

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

**Herausgeber:** Federation of Swiss Societies in the United Kingdom

**Band:** - (1937)

**Heft:** 817

**Rubrik:** Personal

### **Nutzungsbedingungen**

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. [Siehe Rechtliche Hinweise.](#)

### **Conditions d'utilisation**

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. [Voir Informations légales.](#)

### **Terms of use**

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. [See Legal notice.](#)

**Download PDF:** 31.03.2025

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

**LA POLITIQUE.  
Victoire nationale à Berne.**

Les partis bourgeois viennent d'obtenir, à Berne, une victoire significative.

Il s'agissait d'élire un membre du conseil administratif, ainsi qu'un président de la ville, en remplacement de M. Lindt, démissionnaire. Les deux élections étaient distinctes, car à Berne le président de commune est nommé par le peuple, et ses fonctions sont permanentes.

Le parti socialiste décida d'emblée de courir sa chance et de revendiquer aussi bien le siège vacant au conseil que la présidence de celui-ci. Comme nouveau conseiller, il proposait M. Fritz Schmidlin, secrétaire ouvrier; comme président, M. Robert Grimm, qu'il est inutile de présenter plus amplement à nos lecteurs, pour qui c'est une vieille connaissance.

De leur côté, les partis nationaux, après s'être concertés, désignèrent le candidat commun au siège vacant de conseiller administratif en la personne de M. Hans Hubacher, architecte, un technicien de valeur, qui a fait ses preuves et qui siège au conseil municipal. Pour la présidence de la ville, ils jetèrent leur dévolu sur M. Ernest Bärtschi, directeur des écoles, déjà membre du conseil.

Il faut avouer que la compétition s'engageait dans des conditions difficiles pour les nationaux.

D'abord, le mécontentement est assez général aujourd'hui et pousse nombre de citoyens vers les solutions extrêmes. A Berne, notamment, le chômage se fait encore durement sentir. Il est vrai que la ville fédérale avait déjà tenté, il y a vingt ans, l'expérience d'un régime rouge, et que cet essai n'avait pas été heureux, puisqu'il entraîna des dépenses démagogiques, un endettement excessif, et — corollaire inévitable — des augmentations d'impôts. Mais la mémoire des démocraties est souvent courte. On pouvait se demander si le courant ne serait pas favorable au parti révolutionnaire.

Et cela d'autant plus que celui-ci, par un habile camoufflage, s'efforce présentement d'apaiser les craintes des patriotes et de se donner des airs pacifiques et innocents. Ne risquait-on pas que maints électeurs se laissassent piper par les subterfuges des "lignes directrices"? On influence par la dangerense politique de la main tendue, qu'a esquissée le ministre-député Stucki

et qui divise le parti radical suisse? N'oublions pas que M. Stucki est Bernois, et qu'on le tient dans son canton pour une manière de grand homme méconnu. Il n'était donc pas exclu que certains radicaux, médués par le mirage de la concentration et de l'extension majoritaire, se crussent obligés à un beau geste envers l'extrême-gauche, ou, tout au moins, prissent la funeste résolution de s'abstenir.

Or l'enjeu était d'importance, puisque c'est bel et bien la majorité du conseil administratif qui se trouvait en cause. Les bourgeois sont en effet quatre sur sept dans cet aéropage: deux radicaux et deux membres du parti des paysans, artisans et bourgeois; si les rouges l'emportaient pour le siège à repourvoir, ils étaient maîtres de la place. Inutile d'ajouter qu'ils eussent pratiqué, comme jadis, une politique purement socialiste, sans plus s'inquiéter des naïfs qui leur auraient fait la courte échelle.

En ce qui concerne la présidence, la candidature de M. Robert Grimm était très difficile à combattre. Il faut reconnaître que M. Grimm est une personnalité de premier plan; de plus, en sa qualité d'administrateur, il s'est révélé adroit, consciencieux, parfaitement correct. C'était le point sombre du scrutin; et d'aucuns envisageaient même l'hypothèse où M. Hubacher l'emporterait comme conseiller, mais où M. Grimm accéderait néanmoins à la présidence.

La "Tagwacht" arguait du fait que M. Grimm est vice-président, et que ce serait lui infliger un affront immérité que de ne pas le hisser au premier poste. A quoi le "Bund" n'a pas eu de peine à rétorquer que le vice-président n'est pas désigné comme tel par le peuple, et que c'est par simple égard pour la minorité que cette charge a été attribuée au chef socialiste, sans que cela puisse le moins du monde préjuger de la décision populaire.

On voit, sur ce qui précède, que la bataille n'était point gagnée d'avance, et qu'il fallait un bel effort pour faire triompher la liste d'entente. Celle-ci l'a emporté, avec un très estimable total de suffrages. La ville de Berne, si profondément travaillée qu'elle soit par l'extrême-gauche, n'a pas voulu réitérer l'expérience de 1917. Ce résultat ne sera probablement pas sans répercussion sur la politique générale, qui subit en ce moment une grave crise.

Léon Savary.  
(Tribune de Genève.)

**A CITADEL OF NEUTRALITY.**

**The Swiss Citizen Army.**  
(The Times.)

**I. — FROM THE PERIOD OF THE PIKE.**

Recent events have awakened a new interest in the Swiss Army and the Swiss military situation. The rearmament race and the accompanying tension of international relations have inevitably affected all small countries in the danger area, and called into question their capacity to maintain their neutrality inviolate, while the building of the Maginot line along the French frontier has conjured up the picture of a fresh detour through a neighbouring country to avoid the barrier.

The development of mechanization, with its great extension of the range of movements, has strategically reduced the margin which separates an invader from potential objectives of importance. It has thus suggested that, to a mechanized invading force, a circuit through Swiss territory might no longer be so slow to affect the situation as it would have been in 1914-18. There is also the possibility, if an inroad succeeded, of air bases being established on that flank from which an attack could be delivered against various industrial centres in France, at present securely remote. From a British point of view, any renewed contemplation of intervention on the Continent must now consider the defences of Switzerland as well as of Belgium, because of the possible reaction on steps we might take. Beyond all these contingencies some measure of public interest here has been directed to the Swiss Army by the suggestion from certain quarters that this country might adopt the Swiss military system of short-time compulsory service at least for the recruitment of its Second Line forces. To gain some light on all these questions I took a recent opportunity of examining them on the spot, while on a visit to Switzerland.

*Fighting Qualities.*

There is no army more distinctive than the Swiss: in its tradition, composition, or function. It may be said to have won its spurs — or, rather, taken the enemy's — as a militia army. At Morgarten and Laupen in the first half of the fourteenth century the Swiss exposed the limitations of the heavily armoured man-at-arms when pitted against them on their own ground. Their victory at Sempach in 1386, again over superior numbers, finally freed them from the Austrian House of Hapsburg. Employing a 2ft. pike, they combined offensive and defensive power. In

the fifteenth century the way they defeated the forces of Charles the Bold of Burgundy at Grandson, Morat, and Nancy did even more than the English long bow in the Hundred Years War to end the long reign of cavalry.

This string of victories established the Swiss pikemen as the most formidable troops in medieval Europe. They profited by that reputation to become the most highly prized and ubiquitous professional soldiers in Europe, available to any State which could afford to employ them. Although the pride born of victory eventually led, at Marignano and Pavia early in the sixteenth century, to the downfall of a system which had lost adaptability, the Swiss soldier preserved his fighting qualities so well that he never lacked employment in the following centuries.

While the self-sacrificing devotion of Louis XVI's Swiss Guard is a familiar tale, it is not so well known that in the nineteenth century, when Switzerland regained her independence after Napoleon's fall, there were nearly 20,000 Swiss in the service of Charles X, and that they also provided large contingents for the armies of Naples and Rome, raised in complete regiments. If they demanded high pay they usually gave good value by their level of professional ability. This calling was eventually closed to them by the increasing development of nationalism throughout Europe and the accompanying tendency of the different countries to provide their own quantitative needs by conscription. Since then, as a Swiss officer humorously remarked to me, the foreign service of his countrymen "has changed its form, the napkin on the arm having replaced the sword in the hand." The tradition of professional service had to find a new channel, because there was no livelihood to be earned in soldiering at home.

*The Militia Basis.*

For there is no profession of arms in Switzerland, whose forces remained faithful to the oldest tradition by being, in contrast to the rest of Europe, maintained on a militia basis. While service is compulsory, it is of short duration: on being called up recruits do from two to three and a half months' training, according to their branch of the service, and in later years 13 to 16 days. The only whole-time element is a small corps of some 300 instructors. Every citizen is liable for military service, and at the age of 19 is examined and classified as fit for military service proper, fit for auxiliary service, or unfit for service. Those who do not render personal service pay a military tax. Liability to service lasts from the age of 20 to 48, although at 41 they

**PERSONAL.**

We extend hearty congratulations to Mr. E. A. Scheidegger, of the Polyglot Printing Co., who is celebrating on Monday next his 70th birthday anniversary.

M. Scheidegger was the Publisher of the first Swiss paper in this country, which appeared for the first time in October, 1900, under the name of "Rüti," its Editor being Friedrich von Känel. The paper which changed its size several times, was later discontinued.

During many years M. Scheidegger has taken a great interest in the Swiss Colony and especially in the Swiss Club (Schweizerbund). We wish him many happy returns of the day.

\* \* \*

The many friends of Mr. and Mrs. J. H. Berger, of 5, The Ridgeway, Stanmore, Mdx., will sympathise with them, Mr. Berger's father having died at the age of 72, in Pöhlern near Blumenstein, where he was for over thirty years a teacher.

\* \* \*

Mr. and Mrs. E. Büchi, 195, Gloucester Terrace, Hyde Park, wish to announce that the marriage of their Daughter, Jeannette, to Mr. Hermann A. Wirth, will take place on Sunday, July 18th, at 12.15 p.m., at Holy Trinity Church, Bishop's Road, Paddington, W.2.

\* \* \*

We express our best wishes for a speedy recovery to M. E. Glauser-Oggier, who is at present at the French Hospital, Shaftesbury Avenue, W.



When at HAMPTON COURT  
have Lunch or Tea at the

**MYRTLE COTTAGE**

Facing Royal Palace, backing on to Bushy  
Park between Lion Gate and The Green.

P. GODENZI, PROPRIETOR.

pass into the Landsturm, whose duties broadly correspond to those which are to be performed by our newly raised National Defence companies.

Out of a population of just over 4,000,000 the annual contingent amounts to some 25,000 men, and in addition some 150,000 trained men come up each year for the refresher courses. The militia basis as well as the readiness for service is emphasized by men keeping personal arms and equipment in their own possession. Cavalrymen have to maintain their own horses, which they purchase from the Government at reduced rates. A still more notable feature is the network of State-subsidized rifle clubs which train the youth of the nation to shoot. Every combatant soldier of the first line, or Landwehr — i.e., up to the age of 40 inclusive — has to belong to the rifle club where he is living and has to complete every year the regulation musketry course organized by it.

Men must already have become n.c.o.s before they can be selected to go through a course for cadet officers; this extends from 7½ weeks for the infantry to 3½ months for the artillery and air force; after being commissioned they must attend a recruits' course as lieutenants, and before promotion to captain must pass through a central school course besides doing a recruits' course in command of a company, squadron, or similar unit. Suitable officers are picked out to join the General Staff, doing a qualifying course of 10 weeks, and after appointment two successive courses of six and three weeks respectively. A certain number of officers are called up in rotation each year for General Staff work.

During peace time the highest rank in the Swiss Army is that of colonel, even though he may be commanding a division or an army corps. In such cases, however, he is officially termed "Colonel Divisionnaire" or "Colonel Commandant de Corps," and wears distinguishing badges of rank. A foreign visitor may be surprised at the number of higher appointments filled by non-professional officers, and also to find how highly educated many of them are militarily in comparison with reserve officers in other countries or Territorial officers here; but there seems less ground for such a feeling when one takes account of the courses they attend and the level of talent in the professions they tap. It is strange to a visitor, yet not surprising on reflection, to find that some of the ablest combatant officers are doctors in civil life. One of the higher commanders I met was a surgeon of international reputation, who is occasionally called from his military headquarters to carry out some specially difficult operation at the hospital near by.

(To be continued).