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# The *Rerum Novarum* Terrace Restaurant – New Questions About Corporatism, Democracy, and Milieu Catholicism in Switzerland Between 1891 and the 1950s

Thomas Zaugg

The 1935 World Expo in Brussels was experienced by visitors as a cultural arms race between states and world views. An article in a Swiss architecture magazine noted with disapproval that every single part of the exhibition sought to represent a larger totality,<sup>1</sup> and the *Vie catholique* pavilion was no exception. It was designed as a Catholic church building with six golden towers. Built by Henry Lacoste, whose style is difficult to categorize in terms of architectural tradition, the structure welcomed visitors under four cupolas, but the lower part of the church housed a profane terrace restaurant. It bore the famous name of *Rerum novarum*, after the first Papal social encyclical of 1891. The mundane sounds of the restaurant provided the foundations, as it were, for *Vie catholique*.

An examination of three contemporary sources reporting about the *Rerum novarum* restaurant is highly instructive. The Austrian writer Rudolf Henz, an active figure in the cultural scene of the Austrian corporatist state until the *Anschluss* in 1938, retrospectively described the restaurant as «a solid café».<sup>2</sup> Henz had even jokingly asked the waiter whether there was another café nearby called *Quadragesimo anno* – the title of the second social encyclical published in 1931. In his memoirs, Henz trivialized conditions in Austria by writing of a «little Christian corporatist state [Ständestaat] at home».

Unlike Henz, Swiss architect and art historian Peter Meyer, the editor of the architecture and art magazine *Das Werk*, could find nothing favorable to say about the restaurant.<sup>3</sup> A Protestant, he wrote that the Catholic church of the *Vie catholique*

<sup>1</sup> Von der Brüsseler Weltausstellung und ihrer schweizerischen Abteilung, in: Schweizerische Bauzeitung, 106 (1935), 66–68, esp. 67f.

<sup>2</sup> Rudolf Henz, *Fügung und Widerstand*, Graz/Vienna 1963, 227. – Most of the quotations in this article have been translated into English.

<sup>3</sup> P. M. [Peter Meyer], *Weltausstellung in Brüssel 1935 – Landesausstellung in Zürich 1938*, in: *Das Werk*, 22 (1935), 348–354, esp. 349f.

pavilion was a «true hell of tastelessness», adding that the encyclical of 1891 had argued that «tasteless modernism» must be opposed «at all costs». Was it a contradiction, then, that this modern terrace restaurant was called *Rerum novarum*?

Josef Scherrer, a leading figure in the Swiss Christian social movement, visited the restaurant in Brussels on the evening of July 29, 1935, with Emma Keller, the head of the Social Women's School in Lucerne, whom he had invited to dinner.<sup>4</sup> According to his meticulously kept diary, Scherrer and Keller discussed how one could improve connections with the social movement – by which he possibly meant the Christian social movement – and with industrial circles.

These three perspectives on the *Rerum novarum* restaurant bear witness both to the state of political Catholicism during the 1930s and to the way it was perceived. It is the discrepancies between the three that are particularly worthy of attention. Rudolf Henz regarded the restaurant as an architectural embodiment of what had, in his view, been implemented in Austria. He saw that the Brussels restaurant was situated «midway» between the extremes of the 1930s – between the Swastikas and Stalin, he wrote, and between the «sons of exceedingly wealthy British conservatives» whom he had previously encountered as «upper-class communists» at Oxford raving about the Soviet Union.<sup>5</sup> In this way, Henz trivialized the Austrian corporatist state as a small-scale implementation of the Papal encyclical *Quadragesimo anno*. He appears not to have perceived the problem with Austria's authoritarian tendencies or probably viewed them as a middle course between the extremes of his time. This notion of Austria's «tragic» descent into dictatorship, seemingly through no fault of its own, was widespread at the time.

The anti-Catholic article by the Swiss Protestant Peter Meyer similarly resorts to stereotypes, although in a different vein, when it falsely describes the encyclical *Rerum novarum* as directed against modernism. While Meyer regarded the restaurant's materialism as contradictory to Catholic spirituality, he also suggested that the purpose of the restaurant was to soften up its patrons for subsequently attending church: «The visitors – still under the spell of the lower story's restaurant atmosphere – piously bend the knee to the strains of the organ.»<sup>6</sup>

Both attitudes are now well represented in the secondary literature, and the ambivalences of the Christian corporatist state in Austria and under other Catholic-inspired regimes have been studied for years.<sup>7</sup> Comparative presentations of

<sup>4</sup> Staatsarchiv St. Gallen, W 108/1, Journal of Josef Scherrer, July 29, 1935, 921.

<sup>5</sup> Henz, Fügung (see note 2), 225–227.

<sup>6</sup> P. M., Weltausstellung (see note 3), 350.

<sup>7</sup> On the corporatist state in Austria, see two recent works: Emmerich Tálos/Florian Wenninger, *Das austrofaschistische Österreich 1933–1938*, Vienna 2017; Carlo Moos (ed.), *(K)ein Austrofaschismus? Studien zum Herrschaftssystem 1933–1938*, Vienna 2021.

the authoritarian tendencies of the «third way» of the 1930s and the subsequent success story of Christian democracy in Europe after 1945 have been the subject of large collected volumes.<sup>8</sup> Scholars have also sought to reveal anti-Catholic stereotypes. Sweeping generalizations about a Catholic variant of fascism have been largely unviable since international researchers like Martin Conway began urgently demanding a change of perspective in the early 1990s.<sup>9</sup>

In contrast, there is still too little discussion of what to call the development possibilities and mediation paths of Catholic politicians not only between conservatism and liberalism, but also between trade unionism and the free market, from the 1930s to the 1950s.<sup>10</sup> A case in point is Josef Scherrer, a member of the Swiss Christian social movement, and his dinner with Emma Keller of the Social Women's School in Lucerne. Their conversation centered «mainly on the formation of better contacts with the social movement and the industrial sector».<sup>11</sup> While it is impossible to reconstruct the exact details of what was discussed, this paper nevertheless seeks to follow this trail in the widest sense. An interpretation of attempts by various Catholic politicians to form contacts with the industrial sector and establish a new economic and social order culminates in the leading concept of democratic corporatism, which may be of interest for the discourse about both the Swiss and the international Catholic renewal movement during the inter-war years and about the democratization of Catholic parties around the year 1945.

### *Post-1935 Swiss Catholicism as an open field of inquiry*

The history of political Catholicism in Switzerland between 1891 and the late 1920s has been well studied.<sup>12</sup> As a clear political minority, Switzerland's conservative Catholics used the right of referendum to assert themselves from the 1870s onwards. In 1891, the year in which *Rerum novarum* appeared, the first

<sup>8</sup> David Hanley (ed.), *Christian Democracy in Europe. A Comparative Perspective*, London/New York 1994; Tom Buchanan/Martin Conway (eds.), *Political Catholicism in Europe 1918–1965*, Oxford 1996; Martin Conway, *Catholic Politics in Europe 1918–1945*, London/New York 1997; Emiel Lamberts (ed.), *Christian Democracy in the European Union (1945/1995)*, Leuven 1997; Michael Gehler/Wolfram Kaiser/Helmut Wohnout (eds.), *Christian Democracy in 20<sup>th</sup> Century Europe*, Vienna/Cologne/Weimar 2001.

<sup>9</sup> Martin Conway, *Building the Christian City: Catholics and Politics in Inter-War Franco-phone Belgium*, in: *Past & Present*, no. 128 (1990), 117–151.

<sup>10</sup> See, notably, James Chappel, *Catholic Modern. The Challenge of Totalitarianism and the Remaking of the Church*, Cambridge/London 2018.

<sup>11</sup> Staatsarchiv St. Gallen, W 108/1, Journal of Josef Scherrer, July 29, 1935, 921.

<sup>12</sup> For an overview with references to the varied literature, including that contained in the series «Religion – Politics – Society in Switzerland», see Urs Altermatt, *Konfession, Nation und Rom. Metamorphosen im schweizerischen und europäischen Katholizismus des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts*, Frauenfeld/Stuttgart/Vienna 2009.



conservative Catholic was elected into the Federal Government, which had previously been made up solely of the liberal majority. In 1912, the conservative Catholics founded a national party structure, defeating such regressive circles as the representatives of the canton of Fribourg in the process. As an external expression of this defeat, the new party called itself not the *Catholic*, but the *Conservative People's Party*. Their declared goal was to serve as a force for conservative progress and to work interdenominationally in fields such as state welfare, as the Pope had demanded in 1891. To a large extent they remained a milieu party; however, until the late 1920s the Conservative People's Party was dominated by a core of moderate politicians from Central Switzerland together with representatives of the Christian social movement from the larger cities. In national politics they functioned as a conservative «sidecar» of the liberal majority. By then they had won a second seat in the Federal Government – a consequence of the large general strike of 1918 which caused the middle class to close ranks against the political left, which was increasingly perceived as revolutionary.

The picture is less clear for the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s. Like other countries, such as Belgium, Switzerland exhibited a generational break towards the end of the 1920s.<sup>13</sup> The younger generation of Catholic politicians sensed a new dawn and made its presence felt with a more vigorous political Catholicism which one could describe as militant. Josef Widmer, who portrayed the young conservative movement in Switzerland until 1935, wrote of a kind of new culture war in which the auspices for Catholicism were more favorable than in the *Kulturkampf* of the 1870s.<sup>14</sup> Right-wing circles within the Conservative People's Party criticized the old party elites for their policy of adapting to the liberals. They espoused a more forceful anti-socialism and a blend of romantic corporatist thought and anti-democratic notions of renewal that is difficult to define.<sup>15</sup> This swing to the right, which was supported in Fribourg by the financially powerful Federal Councilor Jean-Marie Musy, had great appeal for many of the party's young members. Musy, elected to the Federal Council as a consequence of the 1918 general strike, was uniquely successful in addressing the younger generation's concerns.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Conway, Building (see note 9), 122.

<sup>14</sup> Josef Widmer, Von der konservativen Parteienachwuchsorganisation zur katholischen Erneuerungsbewegung. Die Schweizer Jungkonservativen in den dreissiger Jahren, licentiate thesis, University of Fribourg, 1983, 187.

<sup>15</sup> Joseph Jung, Katholische Jugendbewegung in der deutschen Schweiz. Der Jungmannschaftsverband zwischen Tradition und Wandel von der Mitte des 19. Jahrhunderts bis zum Zweiten Weltkrieg, Fribourg 1988; Franziska Metzger, Die «Schildwache». Eine integralistisch-rechtskatholische Zeitung 1912–1945, Fribourg 2000.

<sup>16</sup> Chantal Kaiser, Bundesrat Jean-Marie Musy 1919–1934, Fribourg 1999; Daniel Sebastiani, Jean-Marie Musy (1876–1952), un ancien conseiller fédéral entre rénovation nationale et régimes autoritaires, doctoral thesis, University of Fribourg, 2004.

Conversely, the older conservatives from Central Switzerland found themselves on the losing side for a time. Their policy of conciliation towards liberalism, which had been dominant in Switzerland at least since the 1890s, came under fire within the party.<sup>17</sup> Leading Catholic publicists developed new strategies building on *Quadragesimo anno* in 1931, opposing liberalism with unprecedented vehemence and calling for a new state order. Both in the German-speaking and francophone parts of Switzerland, the Christian social wing formulated relevant corporatist postulates, with which it spoke for the entire party at times. In francophone Switzerland, more strenuous efforts were made than elsewhere to implement corporatist reorganization in individual cantons.<sup>18</sup> Many elite party members sought to support this renewal for the sake of internal unity. This involved a delicate balancing act: While the Christian social wing wanted to play a more active role with its postulates in shaping the party's stance on social issues, the young conservatives entered into an alliance with the radical right-wing Frontists, most of whom were the same age as themselves, and in 1935 demanded a kind of conservative revolution in the Swiss state by means of an initiative for total revision of the constitution. Unlike other European countries, where Catholicism prevailed in state-building or had to come to an arrangement with totalitarian conditions, Switzerland experienced an open democratic conflict about renewal in political Catholicism.<sup>19</sup> The initiative for the total revision, which was officially supported but very critically debated by the party, was unequivocally rejected by the voting population in 1935.

The development of the Catholic renewal movement after 1935 is still a matter of uncertainty.<sup>20</sup> The networks that needed to be reestablished – following the

<sup>17</sup> Markus Hodel, *Die Schweizerische Konservative Volkspartei 1918–1929. Die goldenen Jahre des politischen Katholizismus*, Fribourg 1994; Claudia Glaus, *Die Schweizerische Konservative Volkspartei 1929–1935. Zwischen Erneuerung und Tradition: eine Orientierungskrise*, licentiate thesis, University of Fribourg, 2000.

<sup>18</sup> Bernard Prongué, *Catholicisme social, corporatisme et syndicalisme chrétien en Suisse romande 1888–1949*, Porrentruy 1968; Roland Ruffieux, *Le mouvement chrétien-social en Suisse romande 1891–1949*, Fribourg 1969.

<sup>19</sup> Peter Stadler, *Die Diskussion um eine Totalrevision der schweizerischen Bundesverfassung 1933–1935*, in: *Schweizerische Zeitschrift für Geschichte*, 19 (1969), 75–169.

<sup>20</sup> With few exceptions, no larger study has to date been made of Switzerland during the period of transition after 1935. Lukas Röllli-Alkemper, *Die Schweizerische Konservative Volkspartei 1935–1943. Politischer Katholizismus zwischen Emanzipation und Integration*, Fribourg 1993; Thomas Gees, *Erfolgreich als «Go-Between»*. *Die Schweizerische Konservative Volkspartei (SKVP) 1943–1971*, in: Michael Gehler/Wolfram Kaiser/Helmut Wohnout (eds.), *Christian Democracy in 20<sup>th</sup> Century Europe*, Vienna/Cologne/Weimar 2001, 425–463; Lukas Röllli-Alkemper, *Swiss Conservative Catholics between Emancipation and Integration: The Conservative People's Party 1918–1945*, in: Michael Gehler/Wolfram Kaiser/Helmut Wohnout (eds.), *Christian Democracy in 20<sup>th</sup> Century Europe*, Vienna/Cologne/Weimar 2001, 208–223.

defeat of the young conservatives and the resignation of Musy, one of their role models, the year before<sup>21</sup> – are still awaiting systematic study. The history of political Catholicism does not become clearer until after the end of World War II, but even then it appears only as the end result of an intermediate phase of which the specifics are unknown.<sup>22</sup> The left or Christian social wing, which was dominant in the major cities, gained increasing influence on the national party after 1945. Government social legislation, which had long been opposed as an example of the encroaching state, was supported by the conservative Catholics against the background of Christian social teaching. Political Catholicism endorsed old-age and disability insurance and, albeit passively, also supported a direct federal tax. The party also renamed itself towards the end of the 1950s and, as the Conservative Christian Social People's Party, shifted more and more to the left into the center of the Swiss political spectrum.

Years ago the theory was put forward that the integration of conservative Catholics after 1935 was related to the Nazi threat, which dissolved the «ambivalences of the preceding decade».<sup>23</sup> While it is true that some young Catholics were formed into supporters of the state by the conservative Catholic Federal Councilor Philipp Etter's program of spiritual national defense («geistige Landesverteidigung»), directed against totalitarianism, corporatist ideas of renewal were being formulated by Etter during the same period of spiritual national defense in the second half of the 1930s.<sup>24</sup> The notion of changing Switzerland's traditional liberalism in the core field of economic policy was not lost as a result of national cohesion; rather, it became part of a new identity negotiated between liberals, conservative Catholics, and Social Democrats.<sup>25</sup>

So what exactly happened to Swiss political Catholicism between 1935 and the 1950s? The Austrian economist Joseph Schumpeter once surmised that Switzerland had been fortunate enough to be spared major internal ruptures<sup>26</sup> – thus one might think that the question has little relevance for the international history

<sup>21</sup> Jean-Marie Musy was later called «a kind of Frontist general» by Heinrich Walther, an important Catholic conservative of Central Switzerland. Thomas Zaugg, *Bundesrat Philipp Etter (1891–1977). Eine politische Biografie*, Basel 2020, 283. Musy had resigned from government as early as 1934. Subsequently he made unsuccessful attempts to intervene in politics again and maintained contacts to Nazi Germany during World War II. Sebastiani, Musy (see note 16), 735–937.

<sup>22</sup> Urs Altermatt (ed.), *Schweizer Katholizismus im Umbruch 1945–1990*, Fribourg 1993.

<sup>23</sup> Altermatt, *Konfession* (see note 12), 73.

<sup>24</sup> Zaugg, *Bundesrat Etter* (see note 21), 266–308.

<sup>25</sup> Oliver Zimmer, «A Unique Fusion of the Natural and the Man-made»: The Trajectory of Swiss Nationalism, 1933–39, in: *Journal of Contemporary History*, 39 (2004), 5–24.

<sup>26</sup> Joseph A. Schumpeter, *Kapitalismus, Sozialismus und Demokratie* [1942], 10<sup>th</sup> ed., Tübingen 2020, 352.

of political Catholicism. But this is not the case. Prominent Swiss Catholics participated in the international discourse on renewal in the aftermath of *Quadragesimo anno*, especially by commenting on what was happening in Italy, Austria, Portugal, and Spain.<sup>27</sup> In particular, the debate about corporatism as a new economic order was influenced by Swiss voices. This article argues that, after 1935, an understanding of democratic corporatism gradually became prevalent in Swiss political Catholicism in the course of exchanges with the liberal majority – a development that was interrupted by the war in some of Switzerland's neighboring states and did not come to fruition until after 1945.

The term «corporatism» here denotes the influence of associations on legislation and on negotiations between employers and trade unions of social partnership solutions that are independent of the state. It goes without saying that, in the 1930s, corporatism was also a synonym for authoritarian approaches whose active promoters included Catholic politicians. These ultimately boiled down to a kind of economic dictatorship in which the economy was to be controlled by compulsory state associations while left-wing trade unions, in particular, were banned. However, the liberal interpretation of corporatism has a certain tradition in Switzerland, where the state exercised very little influence until the late nineteenth century and liberal trade associations saw to the organization of their respective sectors of the economy.<sup>28</sup> As the following remarks will show, the Swiss case is an example of the change in significance which the Catholic variant of corporatism underwent until the 1950s.<sup>29</sup> The first half of the twentieth century, which has often been called the golden age of milieu Catholicism, proves on closer examination to have been an age in which the milieu was gradually overcome and corporatism exhibited democratic tendencies. By focusing on questions of the economy, which had for a long time been regarded as a materialistic, un-Catholic issue, some protagonists were able to move from milieu Catholicism into the elites of the trade associations and form ties with liberal circles.

<sup>27</sup> Stephan Aerschmann, *Katholische Schweizer Intellektuelle und der italienische Faschismus (1922–1943)*, Fribourg 2002.

<sup>28</sup> For an introduction, see Erich Gruner, 100 Jahre Wirtschaftspolitik. Etappen des Interventionismus in der Schweiz, in: *Schweizerische Zeitschrift für Volkswirtschaft und Statistik*, 100 (1964), 35–70.

<sup>29</sup> One of the pitfalls of interpreting corporatist models since the 1920s is revealed in the challenge of translating the terms into other languages. The different models can vary greatly – consider, for example, the «berufsständische Ordnung» with its bottom-up conception vs. the authoritarian «Ständestaat». However, English generally tends to subsume them all under the same term of «corporatism». This article seeks to highlight the importance of the differences between the various concepts and the struggle for interpretational sovereignty that ensued around them. To avoid ambiguity, the original German terms (e.g. «Ständestaat», «Korporationenstaat», «berufsständische Ordnung», or «Berufsgemeinschaft») are occasionally provided in parentheses alongside the translation in quotations from original sources.



*The toils of democratic corporatism*

Josef Scherrer, who visited the *Rerum novarum* terrace restaurant in Brussels in 1935, was one of the foremost Catholic politicians who sought to implement corporatism in Switzerland. His case illustrates both the tendency to greater openness and the limits of the democratic Catholic model of corporatism in Switzerland until 1935. Between the 1920s and 1950s, Scherrer was a member of the national parliament and led the Christian social movement. He also served as president of the International Federation of Christian Trade Unions from 1920 to 1928. The corporatist, vaguely worded economic and social program of the Conservative Party of 1929 bore Scherrer's stamp. In 1931, few months after the promulgation of *Quadragesimo anno*, a postulate – albeit one that was little discussed – about the establishment of a corporate order of professional associations («berufsständische Ordnung») was submitted by Scherrer in his capacity as a National Council member.<sup>30</sup> In 1937, two years after the defeat of the young conservatives and their bid for a total revision of the constitution, he presented a set of «guidelines» for a corporate order to a committee of the Commission for Economic Legislation in the national parliament.<sup>31</sup> Alongside the Fribourg professor Jacob Lorenz, former Social Democrat and founder of the *Aufgebot* renewal movement, Scherrer was undoubtedly one of the most active corporation theorists in Switzerland.<sup>32</sup> His activity, however, should not be confused with activism. Unlike Lorenz, he did not couch his postulates in the rhetoric of conservative upheaval and academic jargon that was typical of the time. Rather, he presented them in a way that was conducive to consensus, although clearly disassociating them from both fascism and tendencies that could have led the Christian social movement away from the Conservative Party, either into an independent party or into the left wing. Scherrer remained focused on his goal of left-leaning policies within the Conservative Party, as became clearly evident in late 1937, when he admonished his party for threatening to adopt «reactionary policies»<sup>33</sup> and declared that the Christian social group must therefore strive with all its strength to give the party a social orientation.

<sup>30</sup> Printed in Josef Scherrer, *Errichtung der berufsständischen Ordnung*, Winterthur 1933.

<sup>31</sup> Josef Scherrer, *Berufsständische Ordnung. Richtlinien für eine Schweizerische Lösung*, n.p. 1937.

<sup>32</sup> Markus Zürcher, Jacob Lorenz. Vom Sozialisten zum Korporationentheoretiker, in: Aram Mattioli (ed.), *Intellektuelle von rechts. Ideologie und Politik in der Schweiz 1918–1939*, Zurich 1995, 219–238. Within the Conservative People's Party, Jacob Lorenz was soon regarded as an outsider because of his solo action. Repudiations of Lorenz can be found, for example, in Otmar Gehrig, *Das Christlichsoziale in der Politik unter besonderer Berücksichtigung des Christlichsozialen Arbeiterbundes der Schweiz 1919–1939*, Winterthur 1969, 85–89; Zaugg, *Bundesrat Etter* (see note 21), 284f.

<sup>33</sup> Staatsarchiv St. Gallen, W 108/1, Journal of Josef Scherrer, December 9, 1937, 3646.

The Christian social members of the Conservative People's Party identified themselves as an alternative to the left-wing trade union movement. They often avoided strikes and class struggles and, in this sense, their corporatism served the cause of conflict reduction.<sup>34</sup> For Scherrer, however, this was not the sole purpose of corporatism, which he believed should realize the vision of a Christian social economic democracy. One of the reasons this issue was so important to the Christian social group was that the Conservative People's Party had supported the Swiss government's deflation policy in the 1930s and exercised socio-political restraint during the economic crisis.<sup>35</sup> The call for corporatism was their way of making amends and at the same time relieving the state of interventionist tasks.

However, Scherrer's own corporatist outlines never gained popularity and he seemed unable to settle on a specific form of corporatism.<sup>36</sup> He developed the vague idea of an «economic council», which would be composed of volunteer coalitions of professional associations and function alongside existing political institutions, such as the Federal Government and the Federal Assembly. The economy would regulate itself largely independently of the state by means of professional associations, although Scherrer always emphasized the importance of welfare state legislation. The political left likewise favored the formation of an economic council in 1933, but simultaneously stressed that such a body should not replace parliament.<sup>37</sup> Scherrer's outlines gave no impression of implying this. His corporatism was based on «the existing state of national policy».<sup>38</sup> It did not claim to organize every detail of the market economy – it was able «at need to cover only one part of our political economy or our country», and joining the «professional communities [Berufsgemeinschaften]» remained «voluntary».

<sup>34</sup> This rule is confirmed by exceptions such as the metalworkers' strike in Zug in 1922. Renato Morosoli describes the Christian social participation in the strike and the simultaneous rivalry with the left-wing trade union movement: Renato Morosoli, «... überall Hemmnisse und Chikanen». Die Metallwarenfabrik Zug vor, während und nach dem Ersten Weltkrieg, in: *Tugium*, 36 (2020), 157–196.

<sup>35</sup> Rölly-Alkemper, *Konservative Volkspartei* (see note 20), 251, 257.

<sup>36</sup> Scherrer's outlines are summed up in Gehrig, *Das Christlichsoziale* (see note 32), 156–163.

<sup>37</sup> Max Weber, *Korporationen?*, in: *Gewerkschaftliche Rundschau für die Schweiz*, 25 (1933), 315–322, esp. 322.

<sup>38</sup> Scherrer, *Berufsständische Ordnung* (see note 31), 2f. «In our view, the state is not to be organized by means of professional associations [gar nicht berufsständisch aufzuorganisieren]», Scherrer explained in an economic commission in 1936. «Nor do we want to eliminate the state completely. We simply do not want it to intervene in the economy itself, at least not where private enterprise can do so without detriment to the common good. We expect the state to regulate economic and social processes and we expect it to perform the task of balancing the interests between the different professions and branches of the economy.» Staatsarchiv St. Gallen, W 108/1, Journal of Josef Scherrer, November 27, 1936, 2593f.



In the 1930s, Scherrer found himself between several internal and external fronts with his hybrid concept and his policies. Within the party, his economic and social program was vehemently criticized by conservatives because it rejected capitalism.<sup>39</sup> At times, however, he also had to contradict «hotheads» on both sides of the party in St. Gallen who sought to drive a wedge between the conservatives and the Christian social group.<sup>40</sup> Conversely, Scherrer was accused of a «policy of duping» when the Christian social movement invited liberal government representatives to their assemblies.<sup>41</sup> Scherrer gradually became estranged from the francophone Catholic corporatists who followed Abbé André Savoy and were influenced by the conservative Musy. He had rebuked Savoy as early as 1920, arguing that corporatism ought not to be a regressive-authoritarian movement, «a reprisal of medieval forms».<sup>42</sup> However, in 1932 he also voiced criticism of the Catholic youth movement with its «stormtroopers [Sturmscharen]»: «I only hope that the new movement doesn't get out of hand with its radical language!»<sup>43</sup> In his view, the role of the party youth in general was disquieting. In 1934, he complained that their policies would give them «the character of a separate party».<sup>44</sup> After an internal discussion about the total revision of the constitution projected by the young conservatives, the Frontists, and the *Aufgebot* movement, he summarized that one could see «the beginning of the movement, but not its end».<sup>45</sup> Scherrer disassociated himself more clearly than other members of his party from the radical right-wing Frontists, of whom he took a «very skeptical» view.<sup>46</sup> He was also concerned that young Catholic journalists in particular rejected the 1934 state security act on the grounds that this law supported the «system» alone – many «seem to be flirting intensely with the Frontist movement and no longer appear to have too much sympathy for democracy».<sup>47</sup> In 1933, Scherrer had experienced the Nazi seizure of power while a spa guest in Bad Wörishofen and had described the beginning Nazi *Gleichschaltung* as «a continuous chain of thought policing [Gesinnungsterror] and acts of violence».<sup>48</sup>

Despite all these disclaimers in the factional struggles of the early 1930s, and after some hesitation, Scherrer wrote articles and delivered lectures supporting

<sup>39</sup> Staatsarchiv St. Gallen, W 108/1, Journal of Josef Scherrer, December 6, 1928, 35.

<sup>40</sup> Staatsarchiv St. Gallen, W 108/1, Journal of Josef Scherrer, August 26, 1933, 268.

<sup>41</sup> Staatsarchiv St. Gallen, W 108/1, Journal of Josef Scherrer, November 4, 1932, 251.

<sup>42</sup> Quirin Weber, *Korporatismus statt Sozialismus. Die Idee der berufsständischen Ordnung im schweizerischen Katholizismus während der Zwischenkriegszeit*, Fribourg 1989, 49.

<sup>43</sup> Staatsarchiv St. Gallen, W 108/1, Journal of Josef Scherrer, September 10, 1932, 236.

<sup>44</sup> Staatsarchiv St. Gallen, W 108/1, Journal of Josef Scherrer, April 7, 1934, 321.

<sup>45</sup> Staatsarchiv St. Gallen, W 108/1, Journal of Josef Scherrer, April 14, 1934, 324.

<sup>46</sup> Staatsarchiv St. Gallen, W 108/1, Journal of Josef Scherrer, September 5, 1933, 269.

<sup>47</sup> Staatsarchiv St. Gallen, W 108/1, Journal of Josef Scherrer, January 27, 1934, 299.

<sup>48</sup> Staatsarchiv St. Gallen, W 108/1, Journal of Josef Scherrer, 1933, 263.

the corporatist total revision of the constitution in September 1935.<sup>49</sup> In so doing, like many established members of the party, he primarily defended the party's cohesion. He was not surprised, however, when the initiative failed at the ballot.<sup>50</sup> In his view, the party and, above all, the young conservative proponents of the initiative had failed to think the issue through adequately in advance. «The result is pitiful for us Catholics», he noted in his journal after the defeat at the polls on September 8, 1935.<sup>51</sup> He thought the young conservatives had «charged off too soon» with their initiative. The alliance with the Frontists was condemned as a mistake within the party.<sup>52</sup>

Born in 1891, Scherrer was too young in the 1930s to resist the question of renewal, but too old to be a member of the radical young conservatives. As early as December 1933, he had made clear during a meeting of the central committee of the Conservative People's Party:

«In a vote in the discussion, I express the thought that we must reject the corporative state [Korporationenstaat], and with it, dictatorship. The corporate order [berufsständische Ordnung] in our sense is the consummation of democracy. It cannot be imposed from above, it must grow from below. The path of urgency suggested by the liberals must be rejected. A reform of values [Gesinnungsreform] is a fundamental prerequisite for the corporate order.»<sup>53</sup>

Thus Scherrer contradicted some liberals who sought to fight the crisis as quickly as possible by means of emergency legislation. However, it was not without reason that he directed this vote primarily at members of his own party. In early 1934, Scherrer supported an interdenominational «civil working group» which was to have discussed the suggestions for renewal based on a «minimal program».<sup>54</sup> However, some within the party sabotaged these efforts. Scherrer was shocked when a fellow party member, the prominent Catholic publisher Otto Walter, tried to push through a program for the total revision of the constitution within the party. Scherrer not only found Walter's revision proposal to contain «very reckless demands», he also warned against its «pronounced National Socialist character».<sup>55</sup>

<sup>49</sup> For some remarks about his misgivings, see Stadler, *Diskussion* (see note 19), 143f., note 175.

<sup>50</sup> A few days after its defeat, Scherrer, who continued to promote corporative development, wrote a paper about Switzerland's economic crisis without mentioning corporatism even once. Josef Scherrer, *Die Wirtschaftskrise in der Schweiz. Materialien über die bestehende schwere wirtschaftliche Krise und die aus ihr erwachsenden Notstände in der schweizerischen Bevölkerung*, St. Gallen 1935; Staatsarchiv St. Gallen, W 108/1, Journal of Josef Scherrer, September 14, 1935, 1034f.

<sup>51</sup> Staatsarchiv St. Gallen, W 108/1, Journal of Josef Scherrer, September 8, 1935, 1012.

<sup>52</sup> Staatsarchiv St. Gallen, W 108/1, Journal of Josef Scherrer, September 17, 1935, 1047.

<sup>53</sup> Staatsarchiv St. Gallen, W 108/1, Journal of Josef Scherrer, December 20, 1933, 282.

<sup>54</sup> Staatsarchiv St. Gallen, W 108/1, Journal of Josef Scherrer, April 14, 1934, 324.

<sup>55</sup> Staatsarchiv St. Gallen, W 108/1, Journal of Josef Scherrer, April 11, 1934, 323.

Scherrer maintained his policy of engaging in open discussion while avoiding hasty actions in the international Catholic community as well. In a study group which met in September 1932 to discuss the postulates of *Quadragesimo anno* and which comprised representatives from Austria, Germany, and Switzerland, he suggested also inviting representatives from the Netherlands, Belgium, and France as well as additional Catholic social movements from Germany.<sup>56</sup> In 1935, Scherrer attended the Fifth Congress of the International Catholic Union for Social Service in Brussels, where he also visited the *Rerum novarum* restaurant at the World Expo. The conditions in Germany and Austria apparently signified a break in the international conversation of Catholic circles: Scherrer's task at the congress was to represent the German-speaking world, since Austrian representatives would not have been trusted and inviting anyone from Germany was completely impossible.<sup>57</sup> Despite his reserved nature, Scherrer was well received in Belgium. Some members of the congress praised him for having criticized the Austrian corporatist state in a prior statement.<sup>58</sup>

Given his international reputation, it is surprising that Scherrer often plays second fiddle in the secondary literature on the Swiss corporatists.<sup>59</sup> In the Conservative People's Party, he took part in several consultations on the introduction of corporatism. But others, like the university professor Jacob Lorenz, Abbé André Savoy, the journalist Carl Doka, or the young conservative Hermann Cavelti, had a higher public profile and thus became the subject of more research in later years. Probably, too, the debate has hitherto concentrated on young ideologues and prominent journalists within the corporative movement because a diagnosis of the time could be formulated much more easily and trenchantly through the lens of

<sup>56</sup> Staatsarchiv St. Gallen, W 108/1, Journal of Josef Scherrer, September 6, 1932, 234.

<sup>57</sup> Staatsarchiv St. Gallen, W 108/1, Journal of Josef Scherrer, July 27–28, 1935, 917f. «I have hitherto been aloof from this international association», Scherrer noted in his journal. «The Belgians were very anxious for me to participate.» The Belgian organizers could not invite anyone from Germany «owing to the conditions created by National Socialism», while the situation in Austria was «also such that Belgian circles were reluctant to invite an Austrian personality as a keynote speaker».

<sup>58</sup> Staatsarchiv St. Gallen, W 108/1, Journal of Josef Scherrer, July 29–31, 1935, 922f. Scherrer had accused the Austrians of a wrong interpretation of corporatism because they had disbanded the Christian trade unions. Abbé Kozłowski of the Catholic Social School in the Polish city of Poznań reported to Scherrer that this criticism had created some controversy in Vienna at an international conference on the study of the corporate order.

<sup>59</sup> Comparatively few mentions of Josef Scherrer are listed in the index of the central study on the Swiss Catholic corporatists by Quirin Weber. Weber, *Korporatismus* (see note 42), 218. Other worthwhile portrayals of the Christian social movement and Scherrer are by Gehrig, *Das Christlichsoziale* (see note 32); Walther Baumgartner, *Die Christlichsoziale Partei des Kantons St. Gallen 1911–1939. St. Galler Arbeiterschaft und Angestellte zwischen Katholizismus und Sozialismus*, St. Gallen 1998. However, these studies end with the year 1939.

these figures. The picture becomes more complex, however, when we take into account the Catholic conservatives from Central Switzerland, many of whom took a more reluctant stance on corporatism, and conciliatory elements among the Christian social representatives from German-speaking Switzerland.<sup>60</sup>

Josef Scherrer in particular facilitates a broader perspective. He brought to the international debate an understanding of corporatism which he also had to defend within Switzerland against internal opposition and simplification. He had long years of practical experience of trade union work, which is attested by the minutes he recorded in his journal of negotiations with employers and employees. The areas where he worked included his home canton of St. Gallen, where the history of the textile industry and its professional associations spanned centuries. St. Gallen was also the region with one of the most vigorous civil discourse across all middle-class party lines about adopting corporatism on a cantonal scale.<sup>61</sup> As a trade unionist, Scherrer was equally aware of the real problems during the crisis and of the difficulty of revising economic legislation. He also deplored the fact that the clergy still had too great a say in shaping conservative Catholic policies. After Abbé Savoy's withdrawal from politics in 1936, Scherrer wrote in his journal: «Of course, the case of Savoy is deeply regrettable. After all, what he wanted most was to be the pacemaker of the corporate order [berufsständische Ordnung]! Here, too, Savoy's optimistic attitude did not mix well with the reality of business life. I don't want to judge harshly. But it has been confirmed once again that clergymen are not good managers.»<sup>62</sup>

Remarks such as these indicate a slight tendency to break free from the milieu in the new field of economics. As an economic theorist, Scherrer seemed to be trying to emancipate himself from the Church; however, his expertise in the field of corporatism was frequently no greater than that of Abbé Savoy. Scherrer was no stranger to competitive thinking when it came to trade unionism and world-views. He displayed no particular willingness to enter into coalitions with other middle-class parties, perhaps partly to avoid weakening his position within the party any further. Until 1935, Scherrer's attempts to introduce Catholic corporatism into the modern era and the existing political discourse between the parties failed because of the limitations of the milieu. Additionally, his early warnings against authoritarian distortions of corporatism too often fell on deaf ears. Nevertheless, in St. Gallen he sought to make contact with liberal corporatists whom he

<sup>60</sup> Scherrer was in close contact with the Catholic conservatives from Central Switzerland. Hodel, *Konservative Volkspartei* (see note 17), 488.

<sup>61</sup> Baumgartner, *Christlichsoziale Partei* (see note 59), 209–212.

<sup>62</sup> Staatsarchiv St. Gallen, W 108/1, Journal of Josef Scherrer, November 11, 1936, 2545.



credited with «true pioneering work in this area».<sup>63</sup> Occasionally he expressed approval of left-wing trade unionists who struck him as being «very decent and very statesmanlike».<sup>64</sup> He was also fond of quoting the British economist John Maynard Keynes, of whom he said: «Owing to the increasingly obvious failure of their basic liberal principles, social scientists who originally proceeded from a position of liberalism find themselves forced by reality to espouse an organizational form that essentially boils down to the corporate order [berufsständische Ordnung].»<sup>65</sup>

### *Corporation over denomination?*

While these biographical diagnoses must be treated with all due caution, there are apparently some indications that a pragmatic course of restraint increasingly gained the upper hand in political Catholicism after 1935. This, however, is not attributable solely to the influence of individuals like Scherrer. Its roots go back further in time. As noted above, corporative procedures had a long tradition in Switzerland. In this weak state, deliberately kept small by its liberal founders in 1848, it was influential trade associations such as the Swiss Federation of Commerce and Industry, founded in 1870, that were responsible for organization and legislation in the business sector. These parastatal organizations, which also debated about social legislation, were its cornerstones and provided an ever firmer foundation for the economy, a foundation which many Catholics too had in mind when speaking about corporatism. While the discourse had been catholicized during the 1930s in the wake of *Quadragesimo anno*, it was the time of the founding of the large associations during the nineteenth century that remained etched in the long-term memory among many Catholics. In this sense, previous interpretations have drawn an exaggerated distinction between the corporatist elements of Switzerland's political and economic system and the corporatism pursued by Catholics.<sup>66</sup> By strongly emphasizing the history leading up to developments during the 1930s, writers like Quirin Weber merely stress that corporatism «during the inter-war years represented a programmatic, ideological means of integration that should not be underestimated».<sup>67</sup> However, without postulating an inventor of one or the other brand of corporatism, we should instead assume an interplay between different corporatist-democratic movements. The strategically astute pragmatists

<sup>63</sup> Quoted after Baumgartner, Christlichsoziale Partei (see note 59), 213, note 134. Scherrer was referring to the liberal August Schirmer, on whom see below.

<sup>64</sup> Staatsarchiv St. Gallen, W 108/1, Journal of Josef Scherrer, October 6, 1936, 2429.

<sup>65</sup> Scherrer, Errichtung (see note 30), 7.

<sup>66</sup> Röllli-Alkemper, Swiss Conservative Catholics (see note 20), 223.

<sup>67</sup> Weber, Korporatismus (see note 42), 148.

of political Catholicism, knowing that they would not be able to attain the corporative order without help from established liberal forces, certainly referenced the intellectual edifice of Swiss corporatism with its long history.

Given the tradition of professional associations in Switzerland, it is no surprise that – with the exception of the suggestions of Catholic corporatists from francophone Switzerland – the specific concepts subsumed under the humdrum term of «corporatism» during the 1930s were not formulated by the Catholic renewal movement. Rather, concrete draft proposals were drawn up by the initially broad-based «New Switzerland» alliance and the liberal National Councilor and president of the Swiss Trade Association, August Schirmer.<sup>68</sup> The draft proposals met with widespread interest because their social and democratic thrust was beyond question. In particular, Schirmer's «St. Gallen Draft» had wide appeal. Even left-wing circles had some sympathy for it, while they generally tended to regard corporatism as a form of clerical fascism or as a capitalist attempt to curb or even eliminate the trade unions.<sup>69</sup>

Edmund Schulthess too, a liberal and the leading economist in the Federal Government, spoke out in favor of a change in the constitution. In 1933, he regarded this step as being «fairly undisputed» in order to «limit absolute freedom of commerce and trade and transfer competences to the federal government and professional organizations [Berufsorganisationen]».<sup>70</sup> Schulthess recognized the signs of the times, which were generally unfavorable to the old economic liberalism: «More and more postulates are calling for a corporative absorption of these

<sup>68</sup> «New Switzerland» soon slid noticeably to the right under new leadership. Walter Wolf, *Faschismus in der Schweiz. Die Geschichte der Frontenbewegungen in der deutschen Schweiz, 1930–1945*, Zurich 1969, 35–38. Among the extensive literature about broad-based corporatist movements, see, in particular: Kenneth Angst, *Von der «alten» zur «neuen» Gewerbepolitik. Liberkorporative Neuorientierung des Schweizerischen Gewerbeverbandes (1930–1942)*, Bamberg 1992; Oliver Zimmer, *Die «Volksgemeinschaft». Entstehung und Funktion einer nationalen Einheitssymbolik in den 1930er Jahren in der Schweiz*, in: Kurt Imhof/Heinz Klegger/Gaetano Romano (eds.), *Konkordanz und Kalter Krieg. Analyse von Medienereignissen in der Schweiz der Zwischen- und Nachkriegszeit*, Zurich 1996, 85–109; Christian Werner, *Für Wirtschaft und Vaterland. Erneuerungsbewegungen und bürgerliche Interessengruppen in der Deutschschweiz 1928–1947*, Zurich 2000; Adrian Zimmermann, *Klassenkampf und Klassenkompromiss. Arbeit, Kapital und Staat in den Niederlanden und der Schweiz, 1914–1950*, doctoral thesis, University of Lausanne, 2012.

<sup>69</sup> In his *Die korporative Idee in der Schweiz* (1934), the economist Paul Keller wrote with approval about Schirmer's corporatist venture, which, in his opinion, did not contradict democratic principles. The Swiss Federation of Trade Unions' periodical *Die Arbeit*, for example, published a favorable review of this work and followed Keller's assessment of Schirmer's corporative ideas. *Die Arbeit*, no. 4, April 1934, [4].

<sup>70</sup> Quoted after Jeremias Blaser, *Das Vernehmlassungsverfahren in der Schweiz. Organisation, Entwicklung und aktuelle Situation*, Wiesbaden 2003, 192.



associations into the system of state administration.»<sup>71</sup> However, Schulthess did not show any initiative of his own. In 1935, shortly before Schulthess's resignation, Josef Scherrer noted in his diary: «Schulthess wanted none of the corporate order [berufsständische Ordnung].»<sup>72</sup>

For the reasons outlined above, Scherrer regarded the fact that the liberals had submitted corporatist concepts of their own as competition and as an incentive to accelerate the development of his own Christian social project.<sup>73</sup> But some conservative Swiss Catholics responded slightly differently. Although they knew that the adoption of corporatism into the program of their own party in 1929 predated both *Quadragesimo anno* and these discussions by the liberal side, it is no exaggeration to state that many Catholic conservatives were waiting for the liberal side to prove them right. Some of them hoped that their Catholic milieu idea, of which – unlike the proactive Christian social members – they had made only the most superficial study, could become an interdenominational matter.

A good example of this wait-and-see attitude with a positive bias towards revision is provided by Philipp Etter, who, like his friend Scherrer of the Christian social movement, was born in 1891, the year of *Rerum novarum*.<sup>74</sup> A Catholic conservative from the Central Swiss canton of Zug, Etter made his voice heard in 1933 and 1934 with occasionally militant articles and writings in support of *Quadragesimo anno* and a Catholic renewal of the liberal Federal Republic.<sup>75</sup> In 1922, he was already a member of the governing council in Zug, and in 1930 he became a federal politician. A man from the lower middle class, Etter had attended the convent school in Einsiedeln and there encountered neo-Thomist as well as Christian social ideas of renewal that were in vogue in the years leading up to World War I. Unlike Scherrer, however, Etter had not closely dealt with the issue of corporatism before the 1930s. For a long time, he did not regard an actual renewal in the narrow sense as necessary. What has been almost completely disregarded by previous research is the fact that Etter fell between two stools, as it were, in the 1930s. In the conflict between the young conservatives and the old party officials,

<sup>71</sup> Quoted after *ibid.*, 144, note 355.

<sup>72</sup> Staatsarchiv St. Gallen, W 108/1, Journal of Josef Scherrer, February 15, 1935, 496.

<sup>73</sup> For example, Scherrer warned in January 1934: «I urgently call for the creation of a special project for the corporate order [berufsständische Ordnung], since the Catholics are falling behind because the liberals are peddling the so-called St. Gallen Draft.» Staatsarchiv St. Gallen, W 108/1, Journal of Josef Scherrer, January 11, 1934, 293.

<sup>74</sup> For an account on Etter's policies from 1929 to 1934, see Zaugg, Bundesrat Etter (see note 21), 145–223.

<sup>75</sup> Philipp Etter, *Die vaterländische Erneuerung und wir*, Zug 1933; Philipp Etter, *Die schweizerische Demokratie*, Olten/Konstanz 1934.

he identified himself somewhat ironically with the «‹medieval› guard [‹mittelalterliche› Garde]». <sup>76</sup> To counter the right-wing tendencies of the youth movement, which had been caused, among others, by the influence of the Action française in France, Etter had deployed the idea of an old Swiss proto-democratic tradition – the orderly Christian *Landsgemeinde* – as early as the late 1920s. <sup>77</sup> Seemingly in contradiction to this stance, in 1933 he, like many others in his party, initially called for a tactical cooperation on individual issues with the Frontists while preserving the party's autonomy and renouncing the centralism and racism of the Frontists. Etter explicitly regretted some of the statements he made during this time, presumably including his remarks to the annual general assembly of the Catholic Swiss Student Association in 1933:

«The liberal democracy of the nineteenth century is collapsing. But liberalism and socialism are not dead yet in Switzerland. If we want to overturn liberalism, then we, the strongest army, must stick together and rejoice when we receive help from the other side.» <sup>78</sup>

Although Etter intended this appeal to prevent the young conservatives from moving more closely with the Frontists, he showed much agreement here. In his private correspondence, however, Etter expressed deep concern about the rising of the right-wing youth. In early 1934, he wrote to his friend, Federal Judge Joseph Andermatt, of a «worrying» number of Frontists «even in our academic circles». <sup>79</sup> «In my view, the young will desert us in droves if there's nothing «going on» in our party», he wrote in May 1933. <sup>80</sup> However, there were definite limits to the amount of political entertainment Etter was willing to countenance: «Although I very much welcome a fresh and active movement, I see it as my task to prevent the radicalization of public life. The seeds and first beginnings of radical solutions can be seen everywhere and on all sides.» He rebuffed those Catholic circles in Zug that called for the prohibition of the left-wing May Day demonstrations. «I was able to dampen this movement in time by talking to the people.» Remarks such as these indicate a certain aloofness from exterminatory interpretations of corporatism. <sup>81</sup>

<sup>76</sup> Staatsarchiv Zug, P 70.376.2, Letter from Philipp Etter to Joseph Andermatt, January 10, 1934.

<sup>77</sup> Zaugg, Bundesrat Etter (see note 21), 121–124.

<sup>78</sup> Zuger Nachrichten, August 23, 1933. Documented moments of Etter's remorse about, among other things, statements from the 1930s, can be found in Zaugg, Bundesrat Etter (see note 21), 19, 194, 477–479, 665, 667, 715.

<sup>79</sup> Staatsarchiv Zug, P 70.376.2, Letter from Philipp Etter to Joseph Andermatt, January 10, 1934.

<sup>80</sup> Staatsarchiv Zug, P 70.376.2, Letter from Philipp Etter to Joseph Andermatt, May 9, 1933.

<sup>81</sup> An understanding of corporatism directed against the left-wing trade union movement was formulated in 1936 by the ultra-conservative Western Swiss writer Gonzague de Reynold in his travelogue about the Estado Novo in Portugal: «It [Portugal's corporative experience]

In March 1934, after the resignation of the intransigent Jean-Marie Musy from Fribourg, Philipp Etter was voted into the Federal Government. His rhetoric, already restrained before, became conciliatory after his election. One of Etter's first statements concerned August Schirmer's corporative «St. Gallen Draft». After talking to Etter, the leading liberal newspaper of Berne, *Der Bund*, wrote favorably about the «extensive congruence» between the corporatism of Etter and the «St. Gallen Draft»: «[Etter] wants to enable the corporative order [korporative Ordnung], not dictate it, and regards this restructuring as the work of an entire generation.»<sup>82</sup> Damian Bossard, the editor of the liberal newspaper *Zuger Volksblatt*, which had attacked Etter as an authoritarian figure, buried the hatchet after Etter's conciliatory ceremonial address in his home town of Zug: «Further discussions about the things that led to our mutual estrangement should now be unnecessary.»<sup>83</sup> On the day of his election into the Federal Government, the former president of the Conservative People's Party, Joseph Räber from Central Switzerland, had advised Etter to act moderately. As a senior member of government, he should abstain from using politically striking terms such as Catholicism, liberalism, socialism, and «corporatist state [Ständestaat]» unless he had «compelling reason» to do so.<sup>84</sup>

Certainly no decisive reformer, Etter was a somewhat hesitant friend of corporatism. For better or for worse, this occasionally almost conformist attitude was his hallmark: He was characterized more by a certain mediocrity than by the extremism which historians tended to impute to him for a time.<sup>85</sup> What is particularly interesting is the fact that Etter had friends in liberal circles and was on the

seems to show that, if corporative organization is to be possible, it must be accompanied by a general renewal of the state. It is difficult to conceive that it would establish itself without intervention by the power of the state. Corporative organization is unequal to its task unless all the germs of the class struggle are kept away from it. If this is not the case, it is distorted from the start and becomes a new source of socialist or communist agitation. But socialism and communism on the one hand and corporativism on the other side are irreconcilable elements: Either they kill it or it kills them. It is characteristic of the corporative order that, at least in the beginning, it manifests itself as a form of organization for economic and national defense in a moment of crisis.» Gonzague de Reynold, *Portugal*, Paris 1936, 319.

<sup>82</sup> E. Sch. [Ernst Schürch], Nach der zweiten Bundesratswahl, in: *Der Bund*, March 29, 1934.

<sup>83</sup> Staatsarchiv Zug, P 70.897, Letter from Damian Bossard to Philipp Etter, March 29, 1934.

<sup>84</sup> Staatsarchiv Zug, P 70.897, Letter from Joseph Räber to Philipp Etter, March 28, 1934.

<sup>85</sup> For some considerations of Etter's checkered record as well as his anti-Semitic stereotypes, see Zaugg, *Bundesrat Etter* (see note 21), 126–144, 447–450, 552–580, 701–715. Based partly on incorrect quotations, various historians have claimed that Etter had an affinity to eugenics. Georg Kreis, *Philipp Etter – «voll auf eidgenössischem Boden»*, in: Aram Mattioli (ed.), *Intellektuelle von rechts. Ideologie und Politik in der Schweiz 1918–1939*, Zurich 1995, 201–217, esp. 207; Alfred A. Häslar, *Redlicher Umgang mit der Geschichte*, in: *Der Bund*, December 21, 1995; Jakob Tanner, *Geschichte der Schweiz im 20. Jahrhundert*, Munich 2015, 241; Zaugg, *Bundesrat Etter* (see note 21), 610f.

lookout for liberals who shared the fundamentals of corporative thought.<sup>86</sup> For instance, in June 1933, he welcomed the fact that the liberal Federal Councilor Edmund Schulthess, while not abjuring the free economy, nevertheless took a step towards the «bound economy» desired by Etter.<sup>87</sup> In the same article, he was even more pleased with the remarks in parliament of one of his liberal colleagues, Brenno Bertoni, a freemason, who went further than Schulthess.<sup>88</sup> «Bertoni praised the Middle Ages with its corporations and its strong communal autonomy as the truly felicitous and felicitous time!» Had a Catholic conservative made such remarks, Etter noted, he would have been condemned as a reactionary not long before. In April 1933, Etter had mentioned a venture by the Protestant Fritz Joss from Berne, an industrial politician and the head of the «New Switzerland» alliance, in similarly laudatory terms.<sup>89</sup> Etter's support for the «St. Gallen Draft» and the «New Switzerland» movement contradicts the prevailing opinion of scholars in the 1990s that conservative Catholics clearly rejected the corporatist advances of the commercial middle class.<sup>90</sup>

In the view of Etter and other moderate Catholic corporatists, corporatism was an organic movement in which everyone should participate: «Incidentally, it is

<sup>86</sup> It cannot be denied that the relationship between liberalism and Catholic conservatism in Switzerland exhibited a certain master-servant dialectic. A priest friend suggested in October 1933 that Etter write a brochure explaining the principles of corporatism, and added jokingly: «Perhaps you could dedicate this little work to Federal Councilor Schulthess, so that he can no longer claim that he doesn't know what that is.» Staatsarchiv Zug, P 70.484, Letter from Wolfgang Eschbach to Philipp Etter, October 18, 1933. As the above remarks show, the liberal Federal Councilor Schulthess was well-informed about corporatism. In fact, in 1934 it was Schulthess whom Etter convinced, in a personal conversation before his election into the government, that he was a good, patriotic candidate. Zaugg, Bundesrat Etter (see note 21), 247. The *Aargauer Tagblatt*, the liberal daily newspaper of Schulthess's home canton, wrote in the run-up to Etter's election that he «finds his way from Christian thought to the important liberal values such as liberty and equality before the law as well as to Swiss democracy». *Aargauer Tagblatt*, March 27, 1934. On the sometimes parasitic relationship between conservatism and liberalism, see Thomas Zaugg, *Katholizismus und Biografie. Möglichkeiten einer Sozialgeschichte jenseits von «Ghetto», «Moderne» und «Antimoderne»*, in: *Schweizerische Zeitschrift für Geschichte*, 70 (2020), 196–218, esp. 210–215.

<sup>87</sup> –tt– [Philipp Etter], *Briefe aus dem Ständerat*, in: *Zuger Nachrichten*, June 16, 1933.

<sup>88</sup> Etter once discussed Aristotle and the epistle of Paul to the Romans with Bertoni (born 1860) over a glass of beer, as he related in a letter to his wife. Staatsarchiv Zug, P 70.490.12, Letter from Philipp Etter to Marie Etter-Hegglin, May 17, 1932.

<sup>89</sup> –tt– [Philipp Etter], *Der Vorstoß*, in: *Zuger Nachrichten*, April 3, 1933. In 1940, when Switzerland was surrounded by the Axis Powers after the fall of France, Etter remembered the «New Switzerland» movement. While he believed that adaptations to the new situation were necessary, he repudiated extremist circles that were calling for an adaptation to Hitler's «New Europe» – instead, he desired a broad discourse about renewal of the kind that had taken place at least during 1933, the first year of the existence of the «New Switzerland» movement. Zaugg, *Bundesrat Etter* (see note 21), 484f.

<sup>90</sup> Rölly-Alkemper, *Konservative Volkspartei* (see note 20), 248.



trade that has the best prerequisites for the corporate structure [berufsständische Gliederung]. Recent developments in legislation have restored substantial rights of co- and self-determination to the professional associations.»<sup>91</sup> Etter held that it was particularly important for the corporate order «to have nothing to do with denomination or politics, such that Catholic and Protestant professionals and representatives of different political stances come together in the corporation». In his programmatic publication *Die schweizerische Demokratie* (1934), Etter similarly argued that corporatism was already a reality in various aspects of life and commerce: «Bottom-up developments towards the corporation are already much further advanced than we realize. Everywhere we look, we find the beginnings of a corporate order [berufsständische Ordnung], although in some cases they still take wrong, distorted forms.»<sup>92</sup> He was especially gratified by the congratulations he received from liberal circles for this publication.<sup>93</sup>

Etter firmly believed that a corporatist renewal would ultimately occur, but his dominant conviction concerned what this renewal should *not* look like. This is laid out in a letter which he wrote in late 1933 on the subject of the «corporations movement».<sup>94</sup> To his friend Joseph Andermatt, who was more reserved on the matter, he explained: «I firmly believe that it is either the socialist state collectivism or the corporative order [Korporationen-Ordnung] that will prevail. Because I reject the former solution, I support the latter idea. It is my conviction that this idea will prevail not through state coercion, but inevitably and through an organic course of development.» Furthermore, Etter wrote that he desired «not the corporative state [Korporationenstaat], but the corporative organization of society [korporative Gliederung der Gesellschaft]». He criticized the dictatorial tendencies within the corporatist movement: «In my view, the opinion that corporative development [der korporative Aufbau] is possible only through dictatorship or centralization is based on incorrect premises. Just as wrong, in my opinion, is the view that it is possible today to encourage the development of a corporative structure [Entwicklung zur korporativen Gliederung] by means of state legislation.» Etter and Andermatt regarded attempts by the Fribourg corporatists to establish a new order in their canton as tactically inept or self-aggrandizing.

<sup>91</sup> –tt– [Philipp Etter], Der Vorstoß, in: Zuger Nachrichten, April 3, 1933.

<sup>92</sup> Etter, *Demokratie* (see note 75), 38.

<sup>93</sup> In March 1934, he wrote to his friend Andermatt: «A friend from Solothurn has just written to me that a liberal solicitor has read my brochure and declared that it is the best he has hitherto seen on this subject, even though he cannot fully endorse my religious stance. Similar assessments have also reached me from other liberal circles.» Staatsarchiv Zug, P 70.376.2, Letter from Philipp Etter to Joseph Andermatt, March 19, 1934.

<sup>94</sup> Staatsarchiv Zug, P 70.376.2, Letter from Philipp Etter to Joseph Andermatt, December 14, 1933.

The subsequent course of Etter's political career – he was to remain in the government from 1934 to 1959 – shows how much restraint he exercised in the question of corporatism, following through on his stated intention of awaiting the work of a generation. He himself displayed comparatively little initiative. Reading Dietrich von Hildebrand's biography of Dollfuss around 1935, he was interested in passages critical of National Socialism as well as in certain generally worded passages about Christian renewal – but his concern was also for the limits of any such renewal.<sup>95</sup> In his copy of the book, Etter underlined the statement that not all reactions to liberalism were beneficial and that they could «lead to new, grave errors».<sup>96</sup> As a conservative Catholic, he underlined too that the crucial final transformation would «not be effected by state measures».

The anti-democratism intermittently displayed by young Catholics made Etter skeptical of the total revision initiative of 1935.<sup>97</sup> Like Scherrer, he was concerned «that our side, in particular, is far too poorly prepared for the total revision. More important than the clamoring for revision on the outside would be quiet, but intensive and practicable preparations for the revision. We cannot accomplish the revision by ourselves. Nor are we here by ourselves.»<sup>98</sup> It was not democracy, but commercial life that Etter primarily wanted to restrain. The latter was to be protected from state intervention by corporatist means – and to this end, he held that the Catholic conservatives should «take into account the present distribution of power and formulate our demands in such a way that we can successfully mobilize a majority in favor of them».

Around the year 1937, Etter wrote in an internal paper that there were only two possible solutions for the social crisis: «Socialization, nationalization, and finally

<sup>95</sup> Zaugg, Bundesrat Etter (see note 21), 291f.

<sup>96</sup> Indications that there were limits to Etter's anti-liberalism are ignored by some scholars, for example by Christian Koller in the case of Etter's annotations to the biography of Dollfuss: Christian Koller, *Autoritäres Vorbild im Osten? Die Schweiz und der österreichische «Ständestaat»*, in: Carlo Moos (ed.), *(K)ein Austrofascismus? Studien zum Herrschaftssystem 1933–1938*, Vienna 2021, 135–150, esp. 140.

<sup>97</sup> One year before this was put to vote in September 1935, Etter commented on the anti-democratic tendencies within the Catholic youth: «Our young people are shifting the emphasis onto a change in the organization of state power. But this is exactly where I believe we should not prioritize revisions.» Staatsarchiv Zug, P 70.376.2, Letter from Philipp Etter to Joseph Andermatt, September 3, 1934. Although initially skeptical, Etter expressed himself in favor of revision in 1935 even though he took a reserved view of the claims and timing of the specific initiative. At the party congress in January 1935, he stated that the party would not adopt «all the servitudes of the initiative». Vaterland, January 28, 1935. Etters attitude to the total revision initiative is described in Martin Pfister, *Die Wahl von Philipp Etter in den Bundesrat 1934. Ereignisse, Ideologien, soziales Umfeld*, licentiate thesis, University of Fribourg, 1995, 104–112; Zaugg, Bundesrat Etter (see note 21), 266–308.

<sup>98</sup> Staatsarchiv Zug, P 70.376.2, Letter from Philipp Etter to Joseph Andermatt, September 3, 1934.



communization, that is, the collectivization of society – or cooperation between capital and labor by means of a corporative or professional order [auf dem Wege korporativer oder berufsständischer Ordnung].»<sup>99</sup> Apodictic statements such as this indicate that the Catholic conservatives still tended to think they were on the one and only right side of history. They lived in the perpetual expectation of a Christian renewal, but this expectation was often nothing more than a cover for sitting on the fence, just as their Christian rhetoric was a cover for their own inability to achieve a new state order without the help of liberalism.

After 1935, therefore, even the younger Catholic conservatives increasingly adopted the roles of observers and commentators on what they saw as an unstoppable organic process. And the auspices did indeed look good. The 1937 peace agreement between the employers' association and the trade unionists in the mechanical engineering and metalworking industry was symbolic of the closing of ranks between the social partners in the face of the crisis. When the parliament debated the new sections on commerce for the constitution in 1938, the negotiating power of the trade associations was to be given added weight by allowing the state to declare their internal rulings to be obligatory within their respective branches of commerce. Although the introduction of these new sections came to nothing when the war broke out, many Catholic conservatives regarded these developments as steps on the long road towards a corporate order. Among the young conservatives, the temptation to count these steps as successes was particularly strong since this meant retrospective vindication for their own position. For Karl Hackhofer (born 1904), the peace agreement in the mechanical engineering and metalworking industry was situated along the developmental journey «between the collective labor agreement and the professional community [Berufsgemeinschaft]». <sup>100</sup> Hermann Cavelti (born 1899) described the peace agreement as a «socio-political event» that was «entirely in line with the corporate order [berufsständische Ordnung]». <sup>101</sup> Carl Doka (born 1896) regarded the declaration of general application of 1938 as a form of «corporate discourse [berufsständische Aussprache]» and «a minimum concession to corporate demands [berufsständische Forderungen]». <sup>102</sup> In a resolution of December 28, 1940, the Federal Government created the possibility of declaring the professional association's decisions to be

<sup>99</sup> Staatsarchiv Zug, P 70.923, Philipp Etter, *Wo stehen wir? Beurteilung der Lage*, [about 1937].

<sup>100</sup> Karl Hackhofer, *Berufsgemeinschaft. Ihr Zweck, ihre Form, ihre Verwirklichung*, Berne 1941, 24.

<sup>101</sup> Quoted after Weber, *Korporatismus* (see note 42), 197.

<sup>102</sup> Carl Doka, *Erziehung zur berufsständischen Aussprache*, in: *Schweizerische Rundschau*, 37 (1937/38), 885f., esp. 885.

generally applicable throughout the crisis-ridden hotel industry.<sup>103</sup> Martin Rosenberg (born 1908), secretary of the Conservative People's Party from 1941 to 1968, regarded this as a recognition of the «correctness of the corporate idea [Richtigkeit des berufsständischen Gedankens]» by the government.<sup>104</sup> Josef Scherrer, a member of the established generation, praised the labor peace of 1937 as the realization of a postulate of his Christian social colleagues even though they had not played a leading role in bringing about the consensus.<sup>105</sup>

The debate between the trade unionist left and the Catholic corporatists was also affected by these developments. What little common ground the two movements had shared around 1900 had been lost after recatholicization efforts intensified and parts of the political left became radicalized towards the end of World War I.<sup>106</sup> The left was deeply mistrustful of the Catholic conservative repudiation of fascism and other forms of authoritarian corporatist states.<sup>107</sup> However, parts of the political left gradually realized that it was no longer viable to hold conservative Catholics in suspicion of clerical fascism. Konrad Ilg, a Social Democrat who, as central president of the Swiss Metalworkers' and Watchmakers' Union, had negotiated the labor peace of 1937, drew the national parliament's attention to the supremacy of the authoritarian corporations in Germany and Italy in 1938. In response to an interjection by Karl Wick of the Christian social movement, Ilg conceded that these were «perhaps not the kind [of corporations] that you would

<sup>103</sup> Rölly-Alkemper, *Konservative Volkspartei* (see note 20), 253f.

<sup>104</sup> *Vaterland*, January 16, 1941.

<sup>105</sup> Baumgartner, *Christlichsoziale Partei* (see note 59), 213.

<sup>106</sup> Herman Greulich, a founder of the Social Democratic movement in Switzerland, who died in 1925, was the subject of retrospective veneration by many Catholic conservatives because he symbolized the pre-revolutionary phase of the political left. The conservatives could identify with Greulich's critiques of capitalism and liberalism and his simultaneous skeptical stance on mass strikes. Thus Philipp Etter praised Greulich in 1924 for describing the Middle Ages as the birthplace of bourgeois labor and liberty: «The man who attests this of the Middle Ages is none other than Greulich, the aged Swiss leader of the socialists. The more divided our modern conditions are, the more the experience of states and populations and the structure of society is dominated by an unbridled self-interest that destroys unity, the more mindful present and future generations will become of those high values that sustained the Middle Ages and fueled its great powers that drove culture and reconciled the estates.» Ph. E. [Philipp Etter], *Die Sendung des Mittelalters*, in: *Heimat-Klänge*, no. 18, May 4, 1924, 69f., esp. 70. An especially favorable mention of «Papa Greulich» can be found in *Zuger Nachrichten*, April 11, 1912. The young conservative Karl Hackhofer chose a quote by Greulich as the motto for his brochure *Berufsgemeinschaft* in 1941.

<sup>107</sup> Explicit disavowals were made, for example, by Scherrer of the Christian social movement, the conservative Etter, and the young conservative Hackhofer. *Staatsarchiv St. Gallen*, W 108/1, Journal of Josef Scherrer, December 20, 1933, 282; Etter, *Demokratie* (see note 75), 38; Hackhofer, *Berufsgemeinschaft* (see note 100), 13. In the meantime, the political left held onto its suspicions. *Volksrecht*, March 27 and 29, 1934; Max Weber, *Berufsgemeinschaft*, in: *Gewerkschaftliche Rundschau für die Schweiz*, 33 (1941), 275–278, esp. 277f.

want». <sup>108</sup> Max Weber, another influential left-wing trade unionist and politician, did not discount the possibility during World War II that the proposals of certain Catholic corporatists could weaken democracy and the welfare state alike, <sup>109</sup> but his warning was phrased almost as an appeal: «Surely we all want a Swiss solution, by which I mean a solution that does justice to the peculiarities of Switzerland and, most importantly, provides the maximum guarantee of safeguarding our democracy and freedom.» <sup>110</sup> The left increasingly signaled its willingness to conclude a party truce. In 1941, for example, the trade unionist and Protestant Emil Friedrich Rimensberger agreed «far from the former battleground of opinions» to a rehabilitation of the medieval «corporatist state [Ständestaat]» and the Papal social encyclicals. <sup>111</sup> The former Austrian chancellor Kurt Schuschnigg could «perhaps have averted the fate of Europe if he had adhered to the words of Pope Leo XIII and his successors», Rimensberger wrote. In 1943, Jean Möri, who later became central secretary of the Federation of Trade Unions, noted that the major parties had agreed to a postulate on «professional community [Berufsgemeinschaft]» by the Social Democratic National Councilor René Robert. <sup>112</sup> Möri wrote that, after some initial struggles, «the conclusion of a kind of political ceasefire» and «a time of cooperation» had been achieved since the start of the war.

<sup>108</sup> Quoted after Zaugg, Bundesrat Etter (see note 21), 306.

<sup>109</sup> In addition to accusing the Catholic conservatives of being anti-democratic, the left speculated that the Catholic conservatives were closer to capitalism than they cared to admit and were attempting to use corporatism to sabotage the state's welfare policies. The deflation policies of Jean-Marie Musy before his resignation in 1934 provides important context for this charge. Max Weber in particular emphasized that the trade unions could «never consent to the dissolution of state welfare policy into «voluntary agreements» between the participating trade associations, as the adherents of the corporative state [Anhänger des Korporationenstaates] would wish». Max Weber, *Gewerkschaften und Umbau der Wirtschaft*, in: *Gewerkschaftliche Rundschau für die Schweiz*, 26 (1934), 265–271, esp. 268f. On this matter, see also Ernst Nobs, *Solidarismus und Sozialausgleich als Sozialismus-Ersatz*, in: *Rote Revue*, 10 (1931), 353–359, esp. 355; Weber, *Korporationen* (see note 37), 322; Max Weber, *Der Kampf um die Neuordnung der Wirtschaft*, in: *Gewerkschaftliche Rundschau für die Schweiz*, 26 (1934), 133–141, esp. 135; Fritz Schmidlin, *Korporationen in der Schweiz*, in: *Rote Revue*, 14 (1935), 181–189, esp. 183.

<sup>110</sup> Max Weber, *Die Allgemeinverbindlicherklärung von Gesamtarbeitsverträgen*, in: *Gewerkschaftliche Rundschau für die Schweiz*, 33 (1941), 220–228, esp. 225. Weber's criticism was specifically directed at Karl Hackhofer's brochure *Berufsgemeinschaft*. Weber, *Berufsgemeinschaft* (see note 107), 277f.

<sup>111</sup> E. F. Rimensberger, *Von der Berufsgemeinschaft zur Ordnung der Wirtschaft*, in: *Gewerkschaftliche Rundschau für die Schweiz*, 33 (1941), 261–275.

<sup>112</sup> Jean Möri, *Burgfrieden und Berufsgemeinschaft*, in: *Gewerkschaftliche Rundschau für die Schweiz*, 35 (1943), 365–370.

*Open questions about a vanished concept*

To trace the history of Swiss corporatism and the perceptions of various Catholic politicians until the 1950s would take us too far afield. Compared to the enormous journalistic response it triggered, the concept remained fraught with far too many questions. The politicians mainly portrayed above, Josef Scherrer and Philipp Etter, had different commitments and yet agreed on one decisive point. Scherrer, who belonged to the Christian social movement, played an active role by wanting to implement corporatism in economic practice, an area in which he was more knowledgeable than many of his Catholic friends. Philipp Etter, a Catholic conservative with little experience in economic and trade union issues, took a more hesitant stance. He came to grips with corporatism much later than Scherrer. Etter never worked on a clear concept of corporatism and preferred to emphasize its longer-term «organic» enforcement. Yet it was clear to both Scherrer and Etter that only a democratically based corporatism could bring about social peace. In this respect, various Swiss Catholic corporatists are comparable to European Christian Democrats who were later in exile or in the Resistance. As Wolfram Kaiser has shown, the French trade unionist and journalist Louis Terrenoire, for example, wanted to reconcile corporatism with the «political regime founded on liberty» by supporting a «democratic corporatism» in 1939.<sup>113</sup>

In terms of corporatism, the second half of the 1930s was a time of transition. Few representatives of political Catholicism in Switzerland believed that corporatism had been achieved towards the end of the 1930s. A veteran observer, Karl Wick of the Christian social movement, was restrained in his comments. Fear of the Big State was clearly still widespread: For Wick, the fact that the state was taking an interest in the decisions of professional associations in 1938 and wanted to give them general validity more suited to a «purely state socialist economy» than to corporatism.<sup>114</sup> The respected liberal Albert Oeri agreed with Wick on this score: «Personally, I am particularly interested to see the development of the corporative possibilities contained in the proposal.» Oeri, like his «colleague Mr. Wick», felt that these possibilities were much more appealing than state socialism. It was likewise clear to Oeri that Manchester liberalism was a thing of the past.

Changing alliances, unresolved differences, and unaddressed shifts in meaning are part of the history of this discourse. Notwithstanding all the open questions

<sup>113</sup> Louis Terrenoire, *Corporatism and Democracy*, in: People and Freedom Group (ed.), *For Democracy*, London 1939, 185–209; Wolfram Kaiser, *European Christian Democrats in Exile in the United Kingdom. Socially Isolated and Politically Marginal*, in: Wolfram Kaiser/Piotr H. Kosicki (eds.), *Political Exile in the Global Twentieth Century. Catholic Christian Democrats in Europe and the Americas*, Leuven 2021, 29–50, esp. 44.

<sup>114</sup> Quoted after Zaugg, Bundesrat Etter (see note 21), 304f.



about these developments, the contexts and character sketches outlined above allow us to conclude that, in convoluted ways and with the participation of political Catholicism, a democratic form of corporatism was gradually asserting itself in Switzerland. During the post-war years, the professional associations played a crucial core role both in legislation and in the running of the economy. In 1984, the political scientist Peter Katzenstein provided a case study of Switzerland in his foundational work *Corporatism and Change*. In his view, Switzerland had one unique feature. Democratic corporatism had often developed under the influence of powerful trade unions in countries where the political left was strong. In Switzerland, in contrast, corporatism had been promoted by many middle-class protagonists, including Catholics.<sup>115</sup> Katzenstein therefore wrote: «This book argues that many roads lead to Rome.»<sup>116</sup>

This conclusion applies especially to political Catholicism in Switzerland if one considers that this road was characterized by the rhetoric of enmity on both sides: by anti-Catholic suspicions and polemical hostility from the socialists and liberals and by utopian fighting words from the Catholics. It was almost as though some Catholic politicians deliberately wanted to cling to the vague definition of corporatism. This was probably not entirely unintentional. In order to appear united as a minority, they rarely openly contradicted each other, and therefore did not sharpen their concepts in the struggle for the prerogative of interpretation within their own political milieu. Viewed from the outside, this arduous, protracted inner battle could hardly fail to raise eyebrows – and it provided opponents with more than one polemical weapon against the «backwardness» of political Catholicism.

In practical politics, however, Catholic politicians proved to be willing to adapt. Long-standing protagonists of the Christian social movement, along with moderate conservatives, not only constrained the influence of reactionary circles in their party, but succeeded in placating and fostering the young conservatives, some of whom had been radicalized by 1935, in ways that served their own interests. Research to date has been dominated by the conclusion that corporativism surely exercised an influence and brought new ideas, «but it did not itself set in motion the development that occurred after 1945».<sup>117</sup> This consensus is formulated a little too retrospectively. If one assumes that liberals, Catholic conservatives, and the political left alike took their own – ultimately corporatist – routes

<sup>115</sup> For some references to the discussion about Katzenstein's arguments, see Bernard Degen, *Arbeit und Kapital*, in: Patrick Halbeisen/Margrit Müller/Béatrice Veyrassat (eds.), *Wirtschaftsgeschichte der Schweiz im 20. Jahrhundert*, Basel 2012, 873–922, esp. 915–919.

<sup>116</sup> Peter J. Katzenstein, *Corporatism and Change. Austria, Switzerland, and the Politics of Industry*, Ithaca/London 1984, 33.

<sup>117</sup> Olivier Meuwly, *Korporatismus*, in: Stiftung Historisches Lexikon der Schweiz (ed.), *Historisches Lexikon der Schweiz*, vol. 7, Basel 2008, 414f., esp. 415.

towards the negotiating table at which models of social partnership were developed, one could interpret the democratic corporatism formulated by Catholic circles as, at the very least, an eye-opening concept. Although these developments progressed by small steps, for the Catholic milieu they were tantamount to the discovery of a new world. The ultimate objective of the corporatist order forced many conservative Catholics to venture out into the materialistic economy. For many this involved an intimate confrontation with the long-repressed question of big industry and organized labor. In the end, some Catholic politicians probably used corporatism as more of a metaphor than a policy – a form of political poetry with which they advanced into the field of economic issues.

A combination of interventionism on the part of the professional associations and restrained trade cycle policies implemented by the government characterized Switzerland's economic, political, and social course after 1945, even though the steadily growing influence of the associations was watched with distrust from various sides.<sup>118</sup> Corporatist lobbying had become the democratic norm. Nevertheless, it seems that it was no longer advisable to speak of corporatism. The term vanished from the political and scholarly discourse for a very long time; it was not until the 1970s that political scientists began to revive the concept of corporatism to describe democratic policies.<sup>119</sup> «Corporatism» seems unwilling to go away – either as a subject of inquiry or as a practice of governance», Philippe C. Schmitter and Wolfgang Streeck wrote in 1987.<sup>120</sup>

A preliminary question for future research concerns this mysterious disappearance of the word «corporatism» at the moment of its secret triumph. After 1935, when the corporatist wave had declined, was there a subsequent wave that built up almost unnoticed because it was less confessionally charged?<sup>121</sup> As early as 1937, the leading Catholic conservative Swiss newspaper *Vaterland* no longer thought it necessary to use the infamous term «corporate order [berufsständische Ordnung]»

<sup>118</sup> Degen, *Arbeit und Kapital* (see note 115), 899–903; Patrick Halbeisen/Tobias Straumann, *Die Wirtschaftspolitik im internationalen Kontext*, in: Patrick Halbeisen/Margrit Müller/Béatrice Veyrassat (eds.), *Wirtschaftsgeschichte der Schweiz im 20. Jahrhundert*, Basel 2012, 983–1075, esp. 1044–1051.

<sup>119</sup> Roland Czada, *Konjunkturen des Korporatismus: Zur Geschichte eines Paradigmenwechsels in der Verbändeforschung*, in: Wolfgang Streeck (ed.), *Staat und Verbände*, Opladen 1994, 37–64.

<sup>120</sup> Philippe C. Schmitter/Wolfgang Streeck, Foreword, in: Ilja Scholten (ed.), *Political Stability and Neo-Corporatism. Corporatist Integration and Societal Cleavages in Western Europe*, London/Beverly Hills/Newbury Park/New Delhi 1987, vii–viii, esp. vii.

<sup>121</sup> Weber speaks of a first wave after World War I and a second after the Great Depression. Weber, *Korporatismus* (see note 42), 199. For some remarks on the «renaissance» of corporatism during the 1940s, see Rölli-Alkemper, *Konservative Volkspartei* (see note 20), 254f.



as long as «the cause» itself was advancing.<sup>122</sup> The young conservative Karl Hackhofer published a brochure in 1941 about the «professional community [Berufsgemeinschaft]» – a term, already earlier used by Hackhofer and others, that eschewed the old battles for the correct understanding of corporatism.<sup>123</sup> Philipp Etter, in a speech given a year before the end of the war, celebrated the social partnership between employees and employers in very similar terms: Although he did not use the term «corporatism», he nevertheless alluded to it with every circumlocution.<sup>124</sup> Naturally, the liberals too had no interest in using the historically loaded term from the cabinet of horrors of the 1930s, preferring instead to speak of the social market economy or of a concordance democracy incorporating the important associations.

Another topic that was spotlighted in the first half of the twentieth century concerned the conservative Catholic attitude to the liberal economy. How did the conservative Catholics, who were simultaneously skeptical about the state, abandon their anti-commercial mindset? How much influence did the long marginalized faction of the urban Christian social movement have on this change? What were the main branches of commerce and the associations which conservative Catholics entered? There is no doubt that corporatism played an important interdenominational role in these questions. Scholars wishing to research the networks of Catholic politicians in associations, Catholic entrepreneurs, and Catholic business experts will have to place less emphasis on their contacts within the milieu than on those to the branches of the economy dominated by the liberals.

A third question concerns the collective biographies of the young conservatives of the 1930s and their political development after 1935. Apart from the years of the nineteenth-century culture war, no other generation of Catholics had rebelled against the liberal state on such ideologically comprehensive grounds. At the same time, the integration of this generation into the liberal market economy and into

<sup>122</sup> Vaterland, February 23, 1937.

<sup>123</sup> Hackhofer, *Berufsgemeinschaft* (see note 100).

<sup>124</sup> «The labor peace, which is one of the foundations of social harmony and thus a sacred good which also provides an important prerequisite for perseverance, is served in large portions of our national economy by the collective wage agreements supported by state authorities. The entrenchment in law of the wage agreements and their general character is a welcome advance in the development of our labor law and helps to ensure harmonious relations between employer and employee. I note with satisfaction that the tensions in these relationships were greatly eased even before the war, and even more so during the war. This was achieved by means of free mutual agreements that were subsequently sanctioned by the state in a subsidiary capacity.» Staatsarchiv Zug, P 70.109, Philipp Etter, *Die Schweiz im fünften Kriegsjahr*, speech at the Party Congress of the Swiss Conservative People's Party in Zug, May 7, 1944. For other speeches by Etter on this subject dating from 1943 and 1958, see Staatsarchiv Zug, P 70.99, P 70.288.

European post-war society after 1945 is without precedent.<sup>125</sup> Aside from the Cold War, what were the milestones of this integration story in the history of networks and events? What was the attitude of the corporative wing towards the demands for a stronger welfare state that became louder even within the Conservative People's Party after 1945? Did corporatist thought, that revenant of political and economic history, go in search of a new subject outside the economy?<sup>126</sup>

None of these questions can be studied without encountering democratic corporatism. As a leading concept, it is often more fruitful than milieu Catholicism or the notion of a Catholic ghetto. To paraphrase Peter Katzenstein: The central theme of corporatism, which was formulated from the 1920s onwards, caused many Catholics to find their way, not back to Rome, but to the world of the liberal economy – to the foundations of the *Rerum novarum* terrace restaurant – on which they were so heavily dependent.

*The Rerum Novarum Terrace Restaurant – New Questions About Corporatism, Democracy, and Milieu Catholicism in Switzerland Between 1891 and the 1950s*

In the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, both political Catholicism and liberal circles formulated various ideas for reforming the economy, state, and society under the term «corporatism». This article uses the Swiss discussion to shed light on the period after 1935, which has so far been neglected in the research literature. The core argument is that the confrontation of Catholic politicians with corporatist ideas cannot be interpreted solely against the background of the Austrian corporative state, but must also be understood as a conflictual and, in detail, often contradictory debate with liberal capitalist and trade union ideas, which in the medium term led out of the Catholic milieu. In this process, the idea of a democratically based corporatism shaped by the existing liberal business association structures played a decisive role.

Corporatism – democracy – milieu Catholicism – Switzerland – Catholicism – *Rerum novarum* – liberalism – economy – state.

*Das Terrassenrestaurant Rerum novarum – Neue Fragen zu Korporatismus, Demokratie und Milieukatholizismus in der Schweiz zwischen 1891 und den 1950er Jahren*

Unter dem Begriff «Korporatismus» formulierten in der ersten Hälfte des 20. Jahrhunderts sowohl der politische Katholizismus als auch liberale Kreise verschiedene Ideen zur Reform von Wirtschaft, Staat und Gesellschaft. Der vorliegende Beitrag beleuchtet anhand

<sup>125</sup> The professionalization of the party's organization also seems to be attributable to the influence of young conservatives. Thomas Gees reports (unsuccessful) attempts during the 1940s to expand the placid party secretariat. Gees, *Erfolgreich* (see note 20), 428f.

<sup>126</sup> Lukas Kunz of the University of Lausanne is currently writing a study on Martin Rosenberg, one of the most pronounced young conservatives to rise within the party elite during World War II. Martin Pfister formulated the argument that Rosenberg's «magic formula» of 1959 allocating seats in the Federal Government to the parties with the most votes – two liberals, two Catholic conservatives, two representatives of the Social Democratic Party, and one member of the Farmers', Traders' and Citizens' Party – represents the belated corporatist heritage of the 1930s. Martin Pfister, *Die Zauberformel – Erbe der dreissiger Jahre? Der Weg zur politischen Konkordanz*, in: *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, December 8, 1999. One could even argue that Philipp Etter's cultural policy in the 1930s was founded on corporative principles, depending on how broadly one wants to use the term corporatism. Zaugg, *Bundesrat Etter* (see note 21), 390–392.

der schweizerischen Diskussion die in der Forschungsliteratur bislang vernachlässigte Zeit nach 1935. Das Kernargument lautet, dass die Auseinandersetzung katholischer Politiker mit korporatistischen Ideen nicht allein vor dem Hintergrund des österreichischen Ständestaats interpretiert werden kann, sondern auch als eine konflikthafte und im Einzelnen oft widersprüchliche Aussprache mit liberal-kapitalistischen und gewerkschaftlichen Ideen verstanden werden muss, die mittelfristig aus dem katholischen Milieu hinausführte. In diesem Prozess spielte die Vorstellung eines demokratisch fundierten, durch die bestehenden liberalen Wirtschaftsverbandsstrukturen geprägten Korporatismus eine entscheidende Rolle.

Korporatismus – Demokratie – Milieukatholizismus – Schweiz – katholische Kirche – *Rerum novarum* – Liberalismus – Wirtschaft – Staat.

*Le restaurant en terrasse Rerum novarum – Nouvelles questions sur le corporatisme, la démocratie et le milieu catholique en Suisse entre 1891 et les années 1950*

Sous le terme de «corporatisme», tant le catholicisme politique que les milieux libéraux ont formulé, dans la première moitié du 20<sup>ème</sup> siècle, différentes idées de réforme de l'économie, de l'État et de la société. Le présent article s'appuie sur le débat suisse pour éclairer la période postérieure à 1935, jusqu'ici négligée dans la littérature de recherche. L'argument central est que la confrontation des politiciens catholiques avec les idées corporatistes ne peut pas être interprétée uniquement dans le contexte de l'État corporatiste autrichien, mais qu'elle doit aussi être comprise comme un débat conflictuel et, dans le détail, souvent contradictoire avec les idées libérales-capitalistes et syndicales, qui a conduit à moyen terme hors du milieu catholique. Dans ce processus, l'idée d'un corporatisme fondé sur la démocratie et marqué par les structures libérales existantes des associations économiques a joué un rôle décisif.

Corporatisme – démocratie – catholicisme de milieu – Suisse – Église catholique – *Rerum novarum* – libéralisme – économie – État.

*Il ristorante-terrazza Rerum novarum – Nuovi interrogativi su corporativismo, democrazia e ambienti cattolici in Svizzera tra il 1891 e gli anni '50 del secolo scorso*

Nella prima metà del XX secolo, sia il cattolicesimo politico che i circoli liberali formularono in termini di «corporativismo» diverse idee per riformare l'economia, lo Stato e la società. Questo articolo utilizza il dibattito svizzero per far luce sul periodo successivo al 1935, finora trascurato dalla letteratura. L'argomento centrale è che la confrontazione dei politici cattolici con le idee corporative non può essere interpretata solo sullo sfondo dello Stato corporativo austriaco, ma deve essere intesa anche come un dibattito conflittuale e, in particolare, spesso contraddittorio, con le idee liberali capitaliste e sindacaliste, che a medio termine condussero fuori dall'ambiente cattolico. In questo processo svolse un ruolo decisivo l'idea di un corporativismo su base democratica plasmato dalle strutture associative liberali esistenti.

Corporativismo – democrazia – ambiente cattolico – Svizzera – cattolicesimo – *Rerum novarum* – liberalismo – economia – stato.

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