

The failure of jurassian separatism

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Objektyp: **Article**

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

Band (Jahr): - **(1959)**

Heft 1346

PDF erstellt am: **21.09.2024**

Persistenter Link: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-691584>

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THE FAILURE OF JURASSIAN SEPARATISM.

By PIERRE BÉGUIN.

An important Popular Referendum took place recently in the canton of Berne. The voters had been called upon to express their opinion on an Initiative, which had been launched by the so-called Jurassian Separatist Movement, which demanded that a plebiscite should be organised in the seven Jurassian districts, in the canton of Berne, in order to establish in a definite manner whether the Jurassians really wanted a scission with the canton of Berne and the constitution of a twenty-sixth canton, that of the Jura. The Initiative was rejected, not only by the whole of the Bernese electorate, but also by the Jurassians themselves.

This vote has helped towards gauging the extent of the Jurassian separatist movement.

In order to understand the importance of the vote which has taken place, it is necessary to know that the canton of Berne is composed of two principal parts: on the one hand there is the Ancient Canton, which speaks German and practises the reformed religion, whilst on the other hand there is the Bernese Jura, where the people speak French mostly and are Roman Catholics. The Bernese Jura was only attached to the canton of Berne in 1815, by virtue of the international treaties signed at that time. Before that it had belonged to the bishopric of Basle. For more than a century no difficulties arose between the two parties in the canton of Berne. Then, however, following upon various circumstances, the Jurassian minority manifested a separatist tendency. It was thus that the Separatist Party launched the Initiative on which the electors belonging to the two parties voted. At first glance this vote only appeared to touch upon a question of procedure, but in reality it concerned the very heart of the matter, as it was very evident that the adversaries of the plebiscite were opposed to any separation, whilst its partisans were in favour of the constitution of a Jurassian canton, and thus, of a scission with Berne.

It had already been foreseen that the Initiative launched by the Separatists would be rejected by the *German-speaking* party of the canton of Berne, but what proved very interesting were the results of the voting in the Bernese Jura, the French-speaking district in the canton of Berne. As we have already stated, the Initiative was rejected by the Jurassians themselves, by 16,000 as against 15,000 votes. Furthermore, it is indicative that the Separatists, who only obtained 15,000 votes, had had their Initiative supported by as many as 21,000 signatures. This means that hundreds of citizens, who, for reasons of prestige, for economic motives or for reasons connected with public opinion in their small towns, although they had not dared to refuse their signature publicly, had cast a "no" into the secrecy of the ballot-box. Finally, we learn that of the seven Jurassian districts, four rejected the Initiative.

The conclusion may therefore be drawn that separatism is not borne on the crest of a deep wave of opinion and that it has now, so to speak, "lost the rubber".

Nevertheless, the fact must not be overlooked that, in the Bernese Jura, the votes were pretty well equal, and that three districts voted definitely in favour of the separatist Initiative. Thus, a problem subsists. It could be solved, however, if the victors and the vanquished in this Referendum joust were to make an effort with a view to regaining the means whereby they can once more live together in harmony. As a matter of fact, up to now, it has always proved possible, in Switzerland, to find

a solution for the problems of various minorities. It is up to the Jurassians and the Bernese, therefore, to show us that they also are capable of surmounting divisions and of living together in peace and amity. This is the sincere wish of their other Confederates.

VARIOUS.

Flight-Captain Otto Heitmanek has left "Swiss-air" to go into retirement. He was the only remaining pilot who had been with the Company since its foundation in 1931. Heitmanek was born at Ragaz in 1903 (of Zurich origin), and in 1925 entered the pilots school, after which he became a military pilot. He was for three years employed as "Verkehrspilot" in the United States of America. During his employment with "Swissair" Heitmanek has flown 5,302,784 kilometres and has been in the air about 19,000 hours. (A.T.S.)

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In the month of June 1959 Switzerland has exported 3,344,000 watches, or 555,000 more than in June 1958, the value of which amounts to 93,900,000.—francs; (June 1958: 90,100,000.—francs). (A.T.S.)

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The World Health Organisation is to build a new headquarters in Geneva. It was decided at the World Health Assembly to accept an offer of loans totalling £2,500,000 from the Swiss Federal and Geneva Governments. (A.T.S.)


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During the recent Federal Gymnastic Festival in Basle 27,555 litres of milk were consumed. (A.T.S.)

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Negotiations between Danish Government circles and representatives of Swiss Banks have led to the conclusion of an Agreement, according to which the Kingdom of Denmark will float a 4½ per cent loan of 50 million francs in Switzerland. A Swiss banking consortium has taken this loan over.



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