

# The Jura problem is seen as a threat to swiss society

Autor(en): **[s.n.]**

Objekttyp: **Article**

Zeitschrift: **The Swiss observer : the journal of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK**

Band (Jahr): **- (1977)**

Heft 1728

PDF erstellt am: **27.04.2024**

Persistenter Link: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-689782>

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# The Jura problem is seen as a threat to Swiss society

Two sociologists have published an important study of the social implications of the Jura problem on the Swiss people as a whole. Dr. Uli Windisch, lecturer at Geneva University and Professor Alfred Willener of Lausanne University consider that the whole problem of the Jura has been misunderstood by the Swiss people, and that this fact reveals many negative but latent aspects. In their book *Le Jura incompris - Federalisme ou totalitarisme* they defend the view that the Jura problem has lifted the veil on several less savoury sides of the Swiss people and their way of life.

The two authors are fundamentally pro-Separatist, but this does not prevent them from being as honest as they can and denouncing the implicit dishonesty with which the whole problem has been viewed over the years in the country.

Their basic thesis is that the Separatists have been very much maligned. They state that their "violence" has only been symbolic, and hold that acts of violence in the three anti-Separatist districts of Southern Jura were far more serious.

Because of the various demonstrations and the "un-Swiss" behaviour of the younger members of the Separatist movement, this movement has been seen in an increasingly bad light by the public at large. Prejudices have grown, false ideas have taken over, minds and attitudes have

hardened. As a result, a growing feeling of resentment against the Swiss community has grown among Separatist circles. The authors blame a great deal of this lack of national understanding to a kind of complacency mingled with an absence of mental flexibility - which they term as "Swissness". It is as a reaction to this side of "Swissness", and to the absence of a proper understanding of their cause, that the Separatists have reacted to violently. Basically, a reading of the book is that the values of regionalism and local identity, the meaning of a culture shared by the members of the local community, has more attraction and value to the human soul than the ideals of federalism which, one can say, the Separatists have tended to disregard.

So the two writers claim that the Jurassians are no worse Swiss than their compatriots in the other Cantons. They note, in passing, that the French-speakers are more open to their cause and politically less rigid than the German-speakers. A survey made in March of last year by the "Weltwoche" showed that 72 per cent of the former were in favour of a new Jurassian Canton and 12 per cent against, whereas the proportions among the German-speaking majority were respectively 48 and 42 per cent.

The book claims that, behind an irreproachable institutional facade, Swiss democracy isn't quite as democratic as it might seem. They mention the case of a television debate between three Separatists, and three persons from the other side. The journalist monitoring the discussion was said to be perfectly neutral. Swiss broadcasting has, by law, to be a politically unbiased organisation. But, from the authors description of the programme, it appears that the journalist concerned conducted the discussion in such a way that the Separatists never had a proper chance to state their case and to engage into an in-depth exchange of views.

This year will be an important one for the Jura. Following various votes held within the framework of a complex cantonal procedure, the people of the six French-speaking districts were given the chance early last year to decide whether or not to remain in Canton Berne. The verdict was that the three northern districts of Delemont, Franches Montagnes and Porrentruy have voted in favour of creating a new Canton.

A Constituent Assembly is currently at work on the political and administrative structure of that new Canton. It will have a Great Council of sixty delegates. The future Constitution will be submitted to the approval of the people next March.

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The three southern districts of Courtelary, La Neuveville and Moutier have decided (by a very small majority in some areas) to remain within Berne. Some towns, like Moutier, are very seriously divided between the pro- and anti-Separatist factions. The fact that the South decided to resist the Separatist Campaign was due to several factors, the main ones being that its German-speaking population is larger, and that it is nearer to the economic influence of cities like Biel.

The verdict at last year's vote will certainly not spell an end of the Separatist campaign to have a completely

unified Jura. The Rassemblement Jurasien does not consider the results of that poll as the last word of the campaign that was started in earnest in 1947. The creation of the Canton of North Jura was a first and important step towards the final goal. That this stage should have been reached without violence and in respecting our federal traditions speaks well for the Swiss system and the discipline of the Swiss people. But, as shown by the two sociologists referred to above, it also indicates, by the very slowness with which this result has been achieved, an ingrained conservatism and resistance to change.

## More thoughts about home

I was interested in your article. I too have visited Switzerland in the last seven months, after an absence of six years. My impressions were almost identical, I felt simply insufficient to comprehend such affluence, it was cold and stiff and terribly impersonal and selfish. Most of my conversations with the people I know well were concluded with the vague worry that things might not go on like that, that some recession is in the offing. There was I, ready with all the apologies I had prepared for the dreadful economic performance of my adopted country, but there was simply no one

interested in it in the slightest. I was amazed, had I not worried about their impressions for years? Surrounded by the pampered Swiss and their consumer-oriented talk I felt nostalgia. It took me back to our farm in Luzern, during the war, trying to grow wheat and harvesting it with out bare arms. At 14 working an 18-hour day in the summer's heat and getting ill from overwork. Leaving school at 14-and-a-half and spending our school-days in the rickety old wooden building. Was I in the same country only 30 years later, or was it a Wellsian time-switch?

I did not like it much and came back to England quite contented. The English wanted to know alright, but then they had always been interested. For 25 years they have given me all the important things like love and kindness, affection and an education in civilisation. The gifts have not diminished over the years, not

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with the country's poverty. I love the English; I sometimes hate their stupidity, shortsightedness, thriftlessness and I could weep for them and feel exasperated, but I am so grateful for their kindness.

Perhaps there is a moral somewhere. Is prosperity completely absorbing, is its exclusive pursuit wrong? Perhaps the Swiss wife of the English husband living in the suburbs is lonely sometimes, her effort to tap the resources around her is very worthwhile, there is much to be had. For man does not live on bread alone nor the selfishness of materialism.

Mrs. A.S.F.

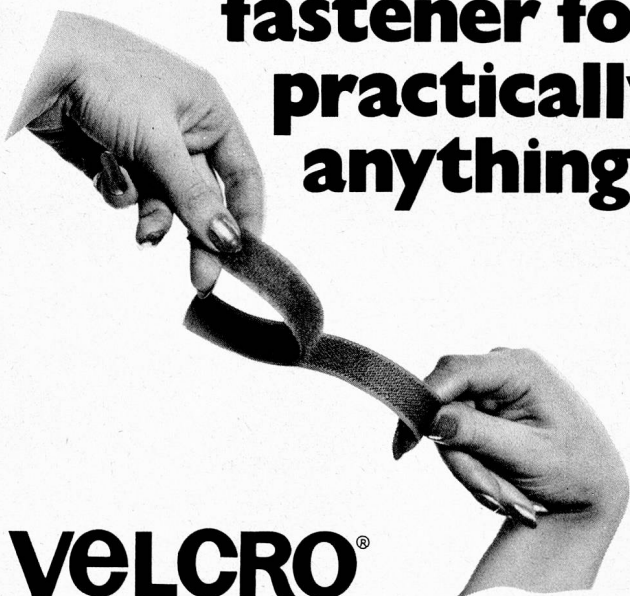
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