caution on the UN floor to keep Switzerland free from unwanted and highly unwelcome repercussions. Here again, the League of Nations taught a lesson.

"Finally, let us have a look at the relationship of Switzerland with the Third World. Switzerland, 200 years ago, one of the paupers of the world and very much underdeveloped, has staged an impressive show of a poor man becoming prosperous. The *per capita* income today is the fourth highest in the world. As to industrial output this country has continuously climbed up the ladder to become something of a middle-sized power. And in financial matters, George Brown, with his curious talent to put the right label on the wrong thing had the wrong label on the right thing, has pointed to a significant phenomenon with his "Gnomes of Zurich": Switzerland plays a manifold more important role in the world than one would guess from her territorial size and her population figures. The country very much belongs to the "Rich Men's Club" and therefore shares their obligations towards those in the world who are still far behind in development and wealth. The Swiss, however, were late to understand the world

situation in that respect. This is largely due to the fact that Switzerland remained outside the goings-on in the colonial period. In some respects this may be an advantage. But in other ways it is not: the colonial powers had always been confronted with the problems of backward countries and had, willy-nilly, to do something about it. It is only now that public opinion in Switzerland starts to grasp the truth that not only the colonial powers ought to do something about the appalling situation in large parts of the world, but that the smaller countries should not sit forever on a back seat and let the others carry the burdens of international solidarity. Every nation capable in doing so should take on part of that burden herself. The development aid of Switzerland is being increased now, and although the percentage of 1% of the social product is far from being reached, it is clear that something around that figure generally agreed upon as necessary, will be attained in the not too distant future. I am confident that, in spite of all hesitation, criticism and slow movement in public opinion, this task will be taken on by the Fatherland of the Red Cross with determination and efficiency if not with outright enthusiasm."

#### "International Volunteer Force"

The speaker then pointed out that at the very moment Switzerland was on the point of putting up a quite impressive volunteer force for "international emergency aid" which would be used in future

to bring instant personal and material aid to any place in the world where there may be a catastrophe such as earthquake, floods or other devastation in which local remedies would be less than sufficient. The organisation was now being created on *quasi* military lines and would before long be in a position to fly off respective aid teams carefully trained and fully equipped, and all free of charge to the receiving countries. The personnel of this new Swiss organisation, apart from a few staff officers, would consist of hundreds of volunteers recruited from their civilian jobs. They would constantly be ready to leave for this sort of solidarity action.

"This to me", the speaker concluded the first part of his talk, "appears to be a true manifestation of the spirit in which this country, in the future, will participate in concrete tasks of international cooperation. The slow start, as in the past, is typical of the Swiss temperament. I think we are and shall remain slow starters, but quite good performers once the initial phase of hesitation has been overcome."

In the second part of his paper, Dr. Boeckli touched on economic matters. He thought that the general economic problems would not differ from those of most other technologically advanced countries.

"First of all, let us have a look at agriculture. This sector as economy shows tremendous changes if we look back to the past. Having been an agricultural country, Switzerland today has only about 7% of her population living

## 2 fine restaurants for the truly discerning



With the elegant Four Seasons and the popular Vintage Room the Inn on the Park has firmly established itself as a rendezvous for those who appreciate good food, luxurious surroundings and impeccable service. The Four Seasons with its wide view over the Park and a superb menu, presents the finest foods of each season. The Vintage Room specializes in succulent steaks and traditional Ribs of Scotch Beef. After dark, continuous dancing from 9.0 until 3.0 a.m. makes the Vintage Room one of London's most popular night-spots. If you appreciate fine food in luxurious surroundings, visit the Inn – soon.

### *Inn on the Park*

Hamilton Place, Park Lane, London, W.1. Tel: 01-499 0888

from primary production. The peasant, still predominant in the last century, now has become a rather lonely figure. In the last three decades, the disappearance of farm units has been rapid. At the same time, the average unit has become bigger than it used to be. Small-scale farming has been literally eliminated except in some mountain regions where this change is still in process now. But production has not decreased. Actually, the 7% peasants of today produce more than the 25% did before the Second World War. And, by state measures, largely *via* administered prices and direct subsidies, the agricultural income could roughly be kept on the same level as income in industry. The question is whether this situation can be maintained in the future. Would it not be better to give up intensive agriculture, turn to extensive agriculture and buy most food abroad at the best possible world market prices? For defence reasons, in order to guarantee an adequate percentage of good production inside the country, this solution, however, in spite of its evident economic advantages is not taken into consideration. But it seems inevitable that the role of agriculture in Switzerland will be somewhat different from the past. The peasant, and this especially under the influence of the new environment thinking, is not only useful because of what he produces, but he is looked upon as a "scenery gardener" who, by his work, saves the land from erosion and ruin for the good of the other 93% of the population who need fresh air and recreation. Plans are actually being made to change the traditional agricultural policy of consumer-oriented production and income to a scheme of subsidies which would partly be independent from the farmers' output.

"The rising volume of milk production has lately become a serious problem, and Swiss cheese, encounters more and more difficulties on the export markets. This is due to less and less competitive prices, but to some extent also to a change in consumer taste. Emmenthaler, for instance, seems to run into difficulties lately because of this! There is a problem, too, with excess production of butter. Thus it can be expected that the traditional production line of milk and dairy products will lose importance. Diversification will mark the agricultural picture of the future with perhaps more emphasis on meat production."

### Stormy waters for Industry

Next, Dr. Boeckli turned to industry where a picture of change no less radical than in agriculture could be seen. Here too, a trend to concentration was making itself felt with an imminent danger of elimination for smaller units, especially family enterprises of the more traditional type. He mentioned the wide spread fear that the former classical industries which had so far survived fairly well, were going to be in stormy waters. It was possible that labour-intensive industries whose products were often of relatively

low value compared to the cost of raw materials, were on the way out, such as textiles, clothes, shoes, leather, wood and some branches of the metal industry.

The watch industry was meeting increasing competition from certain countries, especially in the field of cheaper-priced watches. The main problem appeared to be in the marketing of the product, not as yet in the product itself which still compared well and enjoyed a prestige advantage. The main industry, in the speaker's view, would probably be forced into a higher degree of concentration in order to survive in the most important markets.

Dr. Boeckli finally turned to the machine industry. "Some well-known firms seem to get into trouble because of the last international currency upheavals which hit them hard. This is more than a temporary symptom. It shows that the profit margins are narrow, and therefore the price competition has a tendency to be unfavourable for many Swiss products. It may be that innovations will hold the threatened front as has happened many

times before in the watch and machine industry.

"Better prospects may be forecast for the chemical and pharmaceutical industries, electronics, advanced food processing, banking, insurance and, of course, a wide range of service industries. It is possible that these industries show an even higher growth rate in future and largely characterise the industrial landscape of the country within the next generation, whilst the first-mentioned group of industries will eventually disappear from the Swiss scene because they are hopelessly outpriced."

The discussion following Dr. Boeckli's talk was in two parts and showed the immense interest the audience had taken in his exposé. Questions were pertinent and he answered them with skill and competence, enlarging on many of the points he had raised. His talk had certainly given much food for thought for any compatriot who has the future of Switzerland at heart.

M.M.

## COMMENT

### HOW ACCEPTABLE IS BUGGING?

While the Watergate affair was one of the most publicised issues in the West, a leader of the Separatist Movement in the Jura claimed last May that 48 leading Swiss politicians, magistrates and journalists had their telephone calls tapped. Referring to secret sources of information, he said that even the telephone of Mr. Kurt Furgler, "Minister" of Justice and Police, was being bugged. Mr. Furgler ordered an immediate enquiry and reported to Parliament six weeks later that none of these claims had been substantiated during a thorough check of the Capital's telephone network.

Meanwhile, it was disclosed that a bug connected to a micro-transmitter had been placed in the premises chosen at Epalinges (Vaud) by the Swiss Marxist League for their Annual Congress. This incident called for explanations. Mr. Furgler supplied them in particular during a debate on the reform of administrative penal law. While the Lower House accepted a heavy package of new proposals prepared by a special committee during several years of efforts, the delegates stumbled on article 66, which covered the use of bugging and other "spy" devices by the Federal Administration. Many parliamentarians felt that the article did not provide a valid legal foundation to the use of bugs. After nearly a full day's debate, the whole package was accepted but it was understood that article 66 would be re-examined at a future date.

Recognising that telephone conversations were being tapped in certain circumstances and defending this

practise, Mr. Furgler said that it was the responsibility of the State to be *aware* of the activities of organisations committed to the overthrow of the established order by violence and against the will of the majority. He stressed that the Swiss Marxist League, however insignificant numerically, had nonetheless tried to steal electronic material from an important firm in Baden and prevented the Colonel responsible for the country's military training from delivering a speech in Berne. "We must constantly be on the watch out for them", he said.

Despite protests from the left, the majority of the National Council endorsed Mr. Furgler's statement and implicitly admitted that privacy could be infringed by the State in the interest of Society. The controversy touched not on the principle of bugging, but on who should draw the line. So far it is the Federal police acting under the orders of the Federal Attorney. The use of bugs, an inherently anti-democratic concept, is thus resorted to at the discretion of an administrative machine upon which the people have only an indirect control. Similarly, the use of bugs by the White House and the FBI pertains more to private undercover dealings than to the watchfulness of a responsible society eager to preserve its values. The answer therefore would be to bring the whole bugging issue in the hands of a parliamentary commission and the judicial powers of the land.

Bugging is acceptable only if the elected representatives of the people can supervise the way it is put in operation.

P.M.B.