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Articles in the SAHS Review are available in full text in
America: History and Life (EBSCO) and Historical Abstracts (EBSCO).
Dedicated to Marlene Brown-Bieler, Gottlieb Brunner, Heinz Egger, David Gogniat, Charles Probst, and all those Swiss children whose stories will never be heard and for whom justice will never be found.

Switzerland’s Banished Children

by Una Suseli O’Connell

Hail, Holy Queen, Mother of Mercy
Our life, our sweetness and our hope.
To thee do we cry
Poor banished children of Eve.
To thee do we send up our sighs,
Mourning and weeping in this valley of tears.

~ Salve Regina

Over a one hundred year period a practice known as verdingen (indentured servitude) operated in Switzerland. Children were removed from their families and sent to work on farms. It is estimated that between 1860 and 1960, one hundred thousand children were verdingt in this way, a quarter of them in the Canton of Bern. Local parishes paid farmers a monthly allowance to provide disadvantaged children with board and lodging. Although some treated their charges well, countless children suffered terrible hardship over many years. A veil of silence fell across entire communities as clergy, social workers and villagers chose to ignore the widespread abuse. Teachers who reported that children were being ill-treated often found that their contracts were not renewed at the end of the school year.
I was born in Switzerland and grew up in England. As an adult I lived, worked, and raised a family in the town of Biel, near Bern. Yet, in all those years, I never heard mention of the Swiss Verdingkinder. It was not until April 2000 that I read an article in The Guardian titled The Vanishing. I mentioned it to my Swiss father-in-law, who told me that two half-brothers from his father’s first marriage had been verdingt when their mother died. The youngest child, a girl, was not given away, and grew up with him and his brother in the second marriage. Something similar had happened in my own family. My grandmother, Rosa, was the only child of her father, Benedicht’s second marriage. She grew up with her half-sister Bertha, whose mother had died when

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1 Frances Stonor Saunders, “The Vanishing” (The Guardian Weekend, April 15, 2000)
she was three years old. Bertha never married and worked as a laundress at hotels on the French Riviera and in the sanatoriums of Davos. My mother and I used to visit Aunt Bertha in Basel before we boarded the night train to Calais. Her apartment was crowded with sofas and ottomans, upholstered in shades of olive and tobacco velvet and everything was bathed in a warm, butter-yellow light.

Bertha Gilomen died in 1966 and my mother, Lea, and her brother, Bobi, were named as the sole heirs in her handwritten will. The lawyer’s will, however, listed twenty-three family members, all of whom were making a claim on my great-aunt’s estate. In a letter to Lea, Bobi wrote: *I had no idea that any of these people existed.* I was astonished by this remark. How is it possible for so many people from one family to vanish from living memory? I returned to the Gilomen family tree in search of clues. Bertha and Rosa’s father was married for thirteen years to his first wife and she gave birth to six children before she died in 1885. What became of Bertha’s five siblings?

I have found that it is extremely difficult to conduct genealogical research in Switzerland. There is no equivalent to www.ancestry.com and the Bernese State Department carefully monitors and controls all documented information. Swiss passport holders may visit the archives three times a year, although there are no copying facilities available and photography is forbidden. In 1997, I telephoned the parish of *Hoechstetten* in Bern and requested a copy of my grandfather’s death certificate. There was a moment of silence, followed by an audible intake of breath, and I was informed that such information was not available. Death, the woman told me in a tone of undisguised indignation, is a strictly personal matter.

There is a fine line between privacy and secrecy in Switzerland. Sixty-five percent of the country is mountainous, and this, in many ways, has shaped the sociology of its people. Communities are often isolated from one another and survival, especially in winter, requires a resilient and resourceful nature. People work hard and are wary of outsiders.
The village of Adelboden in the Bernese Oberland is where my mother went skiing when she was a young girl and it is where, in 1959, I was christened in the village church. During my childhood, we spent every Christmas holiday in Adelboden, together with Uncle Bobi, Aunt Heidi, and my cousin, Christine. The Chalet Marlis is still offered as a holiday let and in 2015, I decided to spend a week there while I investigated the mystery of Aunt Bertha’s lost siblings. In Stauffacher’s bookshop in Bern I came across *Versorgt und vergessen*\(^2\) (filed away and forgotten) an oral history, documenting the experiences of forty former *Verdingkinder*. The stories were compiled and published in 2008 by Swiss historians, Marco Leuenberger and Loretta Seglias.

In our early years in Adelboden, I stayed with my aunt and uncle and my parents were guests at the *Hotel Schoenegg*. At some point, my teenage cousin began to resent sharing her room with an eight-year old and so, in the winter of 1967, I was sent to the local children’s home. The *Kinderheim Helios* was a dark and gloomy chalet and I wasn’t at all convinced by my parents’ assurances that it would be huge fun living with lots of other children. Every day we would load our skis onto a sledge pulled by a donkey and walk through the village. If I saw Mum and Dad, I could wave but I wasn’t allowed to speak to them. I knew nothing about the other children’s backgrounds, but it was clear that I did not belong, and my occasional supper trips to the hotel only served to highlight my feelings of exclusion. We were expected to do chores, but we had enough to eat and the adults, although strict, were not unkind. There is no comparison with my brief experience in a children’s home in the 1960s and the ugly and painful lives led by many *Heim* and *Verdingkinder*. I can, however, identify, if only on a very small scale, with what all of them describe as feelings of abandonment, despair, and a sense of powerlessness. The *Helios*, I subsequently discovered, was owned by Herr Bruendler, a card-carrying member of the Swiss Nazi Party.


https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/sahs_review/vol59/iss2/13
Postcard of the Kinderheim Helios, 1960s.

Reverse side of the same postcard.
Today, Switzerland has one of the highest per capita incomes in the world. One hundred years ago, however, the country was extremely poor. Before World War Two, agriculture was unmechanized and farmers needed cheap labour. The worldwide economic crisis of the 1930s affected much of Swiss society and created a cycle of real poverty, or a constant fear of it. Sudden illness, an accident, or the death of a parent could quickly disturb the fragile balance of a family already living in constrained financial circumstances. The authorities were swift to intervene, sending very young children to homes and orphanages and older ones into servitude. The Swiss government promoted the idea that hard work, self-discipline, and fresh air were a natural corrective for these potentially wayward children and would provide them with the means to support themselves as adults. Farmers worked the children hard: many former Verdingkinder describe getting up before daybreak to help in the barn and carry milk pails to the dairy before school; girls as young as six were expected to cook, clean, and knit. These children and thousands like them were taken from their families without warning. They did not know where they were going, nor for how long. Often they were moved to farms in different cantons, and lost touch with their parents and siblings.

I wonder whether this is what happened to Alfred, Maria, Johann, Lina and Anna, the five lost Gilomen siblings?

I mentioned my research into the Verdingkinder to my friend Brigitte and she told me the following story about her own family. Her father, Hermann Hellmueller, was the youngest of eighteen children, and, for reasons unknown, he was allowed to grow up with his parents. His seventeen siblings were all verdingt. Every Sunday, Hermann and his mother, Dora would walk to the neighbouring farms to visit those children who had been placed locally. In her later years, Dora’s adult sons and daughters would, in turn, visit their mother at her home in Willisau, Canton Solothurn.

When Brigitte was seventeen years old, her own mother died of cancer. Within days, the authorities arrived to take her fourteen-year-old sister into care. A kindly neighbour insisted she would help with cooking
and caring for the girls and this generous intervention saved Hermann’s younger daughter from servitude on a farm. The year was 1978.

In early 2016, I came across netzwerk-verdingt, an organisation founded by former Heim (Home) and Verdingkinder. They gather once a month at the Kaefigturm (Jail Tower) in Bern. Walter Zwahlen, the spokesman for the group, kindly invited me to attend one of their meetings. A few months later, on a cold afternoon in March, I arrived at the Jail Tower. I felt a little apprehensive, concerned that my presence might appear intrusive, but I was immediately made to feel welcome. I joined a small group standing around the coffee urn and soon fell into conversation with David and Heinz, both tall, imposing men in their late seventies.

David Gogniat was born in Bern in 1939, the eldest of four children. His mother worked as a housecleaner. We had very little money but it was a happy childhood, he recalled. When his father left the family, the state intervened and all four children were assigned a legal guardian. When David was nine years old, his three siblings were sent to a foster family near Gstaad, 100 kilometres from Bern. A year later, in April 1949, two police officers came to the house with instructions to remove David from his mother’s care. Mrs. Gogniat, a physically strong woman, was filled with rage and grief at the thought of losing her son and she pushed the two men down the stairs. The following day three policemen came to the door and David was taken away and verdingt to a childless farmer and his wife.

His day on the farm would begin at 5:00 am and he worked until 9:00 pm. Attending school was only an option during the winter months. The ten-year old slept in an unheated room in the attic and his foster father beat him regularly, threatening to send him to an institution if he ever tried to defend himself. Once a year, an employee from the youth welfare office came to visit. As the family did not have a tele-

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3 https://www.netzwerk-verdingt.ch
4 Sandra Rutschi. Was ehemalige Verdingkinder in ihren Akten finden (What former indentured children discover in their files) (Bern: Tages Anzeiger, August 4, 2014.)
phone, a neighbour would hang a sheet in the yard to warn the farmer and his wife that Frau Madoerin was on her way. On that one day each year, David did not have to work and he sat at the kitchen table with the farmer and his wife and enjoyed a good meal. He was given nice clothes to wear and temporarily installed in a bedroom that was not his own. He was never left alone with Frau Madoerin and was never asked about his experiences.

Mrs. Gogniat remained in Bern. From her meagre salary, she was required to pay board and lodging money for David and his three siblings. When, after her death, I was given access to my files, I discovered that my mother had fought like a lioness for us. I will always be grateful to her for that, he said.

When he left school, David expressed a wish to apprentice as a mechanic but was told that there was no money available. He was given three options: chimney sweep, farmer, or gardener. He chose farming. Some years later, he got his truck driver’s license and spent many years driving long hauls through Europe and the Middle East. Today, David Gogniat owns a successful trucking business and is a former president of the Swiss Hauliers Association. I find it difficult to show love for my family, he admitted. I can sometimes be very harsh with them. Unfortunately, I was never taught another way.

Heinz Egger was born in 1934, the fourth of six children, all of whom were taken into care. He has never discovered the reason why he and his five siblings were taken away from their parents. Heinz spent the first year of his life, lying, largely unattended, in a narrow cot in an orphanage. To this day, I can’t fully stretch out my elbows, he said. The next six years of his life were happy ones. He was fostered by a childless couple in Wiedlisbach, Canton Bern, who treated him as if he were their own. They wanted to adopt him but his birth father refused to sign the papers. In 1939, at the outbreak of World War Two, Heinz’ foster father was drafted into the Army and sent to the Swiss border. When

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5 Heinz Egger’s personal recollections shared with the author.
Heinz was seven years old, an anonymous allegation was made against him and he was sentenced to five years ‘re-education’ in the Landorf Boys’ Home near Bern.

Walter Zwahlen of netzwerk-verdingt has confirmed that it was not uncommon for Heim and Verdingkinder to be falsely accused (the cases were rarely investigated), as a way of removing them from the community. After he was released from the Boys’ Home, Heinz was verdingt to a farmer. Although his work days were long, he always found time to study. He was grateful too that he was, once again, living near his much-loved foster parents. At sixteen, like David Gogniat, Heinz Egger was told that an apprenticeship with an auto mechanic was not possible. His guardian showed no interest in helping him find a placement. On his own initiative and because he was clearly bright, he was eventually accepted as an apprentice to a metal worker in Solothurn. He returned to live with his foster parents. *It was a long journey to work every day. I had to walk 8 km down the mountain and then cycle 14 km. But I grew fit, an advantage for someone in my profession. In the spring of 1954, I was awarded my diploma and achieved the highest mark in Canton Solothurn.*

Heinz continued to work hard, attempting to balance his further education with promising career opportunities and an ever-growing family. He, his wife Ella, and their four children re-located many times. Sadly, however, their marriage did not survive. Eventually, Heinz was able to start his own business which he ran successfully well into his retirement. Today he lives happily with his partner, Margrit. As he wrote to me in an email: *I have pretty much overcome my difficult childhood and*
no longer feel overly burdened by it. In the Landorf Boys’ Home, I learnt how to be patient, resilient, how to share and help others. Today I am content with my life.

The people I met that day at the Jail Tower in Bern are able to speak of their painful childhoods, but there are thousands in Switzerland who have been completely broken by their experiences; some are literally speechless; others have taken their own lives. The stigma was so great that many never told their partners and children that they had been verdingt.

One woman I spoke to told me that she had been fired from her job as a secretary when it was discovered that she was a former verding child. We were good enough to clean the toilets, but not to work in an office, she said bitterly. Women generally suffered more than men as it was assumed they would get married and therefore didn’t need to learn a trade.

As adults, many former Verdingkinder chose careers that provided them with freedom and independence. Like David, Charles Probst, known as Scharli, found work as a long-distance truck driver, which enabled him to travel extensively, all expenses paid. He told me about his experiences in Iran, delivering aircraft hangars for their fighter jets. When the Iran-Iraq War broke out, he spent fifty days stranded in the desert with a colony of foreign truck drivers. I was struck both by Scharli’s resourcefulness and by his modesty. He was, I subsequently discovered, not just a truck driver but, like David Gogniat, the owner of a successful transport company.

Scharli later told me that his two younger brothers had been sent to the Kinderheim Helios on the recommendation of the village doctor in Adelboden and Bern social services. Their mother, herself a Verdingkind, was working as a maid when she became pregnant. She was immediately dismissed, even though the baby’s father was the farmer’s son. Scharli grew up on a farm near Bern and when, at the age of ten, he discovered that the people he lived with were not his biological family, he tried to take his own life. He put the barrel of a rifle into his mouth but as he reached down, the bullet fired, grazed his guiding finger at the muzzle and went through the roof of the barn.
I think of my grandmother and I wonder whether she knew, as she was growing up, that she had not one, but six half-siblings. Did her father ever talk about his missing children and why they had gone away?

Many former Verdingkinder say they could have endured the back-breaking work, the under-nourishment, even the violence, but they were never able to reconcile themselves to the absence of kindness and affection. As children, they were told they were not precious to the adults around them. Moments of tenderness were rare and many sought warmth and comfort from the animals on the farm. Without good role models or mothers to explain the changes of adolescence, girls married young or gave birth to children outside marriage, perpetuating the legacy of social exclusion. Sexual abuse was not uncommon, and pregnant girls would vanish in the night to another farm in another canton, where the baby would be given up to a children’s home. The need to survive their physical and emotional circumstances suffocated a natural ability for intimacy and the divorce rate amongst former Verdingkinder is high. In the last ten years, those who have been given access to their records often discover that important information has been omitted or falsified. In some cases, the files have been destroyed altogether, which they experience as a double betrayal.

If my grandmother’s half-siblings were verdingt, then it seems likely that the same fate befell members of my grandfather’s family. Rudolf, my paternal great-grandfather and his first wife, Magdalena, were married for twelve years. In 1884, she died and at the age of thirty-six, he found himself with fourteen children to support. Shortly afterwards, he married the widowed, childless Maria. Second wives recognised their value and often chose to negotiate the number of step-children they were prepared to accept in the marriage. The rest were verdingt. When she was forty, Maria gave birth to my grandfather, Ernst.

Ernst’s two half-sisters, Elise and Bertha, had emigrated to the American Midwest in 1895 and, following Rudolf’s death and Maria’s third marriage to Otto Zingg, Elise wrote suggesting that Ernst join
them in America. Maria felt that her son was too young to make the long journey alone. My mother always claimed that the departure of her father’s two favourite half-sisters and his mother’s refusal to allow him to go America were losses from which he never fully recovered. She even went so far as to suggest that they were factors which contributed to his suicide in 1943.

Elise and Bertha Kummer were eight and ten years old when their mother died. Neither of them spoke very much about their early lives in Switzerland, but it seems likely that they were verdingt. In 1895, the two young women sailed from Rotterdam to New York where they boarded a train to Chicago and on to Wisconsin. For most emigrants, leaving their homeland was not a choice but a necessity, driven by hunger and poverty. Four years after arriving in the Midwest, Elise married the German-born Carl Fritz and they moved to Madison. Carl was a carpenter and in 1901 he founded the Fritz Construction Company which went on to build some of the city’s best known public buildings, including the First National Bank, the Kennedy Dairy Company, and the private home of Glenn Frank, president of the University of Wisconsin.

In 1932, President Hoover invited Mr Fritz to the White House where he was honoured for his work. Elise christened their first born Fidelia Helvetia, ‘Faithful Switzerland’ and spoke Swiss German to her as she was growing up. Perhaps Elise, aware that her little brother Ernst was at risk of being verdingt, wished to provide him with a home and a future. She could offer him a good life in America, growing up alongside his little niece, Fidelia, and learning a trade at the Fritz Construction Company. He would also have been a link to all that she had left behind and someone to whom she could speak in her native language. In spite of her great wealth, Elise never returned to visit her homeland. Her sister, Bertha did not marry and moved to New Glarus, Wisconsin, the archetypal Swiss town, full of chalets and umlauts, yodel music and pork products.

My grandfather, like his father before him, was a policeman. Part of his job would have been to forcibly remove children from their
homes, their siblings, their identities, their childhoods and, above all, their mothers. The Swiss authorities considered that poverty was socially inherited, and believed that removing children from their impecunious circumstances would guarantee greater social and economic productivity in ensuing generations. This policy came at a terrible price for thousands of children and their families as well as for the soul of Switzerland.

In 2013, the Swiss government offered an official apology to all former *Heim* and *Verdingkinder*. A few years later, an initiative was launched seeking financial reparation for the surviving victims, together with a comprehensive investigation into the history of Switzerland’s indentured children. Scharli Probst was active in helping those who qualified for the money, but could not navigate the forms. Many former *Verdingkinder* were poorly schooled and struggled to read and write. Others remain wary of the authorities and fear that their personal information could be used against them.

In the spring of 2016, I visited the *Stolen Childhood—Verdingkinder Speak* exhibition at the *Ballenberg Museum* near Bern where Gottlieb Brunner had offered to be my guide. Godi has a freckled face and warm, sad eyes and, like many former *Verdingkinder*, he is strong but suffers from spinal injuries incurred during childhood when he was made to carry heavy weights up and down mountainsides. Godi was *verdingt* to a farmer when he was eleven years old. In spite of the fact that his grandparents lived in the same village, he was forbidden from visiting them. His grandfather was a skinner by trade and his job included the burying of animal carcasses. He would cut away the unspoilt meat and take it home to feed his large family. Some of his 18 children died of the Spanish flu. Others succumbed to typhoid.

At the age of fifteen, Godi was committed to the *Waldau Psychiatric Clinic* in Bern where he spent a year undergoing electric shock treatment for enuresis. Many years later, David Gogniat’s mother was
Godi Brunner’s grandfather, 1917.
also sent to the Waldau, following a diagnosis of religious mania. David was able to secure his mother’s release on condition that he agreed to take full responsibility for her.

During my own family research in 2016, I discovered that the so-called ‘care home’ where my maternal grandmother spent the last seven years of her life was in fact the Waldau Psychiatric Clinic. Rosa, like Mrs. Gogniat, had a strong faith in God although there is nothing maniacal about her letters to my mother in England. They simply offer loving support in a time of personal crisis.

As recently as 2017, an article in a Bern newspaper\(^7\) described disturbing practices at the Waldau with regard to isolation and restraint procedures. A commission subsequently ruled that patients should not, in future, be handcuffed or placed in solitary confinement for longer than a prescribed period of time.

On March 16, 1951, on the occasion of his twentieth

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\(^7\) Marius Aschwanden, *Kritik an der Waldau* (Berner Zeitung, August 30, 2017).
Godi Brunner’s release from guardianship at age 20. This is a copy of the original letter in German dated March 1951.

https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/sahs_review/vol59/iss2/13
birthday, Godi Brunner received a letter from the authorities, informing him that his guardianship was at an end. He was warned, however, that a close eye would be kept on him. It was explained that this was not a threat but instead a form of ongoing protection. A copy of the letter was sent to the local priest.

5th March, 1951

Mr. Gottlieb Brunner, Apprentice,
to Alfr. Fluehmann,
Brienzwiler

Mr. Brunner,

On March 16th of this year you will be of legal age and thus be released from your guardianship. For your own benefit and in order to facilitate this transition, we trust that you will not invalidate the advantages you have been given.

The authorities, your guardian and your apprenticeship master have all worked hard to raise you into an upstanding human being and a good citizen. It is possible that, in these guardianship cases, more is offered and provided for the child than in many families. Once in the public eye, our charges are more highly regarded than children who have grown up in their own families. Be that as it may, a watchful eye is kept on all our protégés and we will not tolerate any disobedience, either towards your apprentice master or indeed towards anyone in a position of authority. We demand that the rules of your apprenticeship are respected.

We hope that these recommendations will be sufficient for you to maintain orderly behaviour. It is certainly the case that the authorities, following the release of their charges, have no wish to impose strict measures. We advise you only in terms of our role as protective supervisors etcetera.

We encourage you to seriously follow our guidelines and to maintain strict adherence to them.

Yours sincerely,

Your Guardian

Copies to Rev. Von Gruenigen and Mr. Alfred Fluehmann

_Translation into English of Godi Brunner's release letter._
The authorities were true to their word. In his early twenties, Godi began dating Gertrud, a young widow with two small children. Within three months he was summoned to an interview with social services, where a panel of four administrators informed him that, unless he married this young woman, both she and her children would be sent to institutions. Reluctantly, he agreed.

In spite of the appalling abuse Godi experienced, both as a child and later as an adult, his determination enabled him to gain professional qualifications and sufficient savings to start his own painting and decorating firm. He is an accomplished artist, poet, and wood-carver and a man of great sweetness and integrity.

When our granddaughter was born in 2020, Godi gifted her a hand-carved Swiss chalet. It has a cedar-shake roof, red shutters, window boxes full of flowers, a neatly-stacked woodpile with its own tiny axe and a water pump. The chalet also doubles as a money box. Godi told me that he had inserted a flap behind the slot so that any deposited coins could not be retrieved by searching fingers.

_Godi Brunner’s hand-carved chalet that he gifted to my granddaughter._
Verdingt (1943) (Nr. 54)

Zum Buur O......... uf Detlige han i müesse
i bi nid allne Willkomme gsy, u has dörffe büesse,
zwei Mal am Tag nues i mit der Milch i d’Hütte
es isch scho spät, pressier, u tue d'Milch nid verschütte

dä Brief mues sofort furt - pressier, d’Poscht isch gly zue
zwänzg Rappe fürne Margge überchumeni no derzue.
im Sack finden i bir Poscht kes zwänzgi meh
zrügg gan i’s go Sueche, findes aber númmemeh.

Drum gheie i dä Brief halt ohni Margge y,
dä wird eso sicher scho aacho, dänken i.
wones uuschunt ir Obermatt, das isch nid z’beschrybe
mir würde die Flouse mit der Geisle grad uustribe.

~ 01.01.2017, Godi Brunner

Indentured 1943 (Nr. 54)

Off to Farmer, O .... to Detlige I’m to go.
I’m not welcomed by all and am punished for it.
Twice a day, I carry the milk up to the cabin door.
It’s late. Hurry up. Don’t spill it.

This letter must be sent today. Get going. Before the post office closes.
I am given twenty cents for the stamp.
In my pocket, at the post office, I discover the twenty cents is missing.
I go back to look, but don’t find it.

So I send the letter with no stamp;
It’s bound to get there, I tell myself.
When, in Obermatt, the truth comes out, what occurs is unspeakable.
The wickedness is whipped out of me.

~ 01/01/2017 Godi Brunner

Godis’s poem (in original Swiss-German) with English translation.
Godi and Renate, his wife of 50 years.

Thriftiness is a quality that many former Verdingkinder share. Financial independence provides greater freedom of choice and self-determination, something very few of them experienced as they were growing up. Thea’s chalet bank sits on the shelf of her nursery, as yet empty of coins, but overflowing with the generosity of a man she may never meet.
In the winter of 2017, I returned to Bern to see Scharli and together we visited an exhibition at the Jail Tower titled *Verdingkind-er—Portraits by Peter Klaunzer.* The idea behind the project was to pay homage not only to the twenty-five men and women whose photographs shaped the exhibition, but also to dignify the hundreds and thousands of former *Heim* and *Verdingkinder* who have died in recent years. The sentence that accompanied Charles Probst’s picture was: *I wanted to kill myself,* and I asked Scharli what, as an adult, had kept him from making another attempt on his life. He replied that having been told he was worthless and would never amount to anything, he was determined to prove people wrong. He had always relied on himself, trusted only himself, and never depended on others to provide him with anything, least of all a sense of his own worth.

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In Switzerland, every cow is tagged and registered, but to this day, no one knows for sure how many children were removed from their families. Scharli explained that what is important to him is not the compensation money. His hope is that stories of the Verd-ingkinder will be recorded in the history books to be read by future generations of Swiss schoolchildren because, as he pointed out, the money will soon be gone, as will the school groups passing through the exhibition.

In March 2023, I spoke to Marlene Brown who was born in Biel, Canton Bern, in 1935 and emigrated to Campbell, California, in 1956. Her story echoes many others I have heard. Marlene’s mother died when she was seven years old and she was placed with foster parents who were physically and psychologically abusive. Her eleven year-old brother was verdingt to a farmer. Until she was nine, Marlene was under the impression that both her father and her brother were dead. *I made my own little box to live in*, she told me. It was a way of dissociating from her surroundings and protecting herself from the outside world. Later she went to live with her father and his new family. She found work in a silk factory, but was forced to hand over all the money she earned to her stepmother. Marlene met her future husband, a soldier in the U.S. Army, at a Zurich bus station. She and Lyn Brown fell in love, and in 1956 she left Switzerland to begin a new life in California. In the 1980s, the Browns moved to Ohio.

Like many former Verd ingkinder, Marlene never spoke to anyone about her painful childhood. *I didn’t see the point of dragging everybody into my story. It did not seem useful*, she said. In the early 2000s, however, when survivors’ stories began surfacing in the Swiss media, Marlene began to wonder. *This happened to me and my brother too. We were separated from our father and from each other and were sent away*. In April 2013, Simonetta Sommaruga offered a public apology, on behalf of the federal government, for the shameful practices which had continued, in some form or another, until 1981. Marlene wrote to Sommaruga and the Justice Minister wrote back.
With the help and support of the Cincinnati Library, Marlene wrote a book about her life as a Verdingkind. She received a check from the Swiss federal government for twenty-five thousand francs which she has invested on behalf of her grandchildren. *I do not need it now, she said.* My husband Lyn and I were frugal, we saved money, and we travelled a lot. We loved hiking and kayaking. I had a good life and a happy marriage.

In the same year that Sommaruga made a public apology, the Swiss philanthropist, Guido Fluri, himself a former Boys’ Home resident, financed a museum in Muemliswil, Canton Solothurn, dedicated to all former Heim and Verdingkinder. In 2016, Fluri launched the initiative which proposed financial compensation for victims of the state’s forced child labour policies. Resistance came from the Swiss Farmers’ Union which feared that its members might subsequently be held to account. Fluri, however, was less interested in blame and retribution than he was in finding a good solution for the victims. *We had to be quick, because many of them were already old and frail,* he explained.

In February 2019, Guido Fluri and two Swiss victims of clerical abuse were invited to a private audience with the Pope in Rome. Francis apologised to them as individuals and to all the Swiss victims they represented. He asked for forgiveness from ‘the bottom of his heart’, Fluri later told the Swiss Catholic press agency.

Scharli’s final wish has also been fulfilled. In 2017, Professor Hansueli Grunder from the University of Basel, together with Walter Zwahlen and the Carl Albert Loosli Foundation created a course for schools with the intention of educating children and promoting discussion on the subject of Switzerland’s shame: the legacy of the Heim and Verdingkinder.

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9 Marlene Brown-Bieler, *Verdingkinder, the Indentured Children: The life story of one of the children.* marblyn@gmail.com


11 Christa Pongratz-Lippitt, “Francis promises abusers will be handed over to secular courts,” *The Tablet*, March 5, 2019.

12 https://www.carl-albert-loosli.ch
I end with a poem by Marlene Brown:

**Forgotten Children**

Two young children all alone  
no one to love them,  
no one home.

The boy was eleven, his sister still small,  
he was her hero,  
he seemed eleven feet tall.

Gone was her mother,  
father and brother  
she was alone,  
there was no other

She didn’t know why her mother died,  
that she would never again be by her side.  
Why did our father give us away?  
We were not bad kids,  
so why couldn’t we stay?

Abandoned by all, even by God above,  
Where was compassion?  
Where was the love?

Darkness begins, her heart turns to stone,  
where was her family?  
Why, was she even born?

Sent into foster care with total strangers,  
soon she discovered she was in danger.

Hunger and beatings prevailed through the day,  
how much longer in this hell  
did she have to stay?
Into another foster home she went,  
no hugs, or love were ever given,  
but she was content.

Many hard and lonely years passed by,  
her father suddenly took her home,  
she did not ask why.

Good and bad days would come and go,  
as each day went by so very slow.

Her age of twenty did finally arrive,  
after all these years she felt unburdened,  
free and alive.

A handsome young man took her far away,  
where she felt happy,  
so she decided to stay.

Husband and wife they became long ago,  
it is now fine with us both,  
if life goes by slow.

~ Marlene Brown-Bieler, 2010

In memory of Charles ‘Scharli’ Probst
April 28, 1930 – October 8, 2022

A New Voice for Old Helvetia:
Introducing the Descendants of Swiss Settlers

by Joseph H. Smith

The Descendants of Swiss Settlers is a new lineage society that honors and celebrates the unique legacy and achievements of Swiss men and women who settled in North America prior to March 5, 1798, which marks the end of the Old Swiss Confederacy. We are excited to announce our formation and we are seeking members!

Membership is open to men and women 18 years or older, who are lineally descended from a Swiss man or woman who settled in North America prior to March 5, 1798. Additionally, the applicant may claim lineal descent from a Swiss man or woman whose descendant(s) left Switzerland and resided outside of Switzerland for an interim period before coming to North America prior to March 5, 1798.

Life Membership in the Society costs $275. There is also a $25 Registrar’s Fee.

In an effort to minimize paperwork on the applicant’s part, the Society allows applicants to use Record Copies from other lineage societies, such as the Daughters of the American Revolution, the Society of Colonial Wars, etc. to establish a genealogical line of descent. A complete list of acceptable Record Copies is located on the Society’s website under the Membership tab, which is also, where the Society’s membership application can be accessed.

The most important thing to keep in mind is that satisfactory proof must be submitted proving the unbroken line of descent from the
Swiss man or woman and his/her descendant who ultimately settled in North America before March 5, 1798.

Our mission is to preserve and promote the history, genealogy, customs, and culture of early Swiss settlers who generously contributed their time, talent, and treasure to the settling of the North American Continent. The Descendants of Swiss Settlers is the only organization, which provides an exclusive focus on these early Swiss emigrants.

Our Society will have events. We hope to gather bi-annually, including once for an Annual Meeting. It is hoped members will sustain the memory of their ancestors through educational activities, such as a lecture or presentation, and by socializing with other Swiss-Americans at a reception or meal. Group excursions to sites historically associated with early Swiss-American settlement may be planned, as well.

As our membership and the treasury grows, we will also play a role in the larger Swiss-American community by providing charitable support for individuals and organizations who raise awareness about early Swiss settlers. Also, we hope to publish a Society newsletter highlighting our activities, the Swiss ancestry of our members, genealogical discoveries, archival developments, book reviews, etc.

The road to starting the Society has been a long and winding one! In the spring of 2019, I applied to join the Swedish Colonial Society and the Dutch Colonial Society. Knowing that I descended from at least one Swiss ancestor who arrived in Pennsylvania during the Colonial era, I started looking around for a Swiss Colonial Society to join, as well, but I could not find one. I got in touch with the Swiss Center of North America, and I posted a query in the Hereditary Society Community Facebook group, which serves as an umbrella group for dozens of different lineage societies, in the hope that someone would be able to shed some light on this matter. However, no one seemed to know anything about such a society. It then became apparent that a group to honor and celebrate the Swiss who arrived in early America did not exist.

At first, this thought saddened me. Then, it excited me. I could start a group! Having already been a member of a few lineage societies
for several years, I had an understanding of how they functioned. However, I had no idea how to go about starting one from scratch. Frankly, once it began to dawn on me what it would take to form a new lineage society, I was rather overwhelmed. I quietly, albeit rather wistfully, shelved the idea, but the thought of the Society never fully left me.

Then, the pandemic struck. With no events to attend, the idea of a Swiss Society rose again in my mind. I decided that if I was going to form such an organization I needed to do plenty of reading and research about Swiss history, the story of the Swiss in early America, understanding the basics of Swiss genealogy, etc. This unexpected crash course in history, culture, linguistics, religion, and genealogy was exactly what I needed. It was an excellent time of study and growth.

As I learned more about the cultural and religious make-up of the Old Swiss Confederacy, I was routinely struck by its diversity and variety. So many unique stories and narratives emerged in a relatively small place and then spread out all over the world. It inspired me to reconsider the idea of a Swiss Society. My reading and research continued.

With very limited exceptions, the Bernese Cantonal Archives have digitized all of their parish registers and uploaded them for remote viewing. Using this priceless resource, I began to do serious research on my own Swiss ancestral lines. I truly began to understand how to read, study, and use a parish register to maximum effect, as they are the primary source of information for the era we are studying. I also gained an understanding of the unique characteristics of Swiss genealogy. The old, crumpled, ink-stained Swiss parish registers genuinely grabbed ahold of me!

I live in Yonkers, New York. Recently, the Yonkers Public Library became a FamilySearch Affiliate Library. This opened up two completely new avenues of Swiss genealogical research for me. Previously, owing to ancestral research, my research had only focused on the German-speaking Canton of Bern, but now I was able to access the parish registers of the French-speaking Cantons of Geneva, Jura,
Neuchâtel, and Vaud.¹ I also was able to study the parish registers of Graubünden/Grisons, which are generally written in Romansh.

Like many budding genealogists, I first turned to Ancestry.com to build my family tree in an effort to learn more about my antecedents. It was helpful, to an extent, but it does not contain a great wealth of information about Swiss genealogy. Ancestry is a fee-based website. Most larger public libraries offer access to the website through an institutional membership. Ancestry does not provide access to the incomparable old Swiss parish registers; it merely references indices and databases freely available via FamilySearch. It is through the websites of various Cantonal Archives, FamilySearch Affiliate Libraries, and Family History Centers where one can access those treasure troves of information and truly get down to researching one’s Swiss ancestors from the 18th century and before.

In terms of beginning to do research about one’s Swiss ancestors or people who you believe might be of Swiss heritage, a Google search is best. Usually, this will lead a person to a handful of genealogical websites. Although they are user-maintained and subject to error, the data entries for individuals posted on FamilySearch, Geni, and WikiTree can be helpful in getting the proverbial ball rolling. Also, they are free to use.

Once you believe you have identified an ancestor who was possibly of Swiss birth or heritage, The Register of Swiss Surnames is a great resource to consult. Containing information about nearly 50,000 Swiss surnames, it helps establish the Heimat/Lieu d’origine (place of origin) where a particular surname held citizenship in different towns from the 18th century up to 1962. This place is where the family—usually the person’s father—historically comes from. Citizenship, which is inherited through birth, often extends back several centuries. It should not be confused with the place of birth. The community of

¹It should be noted that since I began working with French-language Swiss parish registers, the Cantons of Geneva and Vaud have generously made their parish registers available for remote viewing at home.
origin may be the same as the place of birth, but this is not always the case. The digitized version of *The Register* refers to the 1989 edition. As always, when conducting searches pertaining to surnames in the 17th and 18th centuries, be mindful of possible variants a particular surname may have had before spellings were standardized. Think phonetically!

There are also several outstanding reference works that might be helpful to a person researching their early Swiss ancestry in North America, including Dr. Albert Bernhardt Faust’s *Lists of Swiss Emigrants in the Eighteenth Century to the American Colonies*, Annette Kunselman Burgert’s, *Eighteenth Century Emigrants from the Northern Alsace to America*, Cornelia Schrader-Muggenthaler’s *The Swiss Emigration Book*, and Ernst Steinemann’s *A List of Eighteenth-Century Emigrants from the Canton of Schaffhausen to the American Colonies, 1734-1752*.

While all of the aforementioned works have their own unique merits, Dr. Faust’s two-volume work is an incomparable resource. Published a century ago and studying the Cantons of Basel, Bern, and Zürich, it contains information about thousands of families and individuals who arrived in North America during the 18th century. As evidenced by Dr. Faust’s area of study in the Cantons of Basel, Bern, and Zürich, this work focuses almost exclusively on German-speaking emigrants who practiced the Reformed faith. Notably light are entries about Swiss Anabaptists and Mennonites. Nonetheless, it is the foremost work containing biographical and genealogical information in this field. The book can be accessed for free online via HathiTrust Digital Library.

Most of my Swiss ancestors are from the Canton of Bern. They all settled in Pennsylvania in the 1730s and 1740s. My Swiss ancestors adhered to the Reformed faith and they were farmers. However, as I continued to learn more about them, I noticed how seamlessly and quietly they blended into the larger German-speaking Protestant agrarian communities that dotted the Pennsylvania countryside. They seemed to
get lost in the proverbial shuffle. This both frustrated and intrigued me. What had happened to their distinct Swiss identity and culture?

To my pleasant surprise, I learned that I was not alone in contemplating the idea of a vanished Swiss identity in Colonial America. I acquired a copy of Dr. Leo Schelbert’s *Switzerland Abroad: Historical Contours of a Nation’s People Global Presence*. In his work, Dr. Schelbert succinctly wrote “Swiss immigrants are often difficult to recognize as Swiss, however, because as speakers of German they were taken as Germans and if French-speaking as Huguenots from France. Swiss surnames, furthermore, are often indistinguishable from German or French ones, and often they became Anglicized.”

Dr. Schelbert’s words were a solemn charge: Rescue your ancestors from the historical abyss. Start the Society. Figure it out.

Around this same time, I had three other significant moments of discovery.

1) The date of July 4, 1776, does not mean much in Swiss history. I had initially considered it as a cut-off date for membership eligibility. However, the date of March 5, 1798, is a very important one in Swiss history. It marks the fall of the City of Bern to French forces during the Napoleonic Wars. This was the end of the Old Swiss Confederacy. For this reason, it is the cut-off date for membership eligibility in our own Society.

2) I learned there were a number of Swiss who settled in Canada and the Caribbean before 1798. To this end, I expanded the area of eligible settlement to include the whole of the North American continent.

3) Lastly, I decided that this nascent organization needed a better name. After considering a few options, I chose Descendants of Swiss Settlers.

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In the spring and summer of 2022, I began talking to friends from different lineage societies about the various legal and financial components of starting an organization. To my delight, I learned that several friends had the professional acumen and requisite ancestry needed to be a part of the Descendants of Swiss Settlers. This small band of Swiss-Americans formed the Society’s inaugural Board of Governors.

Our first Board meeting was held on August 29, 2022, and we began accepting membership applications thereafter. As an aside, the modern-day Cantons of Aargau, Appenzell Ausser Rhoden, Basel Landschaft, Bern, Freiburg, and Vaud were represented on our founding Board of Governors.

We are very much looking forward to hearing from our fellow Swiss-Americans as we endeavor to keep the memory of our ancestors alive. Membership inquiries and other queries will be warmly welcomed!

For more information, please visit our website:
www.dss1798.org

and follow us on Facebook at:
https://www.facebook.com/swiss1798

~ Joseph H. Smith, Founder and Governor of the Descendants of Swiss Settlers, and Swiss American Historical Society Life Member
Attending the Annual Meeting of the SAHS in Washington, D.C.: An Exaggeration

by Albert Winkler

As president of the Swiss American Historical Society last year, 2022, it was my pleasure to attend the Society’s annual meeting in Washington, D.C. I always go anyway. The thought of trying to be charming, clever, and insightful at the meetings was just too much for me to bear alone, so I groveled at the feet of my son, Kurt, and his wife, Razil, to go with me. Rather than watch an old man cry, they agreed to go too if I paid. What a deal! We got on the plane in Salt Lake. I can still remember when you had to amuse yourself on flights, but they now have screens on the seat in front of you, so you can watch movies. I caught “Top Gun: Maverick,” and it is a pretty fair action flick.

I lived in D.C. and surrounding area for three years back in the 1970s, and I can still remember how to get around, so it was not difficult to get on the Metro (subway) and get to our hotel. We checked in to the Rat Hole Hotel, also known as the Hotel Harrington. It was built in 1914, so it is pretty old, but it was very cheap and at a great location.

It was dusk when we arrived, and to use our time wisely, we headed out. We walked past the Washington Monument, went through

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1 For decades, I have written weekly letters to missionaries, people in the military, in jail, or just away from home. I try to enliven their day just a little and let them know someone cares. In the letters, I make myself the brunt of the jokes. I wrote about 850 letters before I started numbering them. The material for this article came from letters 1094, 1095, and 1096.
Attending the Annual Meeting of the SAHS

the World War II Memorial, and ended at the Vietnam War Memorial, where I pooped out. We took an Uber back. Years ago, I walked much farther along the tidal basin and was quite surprised to see a big rat run in front of me and dive into the water. Instinctively, I called out, “Senator Jones, might I have a word with you?” I then caught myself, but it was an honest mistake. Any rotten, stinking, filthy, low-down vermin in D.C. must be a politician. This reminds me of a joke in the comic strip, Crock. The comic is about some loveable losers in the French Foreign Legion in the Sahara Desert led by the evil commander, Vermin P. Crock. Two troopers observe. “Isn’t that Crock with his pet rat? What a filthy, stinking, disgusting choice for a companion!” “Yeah, everyone has mentioned it to the rat.”

I enjoyed the trip, and we were busy trying to see as much as possible, but there were times when I was in my room late at night with no means of distracting myself because I had already read the comics in the newspaper. In utter desperation, I watched some local news on the Idiot Box with commercials. It was just too much. The pain got unbearable, and I screamed, “I don’t deserve to live!” We were on the tenth floor, and the drop would have been merciful, but with my luck, I would only have been badly maimed. At least, I saw more comics the next day. I once saw a flick in which a guy fell to his doom out the window of a high building. A dude on the ground observed. “If I had enough guts to jump out that window, I would have had the guts to go on living.”

I am not social, and when I am around people, I carry a sign, “Don’t nobody talk to me,” but it didn’t work this time. All the officers of the Society went to dinner at a Swiss restaurant to talk things over. Everyone was a perfect example of cool, class, style, and charisma, and I could not measure up. But everybody was very nice to me, the conversation was pleasant, and I had a good time. I looked at the menu, and I could not eat anything on it because I am on a restricted diet. But the café took pity on me and steamed a few vegetables for me to eat.
I had the honor of conducting the annual meeting the next day, and it was super cool to meet with such charming people who share an interest in the Swiss and their contributions. We met in the Martin Luther King Library downtown—a great place. In the morning, we had the business meeting, and only thirteen people showed up, but the activists waved their signs. “Free the dog!” “Pardon the Pig!” “All power to the pimple!” I have been lecturing over 40 years, so making a fool of myself is second nature, and I hardly flinched until they brought out the pitch forks, torches, and tar.

The meeting was very challenging for me because of my lack of skill until they replaced me as president of the Society. Thank you,
Lord! Then birds sang, flowers bloomed, and everything was right with the world! As president, I had been very stressed out for months, and my worries kept me up at night. Replacing me was an act of mercy, and my gross incompetence had nothing to do with it. Yet I remain the editor of the *SAHS Review*, and I still have to worry about finding good articles for the *Review* and getting it published on time. But life is much better now.

A few college students came to our meetings, and they brought charm and intelligence with them. One of them even interviewed me for a podcast for one of her classes. The afternoon meeting included presentations from scholars about the Swiss, which were informative and entertaining. I finally decided to dredge up what little cool I had, and it is always a pleasure to be among friends. I worked the crowd praising everyone, congratulating everyone, and asking everybody to submit articles for the *SAHS Review*.

*At CUA before the dogs got me.*
I traveled around town with Kurt and Razil as much as possible, and we hit a bunch of museums, but the architecture was the big hit. We took the Metro to my old school, the Catholic University of America. I thought after 45 years they would have forgotten, but I was wrong. When I set foot on campus again, they yelled, “The weirdo is back! Call out the dogs!” The Basilica of the National Shrine is next to campus, and it is a brilliant Byzantine building with magnificent domes and mosaics. I used to spend a lot of time there, and I have always loved it. When I was driving to campus in the winter time, I parked in the parking lot and cut through the building to get a little warmer on the way to class and to admire the art.

We took the Metro way out of town, and we then took an Uber to the Washington, D.C. Temple. I spent a lot of time there back in the day. I
was on the baptismal team, and they really liked me because I talked fast.
In fact, I tied the all-time record of 8½ baptisms each minute. I was also
a whiz on confirmations, and I was a scheduled veil worker. When Razil
was in Sunday School, they showed her a picture of the D.C. Temple, and
she always wanted to see it. When we got there, she was almost giddy
with joy.

The super treat was the Washington Cathedral. It is a gorgeous
building following the Medieval Gothic cathedrals in England complete
with pointed arches, ribbed vaulting, and stain-glassed windows. The
Gothic is my favorite art form, and I thought I had been taken to heav-
en. I just had to play in the light coming through the stained-glass win-
dows by waving my hand through it. When I discuss the Gothic in my
classes, I tell about the time I lived in D.C. and visited the Cathedral.
I was playing in the light of the windows when they told me to leave.
But it did not work because I came back the next day. Actually, I was
not thrown out. They just said they had to set up for a performance and
they were closing the place for a while. But my fiction is better than the
truth, because getting ejected is a better story.

I try to be a nice guy even
though it is a stretch, because I
am evil by nature. When we were
crossing the streets in D.C., and
the cars stopped for us rather
than running us down, I waved a
thanks to them. They called back,
“Didn’t want to wash blood off
my fender.” Some guys wear
hats that say they are veterans,
and I always thank them for their
service. But I did not see pan-

Light through a stained glass win-
dow at the Washington Cathedral.
handlers for a while, and I finally yelled, “My money is as good as anyone else’s.” That did the trick, and I got approached a bunch of times. I always give them money, and they are always nice about it. They often say, “Thank You,” or “God bless you” which is very kind. When I used to hand out quarters, I called it “a coin for a compliment.” But inflation has hit, and I now hand out at least a dollar to everyone. I guess I should now call it, “A buck for a blessing.”

One panhandler was the most disheveled, bedraggled, and slovenly beggar I had ever seen. His clothes were dirty, rotten, filthy, and full of holes. Even the mosquitoes, ticks, and fleas refused to bite him. Yet when I offered him money, he looked at my clothes and said, “Keep it, buddy. You need it worse than I do.” Of course, there are muggers in the city, and one guy tried to rob me, but he looked at my clothes and refused, “Don’t you know bullets cost money? How could I turn a profit by mugging you?” It only got embarrassing when a robber held a gun on me and forced me to take money.

The last evening of the trip, we went to the International Spy Museum, and it was great, because I like the cloak-and-dagger part of international relations. They had displays about spying and intelligence which brought back many old memories of when I worked for the CIA, and I told Razil and Kurt a ton of old stories. Sometimes, people think you are a spy if you work for the CIA. Not so. I was an “intelligence analyst,” and I mostly chased pencils around a desk. I met some of the real Spooks, and they were tough dudes, the kind who would knife their own mother for a nickel.

On the last day, we got on the Metro to travel to the airport. I was very surprised because in our same car were six soldiers. I should not have been too surprised because one of the Metro stops was the Pentagon. At least, three of the soldiers were full-bird (Eagle) colonels. One of them was a lieutenant colonel, and there was more big brass on the Metro than the horn section of an orchestra. I was caught in a terrible dilemma. I have long thanked veterans for their service, but I wanted to take one step further and buy them a drink in gratitude. Since
I am a teetotaler, I do not even know what a drink costs, and I guessed five bucks ought to do it, but I only had four five-dollar bills on me. Luckily, two got off.

I knew if I tried to buy them a drink, I would make a horse’s patootie out of myself, but if I didn’t try, I would never forgive myself, so I gave it a shot. I offered to buy each of them a drink. I don’t know if they wouldn’t take money from the gutter, but each of them refused. They were very nice, thanked me, and shook my hand. One of them even patted me on the shoulder. I was terribly embarrassed, and I made a complete fool out of myself. Serves me right! That’s what I get for trying to do something nice.

On the flight home from D.C., I watched the new (2021) version of the flick “West Side Story,” except for the last part when Tony gets it. I still consider the 1961 version of the flick the best movie musical ever, but the new version had some good songs. I read they were looking for performers for the new flick. They found people who could sing but could not dance. They found people who could dance but could not sing. They then found people who could sing and dance, but could not act. It was pretty good anyway.

I had a great time attending the SAHS annual meeting in D.C., and I hope to see you all at future meetings of the Society.

~ Albert Winkler, Orem, Utah
Challenges to Swiss Democracy:
Neutrality, Napoleon, & Nationalism

by Thomas Quinn Marabello

The year 1291 is considered the birth of Switzerland as we know it. Yet this is not entirely correct, since it was when the Swiss Confederacy was formed. This defensive alliance between some cantons that would expand over time did not mean Switzerland was a unified nation-state. Most of Europe in 1291 was stuck in the Middle Ages with few unified nations existing at the time. 1648 was an important year for Switzerland and the rest of Europe. The Treaty of Westphalia marked the end of the Thirty Years’ War that involved most of the continent over religion and politics. The treaty acknowledged the legal independence of Switzerland, which was agreed to by the powers of Europe. Thus began Switzerland’s road to unity and neutrality, making it one of the unique states of Europe that continues to this day.

As democracy evolved and more cantons allied, Switzerland would face challenges to unifying and staying neutral when threatened or surrounded by other powers that took bordering lands. Challenges by
Napoleon Bonaparate, the impact and ideas of nationalism, regional and religious differences, and debates today over what neutrality really means and if Switzerland should continue to follow or reform it, show that democracy can be tricky and subject to upholding constitutional principles and also changes over time. As one of the world’s oldest continuous democracies, Switzerland offers many lessons and examples for how a nation can withstand challenges and continue to flourish and lead as a strong democratic and capitalist nation-state.

The details of how Switzerland was able to get the rest of Europe to acknowledge and accept its independence are interesting and have not been widely disseminated. Switzerland was not involved in the Thirty Years’ War, but profited from trade in military supplies and exporting foodstuffs.\(^1\) Johann Rudolf Wettstein, the mayor of Basel, was the diplomat who made permanent neutrality and independence happen for Switzerland. Wettstein participated in the peace negotiations in order to obtain juridical independence for Basel merchants from the Holy Roman Empire. Basel was part of the Holy Roman Empire’s commercial court in Speyer and if you lost a case there, your goods and property were confiscated.\(^2\)

As mayor of Basel, Wettstein was looking out for his merchants and their interests. He was hoping to resolve the dispute about jurisdiction over Basel merchants, who were frequently sued by German competitors.\(^3\) There was also some concern that Basel might be integrated into France, since the city bordered the key region of Alsace, which France had long sought to gain.\(^4\) “In February 1647, at his own request, Wettstein secured a mandate to negotiate for the whole Confederacy. What he brought back from

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3 Balsiger.
4 Saner.
Münster was the ‘Exemption’, an exceptional deal for Switzerland.”

“And as His Imperial Majesty, upon Complaints made in the name of the City of Basel, and of all Switzerland, in the presence of their Plenipotentiaries deputed to the present Assembly, touching some Procedures and Executions proceeding from the Imperial Chamber against the said City, and the other united Cantons of the Swiss Country, and their Citizens and Subjects having demanded the Advice of the States of the Empire and their Council; these have, by a Decree of the 14th of May of the last Year, declared the said City of Basel, and the other Swiss-Cantons, to be as it were in possession of their full Liberty and Exemption of the Empire; so that they are no ways subject to the Judicatures, or Judgments of the Empire, and it was thought convenient to insert the same in this Treaty of Peace, and confirm it, and thereby to make void and annul all such Procedures and Arrests given on this Account in what form soever.”

This great deal that Johann Wettstein struck guaranteed Switzerland was a sovereign and independent state, no longer part of the Holy Roman Empire. Article LXIII from the Treaty of Westphalia (quoted above) states that Emperor Ferdinand III accepted and acknowledged Switzerland’s independence. Freely giving up territory in the seventeenth century was a big deal, but the Holy Roman Empire had lost battles and lands to France and Sweden, the main victors in the war. In addition, the emperor did not want the Swiss Confederacy to form an alliance with France, and so he awarded the desired Basel merchants exemption from the court in Speyer. “The Wettstein mission lasted two years and is based on a paradox: while Wettstein managed to advance his negotiations and to deal successfully with the diplomatic intricacies of the major powers of the time, the

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5 Balsiger.
6 Treaty of Westphalia (1648), The Avalon Project: https://avalon.law.yale.edu/17th_century/westphal.asp.
7 Saner.
internal support of his mission remained poor until the very end.”⁸ Only four Protestant towns had supported Wettstein’s mandate.⁹ It would be centuries before Wettstein was recognized for his achievements, partly due to the fact that as a Protestant, Catholics in Switzerland would not acknowledge him.¹⁰ In 1881, the Wettstein Bridge on the Rhine River in Basel was named for its former mayor. “Neutrality, sovereignty, re-

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⁸ Saner.
⁹ Ibid.
¹⁰ Balsiger.
ligious pluralism: all these Swiss achievements emerged from disputes and discussions lasting centuries. Wettstein’s success in Münster was an important milestone along the way.”\textsuperscript{11} As the sole diplomat for the Swiss Confederacy working in Münster on the Treaty of Westphalia, Wettstein played a major role in guaranteeing Switzerland’s independence and eventual confirmed and accepted neutrality status.

The next major development in Swiss government was the new constitution that was implemented on April 12, 1798. The Helvetic Republic, based on the ideas of the French Revolution, would last until 1802. “In just a few days (between 2 and March 1798) the French army occupied the entire territory of the Swiss Confederacy, which ceased to exist. This was the first and only time in the history of the Swiss state when it had been occupied by another country.”\textsuperscript{12} Napoleon had urged the Directory to occupy Switzerland where many pro-French Revolution and French speakers lived, especially in the western part of the country. “Napoleon, who had been much impressed by the Landsgemeinden, the popular assemblies of the mountain cantons, believed them to be the characteristic Swiss institution and insisted that they be restored. The Landsgemeinden were conservative but democratic, though not in the modern sense.”\textsuperscript{13}

In Switzerland, many in the French speaking cantons supported the new order of the French Revolution of 1789.\textsuperscript{14} “Napoleon took a special interest in Switzerland, including imposing a tighter unification on the cantons, alliance with France, and recruiting Swiss regiments for the Grand Armee.”\textsuperscript{15} As we know from history, Napoleon believed that everyone else in Europe would want liberty, equality and

\textsuperscript{11} Balsiger.
Challenges to Swiss Democracy

fraternity too. He thought that the ideals and changes to France from the Revolution should be replicated and would be widely accepted throughout the continent. Napoleon and his Grande Armée faced resistance and eventually defeat after they failed to conquer Russia.

The Awakening of the Swiss (1798) by Laurent Midart, celebrates the transformation of the Old Confederation into the Helvetic Republic. A Swiss man wakes up from his sleep (the ancien régime) and is handed a sword by Lady Liberty. In the background, the rising sun and rooster herald this new era. (Image from MediaWiki Commons.)
The Helvetic Republic (named for the Helvetii original Celtic tribal inhabitants of Switzerland) was a sister republic of France during the Revolution and Napoleonic period. The constitution was based on the French Constitution of 1795. Ten Cantons established the Helvetic Republic in Aargau with a two chamber legislature and Directory of five members who held executive power. “Switzerland was declared a unified and inseparable country with a centralized government. The sovereignty of the people, the granting of equal rights for all citizens and the separation of powers were proclaimed as its main principles.”\(^{16}\)

On paper, it looked good and was an attempt to create a centralized, modern democratic nation-state. Old feudal laws were repealed and trade barriers between the cantons were removed.\(^{17}\) “The republican model of governance in Switzerland failed to receive any significant support from the population. The people’s attachment to feudalism remained strong and found expression in various forms of opposition. Resistance was strongest in the Catholic cantons in the country’s central region.”\(^{18}\) Attempting to apply the French model of governance with a strong centralized state was not welcomed in Switzerland.\(^ {19}\) By 1803, the Helvetic Republic was gone and replaced with a new government created by Napoleon. “The Helvetic Republic lasted less than five years. It was created and supported by France whose troops occupied Switzerland which was allowed to keep only nominally its independence.”\(^ {20}\)

The Act of Mediation of 1803 restored the Swiss Confederation with a new constitution. “They [the nineteen cantons of Switzerland] reciprocally guarantee their constitution, their territory, their freedom, and their independence, either against foreign powers or

\(^{16}\) Tsachevski, 28-29.
\(^{17}\) Ibid., 30.
\(^{18}\) Ibid.
\(^{19}\) Daniele Mariani, “Has Switzerland’s 26-canton model had its day?” (Jan. 28, 2015): https://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/directdemocracy/federalismo-cantoni-svizzera-quanti-ce-ne-vogliono/41237576
\(^{20}\) Tsachevski, 32.
against the usurpation of a particular canton or faction.”

It is interesting that this act which was written and implemented by Napoleon proclaims Swiss independence. The new Swiss Confederation would remain part of the French Empire until 1815. The Act of Mediation created a weak central government and one year rotating presidency, which was kept after Napoleon was overthrown. The new constitution allowed for the self-governance of the cantons and the Federal Assembly (previously the Tagsatzung) became the highest institution. In many ways the Act of Mediation was a compromise, seeking to respect and bring back traditional Swiss institutions and ways of governing. It also embodied the ideals of the Enlightenment by ending the class system, creating a strong legislature, and calling for equality of rights between the cantons. Napoleon wrote in a letter to Swiss delegates:

“Switzerland is not like any other state in terms of the events which have taken place there over the centuries, or in its geographical or topographical situation, or the different religious denominations and the extreme difference in customs within its parts. Nature has made your country a federal state; to want to override that would not be the thought of a prudent man.”

The emperor of the French recognized Switzerland’s uniqueness and sought to placate its nobles and leaders with a new constitution that in many ways reflected the Old Swiss Confederation. Switzerland, which remained disunified as a nation, would not experience the forces of nationalism that arose in opposition to Napoleon,

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23 Tsachevski, 32.

Napoleon Crossing the Valais Alps at the Great St. Bernard Pass, Switzerland in May 1800, painted by Jacques-Louis David. Seen as a piece of propaganda, it portrays France’s First Consul on his way to Italy to reinforce French troops there. Within just a few years, he became an emperor and controlled most of Europe, including the Swiss Confederation. (Image from MediaWiki Commons.)

especially in Spain and Russia. The Swiss also had to supply troops to the French Army. After Napoleon’s defeat in Russia in 1812, the Swiss like most of the rest of Europe, turned against him.
The Congress of Vienna sought to create a new European order post Napoleon. For Switzerland, this meant formal recognition of its independence by the rest of Europe and also its status as a neutral state. “Switzerland had endured Napoleon’s attentions during the early nineteenth century and was determined to declare and maintain its neutrality away from the Great Powers.”\textsuperscript{25} No longer a part of Napoleon’s empire, Switzerland created the Federal Pact of 1815. This pact in the form of a treaty recognized the equality of the cantons and saw the central government lose power.\textsuperscript{26} The number of cantons was now at 22 and the only federal control was over the army. This new government with a weak executive would not last, as Europe experienced more revolutions and increased nationalism during the nineteenth century.

\textsuperscript{25} Dreyer and Jesse, 63.
\textsuperscript{26} Tsachevski, 34.
The Revolutions of 1848 that swept across most of Europe also impacted Switzerland. When seven Catholic cantons formed the Sonderbund alliance and sought to secede, Protestant cantons united to squash them. This led to the cantons coming together to create and ratify a new constitution. Nationalism seemed to have finally impacted Switzerland, leading to a new government and equality of all cantons regardless of religious dominance. “In creating their central government the Swiss, like the Americans, found it necessary to have two houses in the legislature, one dominated by the cantons (states) and one by the people.”

The term “sister republics” that has often been used to describe the similarities between the United States and Switzerland, can best be seen in this new constitution. Planning had actually begun in 1833 at the Tagsatzung in Thurgau. Known as the “Pact Rossi” the draft of a new constitution called for modeling the Swiss state after the United States, creating a parliament and Federal Council with five executives. “The new Federal Pact draft was the foundation on which the Swiss constitution adopted in 1848 was built. In 1833, however, it was not approved because less than half the cantons supported it.” In June 1848, a referendum was passed for a new constitution with 72% of voters supporting it. “The constitution of 1848 granted the cantons a large independence, including the right to have their separate constitution, government and judiciary, to implement their own policies in education, the social sphere, taxation and transport. The supreme power was vested in the federal institutions.”

The first Federal Assembly met in November 1848, electing the Federal Council and making Bern the federal city and de facto capital. Swiss cantons finally had a federal government and parlia-

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27 Everdell, 83.
28 Tsachevski, 36.
29 Ibid.
30 Ibid.
31 Ibid., 37.
32 Ibid., 39.
Switzerland was becoming a modern, unified nation, while adhering to its traditions and principles of neutrality and strong, quasi-independent cantons. Parliament elects seven members of the Federal Council to head a department. Government decisions are made jointly by the Federal Council. This is a unique system with roots in the French Constitution of 1795 which created the Directory and was also copied in the government of the short lived Helvetic Republic. Not wanting any one person, department or canton to gain too much power or dominate, the Federal Council seeks to represent and continue Swiss political culture. From the Federal Council also comes the office of the president, which passes to a different member each year. Perhaps this system and set up that has worked well for the

The Federal Palace houses the Swiss Federal Assembly and Federal Council. Constructed in neo-Renaissance style and using Bernese sandstone for the facades, it was built from 1852-1902.

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Swiss since 1848 could be a model to others in our hyper politicized early twenty-first century world.

A major achievement for international democracy and for Switzerland was the selection of Geneva to be the headquarters of the League of Nations after World War I. Geneva made sense as an ideal city for the League, since Switzerland had been a neutral country for centuries and was already the headquarters for the International Red Cross. Its strong democracy and location in central Europe made it a good choice for the nations of the world. Federal Councillor Gustave Ador and economist William E. Rappard pushed for Geneva to be selected.34 Switzerland

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‘Neutrality. It’s about getting to the end!’ Switzerland, neutral during World War I, attempts to balance between its major bordering neighbors, represented by the German eagle and the French cockerel. (Image from https://www.byarcadia.org/post/swiss-neutrality.)
joined the League in May 1920 after a popular vote approved it.35

“The League of Nations not only influenced Swiss politics, but it also had an impact on local Geneva society and culture. The number of foreign residents increased, and the different communities mixed.”36

The first international peacekeeping organization, a dream and idea of U.S. President Woodrow Wilson, would be dissolved before World War II. The U.S. never joined as the Senate refused to ratify the Treaty of Versailles, which included the creation of the League of Nations. Japan, Italy and Germany all withdrew from the League before the Second World War started. The League of Nations was essentially reborn as the United Nations in 1945. Wilson famously said “The world must be made safe for democracy.” It was fitting that this new world body would be headquartered in one of the world’s oldest democracies, which was also safe and neutral.

The greatest challenge to Swiss democracy in the twentieth century was neutrality, and this continues to be a debated issue. Without getting too much into the well researched and much written about issue of whether Switzerland was really neutral during World War II, it is worth pointing out that the Swiss have used neutrality to their advantage. Revisionist history has questioned whether using neutral-

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35 “The League of Nations.”
ity to avoid direct involvement in the war led to moral compromises, such as deporting Jews and accepting Nazi gold and money in Swiss banks. And Switzerland was also not the only European country to be neutral during World War II. We also know Nazi Germany considered invading Switzerland (neutrality was not something Adolf Hitler cared about since he invaded neutral Belgium in May 1940). Swiss neutrality was compromised in order to stay neutral, as the country increased banking and trade dealings with Germany during the war.37

It could also perhaps be argued that nationalism and a desire to remain a free nation impacted Swiss leaders and decision making. The Swiss parliament created a commission in 1996 to investigate links between the Nazis and Swiss banks. Known as the Bergier commission, they found that Switzerland and its political leaders failed to protect persecuted Jews and by closing its borders to refugees in August 1942, did more harm to those fleeing the Nazis in other parts of Europe. Switzerland’s positive image as a safe haven for those fleeing persecution and for its neutrality and decisions to not get involved in wars was shaken, and this remains a hot topic when discussing contemporary Swiss history.

Neutrality and a desire to not form alliances impacted Swiss decisions after World War II to not originally join the United Nations or the European Union. “Swiss neutrality is hallmarked by sovereignty and self-determination, the construction of an institution of neutrality recognized by the great powers and the incorporation of neutrality into the strategic culture of the nation.”38 Because of its neutrality and being seen as a safe place, many international organizations chose to be headquartered in Switzerland, including the International Red Cross and one of the four major offices of the United Nations in Geneva, and the International Olympic Committee in Lausanne. Acceptance of Swiss neutrality going back to the Treaty of Westphalia certainly played a role in deciding to have offices in the safe

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37 Dreyer and Jesse, 66.
38 Ibid., 80.
and peaceful city of Geneva for many global organizations. “Switzerland applied for and was granted full UN membership in 2002. This, again, represents the erosion of the idea of absolute neutrality in peacetime. The nationwide referendum passed with 55 percent of the vote, a number that demonstrates the significance many Swiss voters still place on the culture of neutrality.”\textsuperscript{39} Having previously rejected joining the UN, Swiss voters approved the change which had support from political parties, banks and other organizations as a way for Switzerland to become more engaged in international affairs. Also, for the first time, Switzerland is currently a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council through 2024. They will be able to play a role in deciding peacekeeping operations, international sanctions and any military action.

The controversy over Swiss neutrality and if it should be modified is a current topic of debate. When I interviewed Hans-Peter Schaub and Anja Heidelberger, researchers at the University of Bern, they said that neutrality itself has always been strongly supported by Swiss citizens, as surveys show. At the same time, what “neutrality” is and what its consequences are, has always been up for discussion. While the law of neutrality (written in the Swiss constitution) clearly states that Switzerland must not participate in a war between nation-states, the policy of neutrality is a lot less clear and open for debate. The Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs defines the policy of neutrality as “a combination of all the measures a neutral state takes of its own accord to ensure the clarity and credibility of its permanent neutrality.”\textsuperscript{40} Whether an action is in accordance with neutrality has for example been discussed during the debates concerning Switzerland’s rejected accession to the European Economic Area, its accession to the United Nations, and more recently, concerning the reaction of Switzerland after the invasion of Ukraine by Russia in February 2022.

\textsuperscript{39} Dreyer and Jesse, 67-68.

A debate over whether or not Switzerland should adopt sanctions on Russia by the European Union or send ammunition to Ukraine is currently occurring. The Swiss People’s Party launched a popular initiative, with which it wanted to define the policy of neutrality in the Swiss constitution, thus taking the decisions to define it away from the government. In January 2023, the Security Policy Committee of Switzerland’s lower house of parliament voted to allow Swiss weapons and armored vehicles to be re-exported to a war zone.41 “‘The majority of the committee believes Switzerland must offer its contribution to European security, which requires more substantial aid to Ukraine,’ the committee said in a statement. It insisted the proposed changes ‘respect the law of neutrality’ because they would not involve direct exports of Swiss war materiel to conflict zones.”42 The Swiss government would still need to authorize the waiver, which would mean a major break from their policy of neu-

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42 Ibid.
President Ignazio Cassis of the Swiss Confederation makes a point during a press conference with President Volodymyr Zelensky of Ukraine when he visited Kyiv in October 2022 to assess the war situation and discuss humanitarian assistance.

However, this would not violate the law of neutrality, since the government would not be directly sending weapons to Ukraine. “Switzerland, it turns out, has an arms industry that makes badly needed ammunition for some of the weapons that Europeans have supplied to Ukraine, as well as some of the Leopard 2 main battle tanks they have promised.”43 Because companies in Switzerland cannot legally ship those weapons and tanks, there has been pressure and disillusionment from the EU and U.S. “Western countries acknowledge that Swiss contributions would be largely symbolic. But they argue that although Switzerland has for decades benefited from being effectively protected by NATO, surrounded by member states, it has shown no willingness to help those states now.”44


44 Ibid.
Could or should Switzerland change their laws to help Ukraine in its war with Russia? The government has provided humanitarian financial aid to Ukraine and imposed further sanctions on Russia in January. “Swiss neutrality, Mr. Burkart of the Free Democrats argued, only works if it is flexible and if the rest of the world believes in it. The Swiss made accommodations with the Nazis in World War II, and with the Americans by cutting back trade with the Soviet Union in the Cold War.”\(^45\) Switzerland’s current president Alain Berset has stated that it is not legally possible to allow Swiss made weapons to be re-exported to Ukraine, unless parliament decides to change the law. It will be interesting to see in the coming months if there is any flexibility or changes made to this law.

Switzerland experienced lots of changes and challenges since the end of World War II. They remained neutral throughout the Cold War and became a center for international conferences and institutions. The World Economic Forum (originally the European Management Forum) began its annual meeting in Davos in the canton of Graubünden in January 1971, which has grown to include over 1,000 business, government and religious leaders, and NGOs from across the globe. Nationalism can be seen in displays of Swiss flags outside homes and stores and celebrations especially every August 1. But nationalism has never been as strong in Switzerland, due to the strength of the cantons, regional traditions and four national languages. Switzerland experienced little chaos or upheaval with challenges from Napoleon and Nazi Germany. Its democratic institutions remain steady and little has changed since 1848. Admired by many countries for its strong democracy and citizen involvement, there are challenges that many outsiders might not be aware of. For example, I was surprised to learn that only about 50% of citizens vote in elections and popular votes.\(^46\) This seems very low for a semi-direct democracy, where people appear to be very involved and knowledgeable about politics. However, due to

\(^{45}\) Solomon.  
\(^{46}\) Hans-Peter Schaub and Anja Heidelberger, interview by author, Bern, Switzerland, Sept. 6, 2022.
Since 1971, the World Economic Forum (WEF) has met every January in Davos, a mountain resort in the eastern Swiss Alps. An international non-governmental organization, it is mostly funded by 1,000 member companies. The invitation-only annual meeting brings together CEOs, politicians, academic and religious leaders from across the globe. Some people believe that capitalism and globalization have increased poverty and destroyed the environment, leading to criticism and demonstrations against the WEF. The WEF has focused on capital markets, international conflicts and environmental problems with discussion of possible solutions. Could such an annual gathering be possible or successful in other democratic countries? Switzerland offers those who attend the Davos meeting (some coming from non-democracies) a safe and neutral place to debate and exchange ideas and seek ways to make the world better.
its regular popular votes (they usually occur four times a year) Swiss political science has started to take into account how often citizens participate over a certain time span. One study has shown that about 20% of Swiss citizens participated in one out of fifteen popular votes, while 25% participated in all fifteen cases, leaving the other 55% to participate selectively. Thus, participation at popular votes depends strongly on the importance of a topic for the voters (most people will only participate if it is an issue that they care about or if it impacts them).

Another challenge is the slowness of Switzerland’s political system. The referendum means the possibility that any law passed by parliament can be challenged by societal groups and put to a popular vote. In practice, only about 7% of all changes of law are challenged by a referendum. In order to make a law relatively secure against a referendum, the federal government and parliament try to include as many actors as possible in the decision making process. Therefore, big changes in Swiss policies are only rarely possible, and usually change happens only incrementally. Additionally, sometimes a law, on which the government and parliament have worked on for years, nevertheless gets rejected by a majority of voters, so the work has to start all over again. This is obviously something the government wants to avoid from happening. However, Swiss people hold a unique political power, thanks to the two main tools of political power: the initiative (where any citizen can propose a change to the constitution) and the referendum.

To many outsiders, Switzerland today is a model state with an envious high standard of living. “Switzerland has much to envy,

48 Schaub and Heidelberger.
but the image of a picture-perfect country is a misleading one. The genius built into its nineteenth century constitution is increasingly challenged, even endangered.”\(^50\) The country has faced many challenges over the centuries, but often successfully used neutrality and nationalism to its advantage. Many would argue that neutrality allowed Switzerland to avoid wars, prosper, and become and remain a top country for best quality of life. “Over the centuries Switzerland has developed an electoral system and a culture that defuses political tensions and delivers peace and prosperity.”\(^51\) However, like many democracies, they have experienced more recent challenges from an influx of immigrants (30% of the population is foreign-born, about the highest percentage in the world)\(^52\) to a rise in xenophobia, identity questions, calls to do more to help other nations, and debates over neutrality, and if it should continue. For most of United States history, America was neutral too, only permanently changing after World War II. The Swiss political system works well for them, but could it work in the United States or elsewhere? Most Swiss believe their political system is efficient and beneficial, and support their institutions and elected leaders. The same cannot be said of other countries today. Because it’s not realistic that any other country would adopt the Swiss model, it is probably not worth spending too much time pondering this idea. Since Switzerland has mostly benefited from its geography, democracy and neutrality, perhaps they can consider doing more to help other nations that are struggling, especially in Europe. In addition, Johann Wettstein should be further recognized and honored for his impact as a great Swiss diplomat. Perhaps a scholarship, fellowship, award or endowed chair in the study of diplomacy could be created to honor his impact and legacy? One could argue that Switzerland’s successes as an economic power and center for international organizations and meetings is due in large part to its continued neutrality and strong and stable democratic institutions that have existed since the Middle Ages.

\(^{50}\) Bongiovanni and Amez-Droz.  
\(^{51}\) Ibid.  
\(^{52}\) Ibid.
From early in the nineteenth century until the 1950s, tens of thousands of Swiss children were taken from their homes and placed with foster families or sold at auction. The mothers of the outplaced children were usually poor and divorced; some were alleged to be prostitutes. One of these mothers was the author’s great-grandmother,
Dorothea Hürlimann. In 1895, because she was divorced and managed a tobacco store in Geneva’s red-light district, her three children were sent to live with foster families. The middle child, Dora, was four years old when she was placed with a family in Winterthur and began her life as a servant. In 1914, Dora immigrated to the United States, married a German immigrant, and, in 1921, gave birth to the author’s mother, Hazel Fischer. For over a century, Dorothea Hürlimann’s descendants, including the author’s grandmother and her Swiss relatives, were silent about why the children were outplaced with foster families and how the outplacements affected the mother and her children.

In 1987, the author and his Swiss cousin, Urs Arcon, discussed their belief that the family secrets were hiding the truth. To find the true story about Dorothea and the fate of her children, the author and Arcon spent 2018-2019 examining Swiss archives and interviewing relatives on both sides of the Atlantic.

The research revealed that Dorothea’s husband was an alcoholic who had abandoned his family, that Dorothea obtained a divorce and that she was forced to outplace her three children. Dorothea re-married, and, after a decade apart, she and her children were reunited. Daughter Dora and her siblings survived their lives as Verdingkinder (contract children), but they decided to cover up the facts of their mother’s struggles. The true story of Dorothea Hürlimann includes both tragedy and triumph; it is also a tale of resilience in the face of shame and failure.

**Contract Children, Apologies and Compensation**

Until the mid-twentieth century, much of Switzerland’s economy was based on farming.¹ Since there was almost no mechanization, planting, weeding, and harvesting were done by manual labor. Many farmers needed extra workers to cultivate crops and manage

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¹ [https://www.swissinfo.ch/ger/dienstleistungssektor/28990352](https://www.swissinfo.ch/ger/dienstleistungssektor/28990352) May 12, 2016. “In the course of the twentieth century, Switzerland had developed from an agrarian country into an industrial country with a rich tradition of craftsmanship.” (Last accessed Aug. 2, 2022).
the animals. To meet the labor shortage, village authorities seized poor children and placed them with farming families. The outplaced children are called Verdingkinder, a word that has been variously translated as “contract children,” “discarded children,” “indentured children” or even “slave children.”

Starting in 2004, revelations about the Verdingkinder started to appear in the media and many Swiss were horrified by the size and duration of the child labor system. A BBC article by Kavita Puri was one of many that shocked many Swiss citizens. Titled “Switzerland’s shame: The children used as cheap farm labour,” it concluded that, “Since the 1850s, hundreds of thousands of Swiss children were taken from their parents and sent to farms to work—a practice that continued well into the twentieth century . . . the extent to which these children were treated as commodities is demonstrated by the fact that there are cases even in the early twentieth century where they were herded into a village square and sold at public auction.”

The authorities’ rationale was that children of immoral mothers deserved better opportunities, so they had to be removed from their homes and placed where they could learn a skill. Proper child rearing, the thinking went, required that parents be married, the husband have respectable work, and the family have a well-built house. Convinced that these women were unable to raise their offspring properly, officials either seized the children or forced the mothers to place them with foster families. In “Thousands of Swiss Children Sold into Slavery,” Kim Wilshire described how the system worked:

Many of the child workers, known as Verdingkinder (discarded children), ended up being beaten and sexually abused after passing under the auctioneer’s hammer in Swiss provincial towns. They were handed to farmers or

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factory owners, who were paid a fee by local authorities to feed and house them. Although the children were supposed to be paid a basic wage for their work, in practice many were treated as slaves. Historians estimate that as many as 12,000 children of poor families, some of them infants and many with unmarried or divorced mothers, were given away or sold during the 1930s alone. The trade finally ended only in the decade after the Second World War, when increased farm mechanisation (sic) meant less need for youthful labour.”

In 2004, historian Marco Leuenberger expressed the shock that many must have felt as they read about slavery: “We estimate that between five and ten per cent of all Swiss children may have been sold or sent away by their families to work in the countryside between 1850 and 1950. . . . It’s astonishing that these slave auctions were allowed to happen in Switzerland. . . . One explanation is that at the time it was a poor agricultural country and there was a desperate need for cheap labour.”

Another historian, Loretta Seglias, concluded that “hundreds of thousands of such children were placed. The exact population of children sent to foster homes or auctioned will probably never be known, since there is little agreement about when the practice started and ended. In addition, each canton had a different archival system, and there is no federal record of foster care in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.”

Although there is no federal record, it seems likely that there were municipal records. Now and in the past, the tracking of short-term visitors, long-term visa holders, permanent residents and citizens has been extremely well regulated in Switzerland. To the author, it seems possible that municipal and cantonal authorities purged their records, and the truth about many Verdingkinder will remain a se-

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Women, Divorce, Tobacco, and Outplacements of Children

secret. Only in 2019, did revelations by the few surviving Verdingkinder prompt the federal government to offer an apology and compensation.

It seems likely that, during the Verdingkinder era, there were lists of those who were poor, divorced, engaged in prostitution and/or operating places like tobacco stores. Journalists Corinna Guthknecht and Josef Wirnshofer describe how, in Switzerland, the dominant cultural belief of that era was that (1) poor people impoverished themselves due to bad behavior, and (2) such people might threaten society: “At the time, poverty was not a problem of the state, but misconduct of the individual. It was also considered a danger to the common good. Poor mothers and fathers, it was thought, would affect the children negatively. Illegitimate children or children of separated parents were especially affected.”

Some children, like Dorothea’s, were voluntarily outplaced, but others were seized and sold to the lowest bidder: “If a child became orphaned, a parent was unmarried, there was fear of neglect, or you had the misfortune to be poor, the communities would intervene. Authorities tried to find the cheapest way to look after these children, so they took them out of their families and placed them in foster families.” “Public auctions for the child workers were still being held in some Swiss towns and villages as late as the 1930s.”

During the decades of forced child labor, the Verdingkinder had no political or economic clout and most toiled in utter obscurity. However, in 2019, after 15 years of media coverage and interviews with survivors, the government admitted that the child outplacements constituted a “dark period of Swiss history.”

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The (Swiss) Federal Office of Justice (FOJ) has processed some 6,000 claims for victims of forced labour and abuse. . . . The aim is to deal with all the claims, totaling more than 9,000, by the end of the year. The Swiss government has agreed to pay up to CHF 25,000 ($24,800) in compensation to people who, as children, were victims of forced labour policies or placed in institutions, often suffering abuse or neglect. The “Verdingkinder” (slave children) practice continued until 1981. Around 12,000-15,000 victims are still alive, the FOJ estimates. The government announced the CHF 300 million compensation scheme in September 2016, and it was launched in December of that year. The authorities had earlier offered official apologies to the survivors of this dark period of Swiss history.7

Rationale and Methodology

The spark for this research study originated with Urs Arcon, a Swiss great-grandchild of Dorothea Hürlimann. In 1987, Arcon, then a clothing designer and resident of Winterthur, sent a letter to the author in North Carolina. Arcon, aware that he and his cousins shared the same Swiss great-grandparents, wrote that, “there are family myths, and truth is covered by a veil of silence.” He spoke about how his parents never discussed his great-grandparents, and that he sensed there were secrets worth investigating. He and the author knew that Dorothea’s children were placed with foster families, but they did not know why or for how long. The author described his motivation: “I wondered why my grandmother was taken from her mother, who she lived with and why she left Switzerland. Urs urged me to move to Switzerland, but the Swiss Embassy turned me down since neither parent was Swiss. I appealed by saying I planned to write an article describing my Swiss American connections, and, within days the Embassy granted me a visa. Starting in the summer of 2018, Urs

and I pursued leads, translated German and French archival documents, and interviewed relatives, farmers, prostitutes, and surviving Verdingkinder.\textsuperscript{8}

Arcon and the author visited every address where Dorothea and her children are known to have lived. They met with members of ancestral Hürlimann clan in Walchwil, visited the red-light district and a tobacco store in Geneva and viewed the river where Dorothea’s husband fell to his death. Thanks to visits, interviews, and records, the truth can be told, and family myths laid to rest.

\textbf{Dorothea Hürlimann}

Dorothea Hürlimann, the author’s great-grandmother, was born on November 11, 1858, in Walchwil, Zug. Her parents were Michael Joseph Hürlimann (August 25, 1826-September 9, 1894) and Maria Elisabeth Ganz (April 13, 1826-September 4, 1889). Rudolf Albert Sommer, the author’s great-grandfather, was born on January 24, 1857, in Elsau, Zurich. He became a “cooper” and knew how to construct and repair wooden barrels for wine. Although the Sommer family had lived in Elsau for centuries, young Rudolf decided to break free from village life and booked passage to the United States. With a similar goal, Dorothea Hürlimann also emigrated to the U.S. They met in Philadelphia and were married on June 26, 1887. Their son, Rudolf Michael, was born on June 12, 1888, and the couple’s need for income increased. Although he was a skilled woodworker, Rudolf drank heavily and lost his job.

In early 1891, the couple gave up their dream of being Americans and took a ship back to Europe. As they crossed France, Dorothea went into labor, and Dora Suzanne Sommer, the author’s grandmother, was born in Paris on May 2, 1891. After the family of four settled in Geneva, a third child, Elise, was born on August 10, 1893.

\textsuperscript{8} Author’s notes, Apr. 15, 2019.
In Geneva, Rudolf’s life disintegrated: he was jailed for insulting his wife, lost work and abandoned the family. Dorothea decided to seek a divorce, and, on November 8, 1895, a Geneva court heard her complaints. In Calvinist Geneva, divorce was extremely rare, but Dorothea’s case must have been convincing, because the judge’s decision was clear:

“From the first days of marriage, Mr. Sommer was abusive; he does not work; he was fired by bosses at several jobs, he said injurious things to his wife like calling her a whore; he was arrested for doing this in October 1894; he left his wife and three children this past April 10 and didn’t give them any news.”

Thus, on November 9, 1895, Dorothea was a divorced woman with three children, ages two, four and seven. Without a doubt, Dorothea knew that divorce reflected poorly on the wife, but she was so desperate that she was willing to risk the shame of being a mother without a husband. Her ex-husband provided no help, and, according to Swiss family members, he drowned in the Rhine River on October 10, 1904. No one knows if he intended to kill himself. Without funds, Dorothea took a job managing a tobacco store on 52 Rue de Monthoux, located in the district of Geneva known as Le Paquis.

In that era, divorced women who ran tobacco stores were condemned by the Calvinist elders. These businesses were thought to

11 Author’s notes: Urs Arcon and I visited Le Paquis in May 2019. To Swiss, “Le Paquis” is still synonymous with “red-light district.” In the twenty-first century, women from Africa and Latin America walk the streets, many with mini-skirts and low-cut tops. I overheard some women speaking Spanish and said, “Buenos días” to them. Josefina, a woman from Colombia, said, “Come on in to get a massage!” I explained that I was researching my ancestors and not there for a massage. She laughed and said, “Are you really looking for someone from a hundred years ago?”
be fronts for prostitution, and sexual trysts supposedly took place in the back rooms. A 2004 exhibition in Zurich depicted prostitution and tobacco stores: “Covering 1875 to 1925, (the exhibition) tells in graphic detail the story of an often-sordid aspect of the Belle Epoque, when it was considered normal for well-to-do men to visit brothels. . . . After the official closure of brothels in 1898, many of the women found jobs in cigar shops. Each shop had an adjoining backroom where it was possible to buy more than cheroots and other tobacco products.”

Critical of her divorce, poverty, and job, officials required Dorothea to outplace her children. To avoid the auction block, Dorothea voluntarily sent them to live in Elsau and Winterthur. After 1895, there are no photos of Dorothea with her children until they were in their teens, so it seems likely that the mother and children were apart for at least a decade. Paula Craige, one of Dorothea’s great-grandchildren, reflected on the dilemma faced by divorced women: “Dorothea managed to survive by whatever means necessary in a repressive Calvinist society where options to earn a living for a single mother were few.”

Three years after her children were sent away, Dorothea married Rémy Maul, a Swiss-French man. The couple had one child, Robert, and left Le Paquis. Around 1910, Dorothea was reunited with her children, and the three teenagers met their step-father, also known as “Papa Maul.” Dorothea died on October 17, 1924.

Dorothea’s eldest child, Rudolf, worked on a dairy farm in Elsau, a municipality in the canton of Zurich. After his foster placement ended, he took a job with Sulzer, an engineering company based in Winterthur, became a pipefitter, and helped construct a water tunnel for the Amsteg power station in the Reuss Valley. Later, Sulzer sent him to work on projects in Finland, Spain, and Russia. On July 28, 1914, the

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day the Russian Empire entered World War I, he fled St. Petersburg and moved to Winterthur. It was there that he met his wife, Emma Wiesendanger, and raised their children, Emmy, Lilly and Ruedi. In 1920, Emmy married Angelo Arcon and one of their children is the author’s colleague and cousin, Urs. Ruedi married Marie Donner and they had three children, Eliane, Adrian and Bernard, all of whom live near Aarberg.

One day in 1914, while working as a nanny in Winterthur, Dorothea’s oldest daughter, Dora, met two Americans, Rector Thomas Wells and his wife, Annie, from Minneapolis, Minnesota. The couple, who founded the Wells Settlement House, imagined that Dora would be a fine companion for their daughter, Mary, and invited her to come with them to the United States. After years of foster care, little income, and no home, Dora imagined she would find success and happiness. Such was not the case; in fact, her setbacks mirrored what her mother, Dorothea, suffered.

Dora’s son, Rudy, described what happened: “It may have been her language facility . . . that brought her to the attention of the Wells, a wealthy American family then on a grand tour of Europe with their rather spoiled and willful children, in that first decade of the twentieth century. They hired (Dora) as governess and primarily companion for their daughter, Mary, close to Nana’s age, and promptly and without too much difficulty prevailed on her to sail off to the United States in their company.” At age 24, Dora boarded the Kaiserin Auguste Victoria in Hamburg and, on May 30, 1914, she landed on Ellis Island in New York. In Minneapolis, she suffered “frequent spells of homesickness for her beloved Swiss Alps,” and, when the Wells returned to Switzerland a year later, Dora decided to “(terminate) her services . . . without reluctance.” Her son, Rudy, wrote that she had “no intention of visiting the United States ever again.”

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16 Fischer, op. cit. (p. 2).
An invitation from Romola de Pulszky, the wife of ballet dancer Vaslav Nijinsky, was sufficient for Dora to re-consider her vow and, in 1915, she returned to New York. She worked as an attendant for the Nijinskys’ daughter, Kyra, and apparently enjoyed her life with the famous couple. As the Nijinskys prepared for a U.S. tour, Dora met a bellhop named Paul Emil Fischer (December 28, 1890-April 1950), a German immigrant who had arrived in New York on June 10, 1914. Paul and Dora were married in Jersey City, New Jersey, on December 23, 1916. They had two children, Rudy Warner (b. Nov. 27, 1917) and the author’s mother, Hazel (b. Sept. 25, 1921). Dora became a naturalized U.S. citizen on July 7, 1921.

Paul Fischer’s job required him to be absent for months at a time. When he returned home, “he was abusive of (Dora), mentally and physically, complaining bitterly of household bills, lack of freedom, etc.” The family followed Paul to Detroit, Cincinnati, and Minneapolis, but, when he announced a move to Dallas, Dora filed for and obtained a divorce. Soon thereafter, she was so desperate for support that she remarried him, only to divorce once again. She raised her two children, both of whom graduated from the University of Minnesota. Rudy later went to law school and Hazel became a registered nurse and enlisted as an Army nurse. Hazel was ordered to duty in Denver, where she met her future husband, Dr. Ernest Craige. By 1951, they had four children, the eldest of whom is the author.

In the mid-1960s, Dora moved to Chapel Hill, North Carolina, where her daughter and four grandchildren lived. The author can recall his grandmother’s Swiss pastries, stories of the Alps, and the admonition “to have more butter and a little bit of meat. I don’t want you to die of TB!” The grandchildren were impressed that Dora could name every mountain on a Swiss calendar, her favorites being the Jungfrau and the Matterhorn. One evening, she sang a song which went something like this: “Lovers meet on Alpine peaks because mountains never share their secrets.” Sarah Craige recalled how Dora

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17 Fischer, op. cit. (p. 9).
“would make delicious dishes in her apartment, bragging about how much butter was included. She thought it was good to have some plumpness to ward off sickness. She would tell us stories of Switzerland that we loved to listen to, but her voice and accent were so melodious that it was impossible not to doze off.”

Dora never mentioned her mother, her siblings, the tobacco store, Le Paquis, the foster home or her husband, Paul. Towards the end of her life, however, she shared an incident that occurred after she was reunited with her mother:

My mother married Rémy Maul. His last name rhymed with ‘pole.’ We loved him very much and I called him ‘Papa.’ Mother was strict, so I was glad to have a Papa. The two of them bought a piano with ‘Mozart’ carved into it. Papa hired a handsome Italian music teacher who gave me lessons in the back room of the restaurant. Papa would sit near the door to observe, but sometimes the door was shut. One day we were supposed to be practicing the scales. The teacher, as was often the case, joked with me about the small size of my fingers and how they were not able to reach the keys. ‘I will have to stretch them,’ he said, and he held my fingers and pulled on them. On this day, he reached over and kissed me. Just then Papa opened the door and said, ‘Get out! That’s not what we paid you for!’ The man was paid but did not come again. Mother asked me why I didn’t push him away. I said it was not my fault, since I was too young and didn’t want to do anything. As a result, they did not trust me alone. They would not send me to music school and went with me when I went outside.”

The author recalled dinners: “There was no dining room table in her apartment in Chapel Hill, so we would roll out her circular folding table, all the while singing: ‘Roll out the barrel, we’ll have

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18 Sarah Craig, Dec. 1, 2021, interview by the author.
19 Interview notes by the author.
a barrel of fun . . .’ We dined on buttery roesti potatoes and lemon squares while marveling at (her) sweet disposition. She was a perfect grandmother, almost an angel. Many years later, as her health declined, she despaired because cans of food were out of date, grasshoppers lived in her oven, and slugs covered her stoop. I tossed out the cans, dealt with the slugs and grasshoppers and took her in my Plymouth Valiant through the countryside. One time I drove into a ditch, and she exclaimed, ‘Don’t worry one bit! It doesn’t matter at all!’

Paula Craige recalled her grandmother’s skill with handwork and how she accompanied Dora as she passed from life to death:

> When Nana arrived from Minneapolis with her old-timey, purple suitcase, she brought us chocolates with pictures of Switzerland. Nana was a fantastic knitter, making mittens, sweaters and Afghan blankets that are enjoyed today. Her tatting (lace making), cross stitching and embroidery were superfine. She listened to opera every Sunday on the radio. Her handwriting was exquisite. As she got weaker, I would climb into her bed and lay down next to her. Since she was tired and forgetful, she would say a sentence and repeat it. Over and over, this sentence became her mantra of dying and good-bye. Nana said, ‘I love you.’ I said, ‘I love you.’ Nana looked at me and said: ‘I love you.’ ‘I love you,’ I said.’ She died in my arms.’

Dora Fischer died in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, on August 16, 1980, at age 89.

**Discussion about Outplacement of Children**

Why did governments take children from their mothers? What was the goal of the outplacements? How did the parents and children

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20 Author’s notes.

survive the emotional burden of separation and loneliness? In 1989, the forced outplacement of a mother’s children was condemned by Article 7 of the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child which states that a child has “the right to know and be cared for by his or her parents.” Prior to 1989, civil authorities in Switzerland, Canada, and the United States had declared that certain parents were morally, financially, or culturally incapable of raising their children and ordered them to be placed with foster families or in boarding schools. In Switzerland, “Swiss authorities . . . targeted the children of single mothers and others whom they considered to have fallen into ‘moral destitution.’” The policy was designed primarily to punish poor, divorced mothers and create a pool of labor. Canada’s government authorities seized indigenous children, placed them in residential schools and attempted to erase their culture: “More than 150,000 children were sent to residential schools, which Canada’s first prime minister supported to, in his words, ‘sever children from the tribe’ and ‘civilize’ them.” In the United States, authorities moved Native children to boarding schools and banned their tribal language. U.S. cavalry captain Richard Henry Pratt had “the mindset under which the U.S. forced tens of thousands of Native American children to attend ‘assimilation’ boarding schools in the late nineteenth century” and declared, “Kill the Indian in him and save the man.”

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22 Mothers who put children up for adoption do so voluntarily; adoption agencies confirm that the birth mother agrees and that the new home provides adequate financial and emotional support.


Unfortunately, the practice of seizing children from birth parents seems not to have disappeared. A recent article in *Forbes* quoted Ukraine’s Human Rights Commissioner, Lyudmila Denysova, who said that “more than 121,000 children have been forcibly deported to Russia over recent weeks . . .”

**Conclusions**

The Hürlimann clan lived for centuries in Walchwil, Zug, but, in 1895, one member of the family, Dorothea, chose to move to Pennsylvania and later to Geneva. In Philadelphia, she and her husband failed to make a living as immigrants, so they returned to Europe. After their bitter divorce, city officials judged Dorothea to be an unfit mother, and she was forced to send her three children to foster homes. Though called a “whore” by her husband and condemned by a Calvinist government, she refused to give up. Ultimately, despite marital, cultural, and legal obstacles, she remarried, and her children prospered in Switzerland and the United States. Some of Dorothea’s descendants judged her to be a failure, but, as we look at the larger picture of her country’s history and culture, we can see that, despite all odds, she succeeded in re-building her family and leaving behind a beautiful legacy of tenacity and courage.

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Women, Divorce, Tobacco, and Outplacements of Children


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I cannot ever thank my wife, Kim, for all that she has done. When I was ready to give up, she told me I had to go into the Walchwil government office and inquire about a local genealogist. That is how we met Franz Hürlimann who invited us to his home next to where our ancestors lived centuries ago. Mr. Hürlimann was ecstatic to find out about the research, and his records now include information about the youngest and oldest members of many more Swiss and American families.

Divorce decree, November 7, 1895, Geneva archives. Credit: Author.
Archivist searching for family records, Geneva. Credit: Author.

1907 Dora (in back) had been outplaced with the Heller family in Winterthur. Here she is working as a tutor with the Heller children and other students. Credit: In possession of the Author.
After more than ten years, Dorothea was reunited with Elise, Rudolf, and Dora, in Geneva—ca1909. Credit: In possession of the Author.

1916 Engagement party of Dora Sommer and Paul Fischer, Jersey City, New Jersey. Credit: In possession of the Author.

Dora and Paul Fischer with children Rudy and Hazel, Minneapolis, Minnesota, ca1935. Credit: In possession of the Author.
1949 Dora with grandchild Burton and the author. Credit: In possession of the Author.

Author at address of Dorothea’s tobacco store, 52 Rue de Monthoux, Geneva, 2019. Credit: Photo by Urs Arcon, used with permission.
Author’s cousin, Urs Arcon, Locarno, 2019. Credit: In possession of the Author.

2019 Walchwil genealogist Franz Hürlimann. Credit: Kim Craige, used with permission.
Maurice-Ernest Gillioz is a good example of the American dream. The son of a Swiss emigrant from the Canton of Valais who arrived in New York in the middle of the American Civil War, Gillioz started from nothing and built one of the largest public works companies in the Midwest in the first half of the twentieth century. Philippe Pierroz’ book is 164 pages, written in French, of richly illustrated and strongly documented material. The numerous illustrations and appendices can be easily understood by English-speaking readers.

“The American history of the Gilloz family begins on November 10, 1864. On that day, the brothers Alfred Eugène and Eugène François Maurice, ages 18 and 20, arrived in New York. Born in Granges, children of Maurice Gilloz, a notary, and Antoinette Roten, they travelled on the ship Stella which left from Antwerp carrying 189 passengers. They are the uncle and father of Maurice Ernest Gilloz. “Alfred Eugène is the father of Maurice Ernest, to whom this book is dedicated.

The two brothers joined the American army in the middle of the Civil War. Alfred became an American citizen on September 26, 1866, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, where he resided.

Maurice Ernest was born in the hamlet of Dillon, near Rolla, Missouri. He only went to school until the age of 10. At 15, he went to St. Louis and then to Texas where he worked for a while. He returned to St. Louis and married Marie Ismérie Isoria Moret, born in Charrat (Valais, Switzerland). He was soon appointed foreman of the railroad company where he was employed. The book follows Gillioz as he climbed the ladder of success and even ended up rubbing shoulders with U.S. presidents.

In 1913, he started his own company where he built a Catholic church, then several bridges. His adventure had begun.
Gillioz’s work ranged across the nation from Nebraska to Florida, from Oklahoma to Virginia. In each of these construction projects he left his mark on a multitude of roads, bridges, railroads and dams. He touched on the entire spectrum of civil engineering: churches, military airfields, auditoriums, high schools, hospitals as well as the aforementioned projects.

The famous Gillioz Theater in Springfield, Missouri, is intimately linked to the christening of the famous Route 66. Do those who have traveled this mythical road, which has inspired singers and writers, know that in crossing Missouri and Oklahoma, they have driven more than a hundred kilometers of roads and crossed several bridges built by Maurice-Ernest Gillioz? Philippe Pierroz’s book permits the reader to discover this colorful, energetic character.

Included in the book are numerous illustrations and fascinating appendices: Appendices 1 to 4 provide maps, genealogies of the Gillioz and related families, but above all numerous construction projects in which Gillioz participated.

Appendix 5 on pages 150 to 153: list of 74 bridges with the following information:
- Year of construction, Cost in dollars, Name of the structure, Location by state, Type of structure, Length in meters if applicable, and Condition of the structure and any subsequent modifications made to the original projects.

Appendix 6 on page 154: list of 15 dams with the following information:
- Year of construction, Name of structure, Location by State, Purpose, Specific contribution of Maurice E. Gillioz and the overall cost in dollars.

Appendix 7 on page 155: Various other works carried out by Mr. E. Gillioz:
- Year of construction, value in dollars, Location by County, Work (factory, store, reservoir, school, etc.).

~ Yves Bordet, Independent Scholar
In English, this title is translated as *One For All, All For One. A Commemorative for the Bicentenary of the Swiss Shooting Association SSV*. This tome does much more than celebrate the two-hundredth anniversary of Switzerland’s marksmanship society. Given the central role of the SSV in the political, military, and social life of the country, this work is also an interactive history, indeed a reference work, for those same years. This review pinpoints some of the highlights of the volume.

The book has a forward by Bundesrätin (Federal Councillor) Viola Amherd, who heads the Federal Department of Defense, Civil Protection and Sport. Six distinguished historians contribute to the tome, the most prolific is Jürg Stüssi-Lauterburg, an old friend and colleague of this author. Regula Berger, who until 2022 headed the Schützen Museum in Bern which some readers may have visited, is another contributor. The work is well documented with countless original sources.
The outstanding Swiss record in international shooting competitions from 1897 onward is detailed in chapter 1. Chapters 2 through 9 describe the birth and development of the SSV shooting Organization from 1824 through 2021, each chapter devoted to specific periods of the growth of the Swiss Confederation. The roots of the rifle clubs go much further back, for instance that for Lucerne to the year 1354 and that for Geneva to 1474. But after centuries of protecting her independence by defeating some of the great armies of Europe, Switzerland was conquered by Napoleon in 1798 and did not regain her full independence until recognized as such by the Congress of Vienna in 1815. As patriotic feelings grew along with the need to establish a true armed neutrality, in 1822 Aarau rifle champion Carl Ludwig Schmid-Guiot initiated the concept of a Confederation-wide shooting association.

Chapter 2 covers the period 1824, when the association was actually launched, through 1849, in the aftermath of the Sonderbund War. From the beginning, the Schützenverein was tied into the military organization. The officers of the cantonal armed forces held a meeting in Langenthal that helped spark its growth in an organized manner (visit the Hotel Bären in that town today and see a magnificent mural in the hall where they met). Promotion of rifle shooting country-wide enhanced a militia force of all able-bodied men. The slogan “one for all, all for one,” originated at the Lausanne Federal Free Shooting Championships in 1836.

The development of the shooting societies in the context of the growth of the Federal Republic during 1850-1874 is detailed in Chapter 3. Mutual participation in shooting matches help to heal divisions between the Catholic and Protestant cantons following the Sonderbund War, which unified the country while being threatened by the European governments that repressed the 1848 revolutions. Volunteer sharpshooters were organized who could defend the Confederation at a moment’s notice. A standard caliber for rifles was adopted in 1850 for marksmen who were part of the organized militia forces. The year 1872
saw the founding of the country-wide *Feldschiessen*, which was then and remains today the largest shooting festival in the world.

The last quarter of the nineteenth century through just before World War I is covered in Chapter 4. The bond between the citizen and militia service was cemented by the Constitution of 1874, under which every Swiss man had the obligation to perform military service and would be given his arms without charge. Regulations required the arms to be kept at home to facilitate instant mobilization. Every soldier was required to shoot a certain minimum score in the annual *Obligatorische* (obligatory shooting). The SSV worked hand-in-hand with the military department to promote marksmanship skills. When the German Kaiser visited to observe Swiss military maneuvers in 1912, an image of the Kaiser with a Swiss soldier entitled “in the land of the best shooters” went viral with the following dialogue:

– *Also ihr seid 100000 solche Schützen; wenn nun aber 200000 Preußen kämen?*

– *Dä schüsset mer grad no ä mol, Mayestät!*

– You are 100,000 fine shooters, just like you. What if I send in 200,000 Prussians?

– Then we will shoot twice, Your Majesty!

Fortunately, the Swiss managed to avoid the Great War through their armed neutrality, but the next period—1914 to 1939, the subject of Chapter 5—brought her up to the brink of the next war. Led by General Ulrich Wille in World War I, the Swiss militia army was mobilized to protect the borders and to prepare for attack. The SSV continued to hold matches and functioned essentially as a reserve militia. The war over, marksmanship blossomed as the one hundredth anniversary of the SSV was celebrated in 1924 with the unveiling of the *Aarauer Schützendenkmal* (Shooting Monument in Aarau, which can be seen today). When the Nazis came to power in Germany in
1933, Federal Councillor Rudolf Minger, head of the military department and a strong supporter of the SSV, facilitated measures to protect the country from the German threat. The Eidgenössische Schützenfest in 1939 in Luzern would be the last of the great shooting festivals for the duration of the war. When Hitler launched World War II, Henri Guisan became head of the Swiss army, whose armed citizens would be a strong dissuasive force against invasion.

“Und Steht Der Teufel Selbst Vor’m Haus, Hier Beisst Er Einen Zahn Sich Aus” (“Should the devil himself stand in front of our house, he must withdraw with the loss of a tooth”—an old saying meaning that, if Satan threatens, he would lose a tooth if he attempts to crack open the fortress). The title of Chapter 6, that message was posted in a sign at the Fortress Furggels, the largest underground fortress built in Switzerland during World War II, underneath the

The Aarauer Schützendenkmal (Shooting Monument) in Aarau, built in 1924 on the centennial of the first Federal Schützenfest, showing one shooter with a percussion rifle shaking hands with another with a Schmidt-Ruben 1911 bolt action rifle. (Courtesy of the author.)
village of St. Margrethenberg. From the fall of France in 1940 to the end of the war in 1945, the Aktivdienst (active service) generation held fast against planned Nazi invasions from the north, east, and west, and Fascist invasion from the south. In addition to the troops mobilized at the borders and in the Alpine Réduit, the SSV-trained Ortswehren (local defense), consisting of 100,000 old men and boys, guarded against saboteurs and parachutists and formed a cadre of armed resistance. This was not a time for matches—most men were on duty, and ammunition was in short supply—but a time for being on constant alert against aggression. While completely encircled by the Axis, the Swiss held firm. Winston Churchill said it best near the end of the war: “Of all the neutrals, Switzerland has the greatest right to distinction.”

The period of the Cold War, 1946-1970, is the subject of Chapter 7. In 1946, over 460,000 competitors shot in the rifle matches. Soviet aggression in Eastern Europe continued the serious and civic purposes of the SSV shooting programs. These years saw an increase in participation of women in shooting. As throughout the book, presidents of the SSV and their contributions are described.

SSV membership in 1971 amounted to 500,000, but that number fell to 200,000 by 1999, as noted in Chapter 8. The fall of the Berlin Wall and the dissolution of the Soviet Union greatly eased tensions to the extent that required military service also fell in this period. Symbolic of the times was the initiative brought by the Group for a Switzerland Without an Army, which was voted down in 1993. The Eidgenössische Schützenfest in Thun in 1995 fielded 72,241 participants (yours truly being one). The world was changing.

“The shooting tradition embodies one of the basic values of our country,” according to Bundesrat Ueli Maurer, a member of the Federal Council, where he served as President twice and oversaw the military department. His tenure is described in Chapter 9, which covers the years 2000-2021. The book details the SSV’s leadership, including the lengthy tenure of Peter Schmid, brother of the former Federal
President Samuel Schmid (both of whom I have had the pleasure of meeting). In 2011, the Swiss rejected the *Waffendiktat* initiative that would have banned soldiers from keeping their military weapons at home, but in 2019 voted in favor of a Schengen-induced referendum that imposed EU restrictions on firearm ownership. While the Covid pandemic caused the cancellation of the Federal Shooting Festival in Lucerne in 2020, it was held the following year. Life has returned to normal, in the shooting world as elsewhere.

While the entire book is well illustrated, Chapter 10—on the Schützen Museum in Bern—is lavish. After a print of the Federal Shoot in Bern in 1885—the year when the concept of the museum originated—the reader is treated to color photographs of trophies, medals, paintings, historic posters, and glass art. The stairway walls are filled with scores of small arms, showing the historical development from crossbows and matchlocks to flintlocks and modern cartridge rifles.

*Young shooters march in the parade of the Eidgenössische Schützenfest in Aarau, July 4, 2010.* (Courtesy of the author.)
The great hall upstairs houses the collection. (My only regret is that the two large paintings of bears enjoying a shooting festival is not included.) The museum’s building, completed in 1939, is located behind the Bernese Historical Museum, and its outer facade features an enormous painting of soldiers, citizens, and youngsters with rifles and the national flag.

The “Haus der Schützen” is a beautiful mansion owned by a foundation with that name located at Lidostrasse 6 on the Lake of Lucerne. Built in 1918, it was acquired by the foundation in 1960. It hosts SSV functions and houses administrative offices. Its history, which unfortunately has included periodic flooding from the lake, is described in Chapter 11.

While ordnance weapons are usually distinguished from precision weapons, in Switzerland the two were combined so that the soldier and the citizen would shoot the most accurate arms. The arms issued to the militiaman are the same predominantly used in the shooting sports. Chapter 12 traces the evolution of Swiss arms from 1824 to today. Cantonal arms gave way to standardized federal arms in 1847 and there-
When first issued in 1869, the Swiss Vetterli rifle was the most modern military design in the world—it held twelve metallic cartridges in its tubular magazine at a time when most armies still used single-shot rifles requiring a manual reload after each shot. The 1889/96 and 1911 Schmidt-Ruben bolt-action rifles came next, using the 7.5 mm cartridge with smokeless powder. That was replaced by the Karabiner 1931, which was issued until 1958. The age of the *Sturmgewehr* (assault rifle) arrived with the heavy Model 1957 and then the lighter Model 1990, today’s service rifle. These last three models are in wide use in competitions today, along with the SIG 210 pistol, the most accurate 9 mm pistol in the world.

The book ends with a brief Chapter 13 on the study of marksmanship in the academic world. Students formed groups like the *Schützenverein Schweizerischer Polytechniker* in Zurich in 1871 and

*The author of this book review with former Federal President Ueli Maurer, at the 2015 remembrance of General Henri Guisan’s historic 1940 meeting with the Swiss officers at the Rütli.* (Courtesy of the author.)
elsewhere, largely in the nineteenth century. They were inspired in part by movements throughout Europe against the old order and in favor of republican ideals.

_Einer Für Alle_ is a reference work on the history of the Swiss shooting culture in the past two centuries. It is anything but a quick read. Those who venture may find of mosts interest to be the chapters tied to particularly important periods of Swiss history, such as Chapter 2, covering the beginning of the Swiss republic through the Sonderbund war; Chapter 6, on how Switzerland’s armed neutrality dissuaded Nazi invasion; or Chapter 10, with its beautiful illustrations from the Schützen Museum in Bern.

As the _Schweizer Schiesssportverbandes_ enters its third century under the leadership of its current president, Luca Filippini, it will surely face dramatic challenges as elements of popular culture discourage patriotism and marksmanship, EU diktats demand civilian disarmament, and terrorism and unprovoked aggression threaten peace and freedom.

~ Stephen P. Halbrook, Attorney at Law, is author of _Target Switzerland_ and _The Swiss and the Nazis_.
See https://stephenhalbrook.com/.
Switzerland and Sub-Saharan Africa in the Cold War, 1967-1979: Neutrality Meets Decolonisation

Reviewed by Thomas Quinn Marabello


Switzerland and Sub-Saharan Africa in the Cold War, 1967-1979: Neutrality Meets Decolonisation was written as part of the series “New Perspectives on the Cold War,” which looks at different issues, events and regions impacted by the Cold War. While Switzerland was not a major power, nor did it have colonies in Africa or elsewhere, it had economic interests in the continent and a foreign policy that guided its decision making and values, centered around its historical tradition of neutrality. This well researched work of historiography gives readers new insights into Switzerland’s relations, especially with Portuguese colonies during and after decolonization. Those colonies included Angola and Mozambique, along with Ethiopia and Somalia, where Switzerland had strong economic ties. Like most Western nations, Switzerland was opposed to communism. The Swiss government came under pressure as Africa decolonized to take a stand against Apartheid in South Africa and human rights abuses that occurred throughout the continent. Some leaders did not believe that Switzerland was being neutral, since the government
refused to cut ties with white led regimes in Africa. The book looks at disagreements over Swiss neutrality, economic interests, and human rights, which dominated foreign policymaking in Sub-Saharan Africa in the 1960s and 1970s.

During the time period of this book (1967 through 1979), Africa experienced a lot of change and turmoil as European powers left their colonies in the continent. Switzerland hoped they could increase their investment and export opportunities as European nations withdrew from Africa. The Swiss government sought good relations with new African rulers, but often faced criticism from them for not opposing colonization and white minority rule. To improve their image of neutrality in Africa, humanitarian aid was promoted and used by policymakers. Different activist groups in Switzerland tried to influence Swiss foreign policy by creating the Swiss Anti-Apartheid Movement and protesting at a Swiss trade fair in Lausanne in September 1973. In June 1969, the Federal Council prohibited exports of arms to specific African countries. This was followed by the Swiss parliament adopting a new law prohibiting arms exports to countries that compromised its policy on human rights. Switzerland did not want to get bad press or be pressured to not continue to do business with African countries that had governments that were engaging in human rights abuses or discrimination, or that were seeking support from the Soviet Union.

The coup against Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia in 1974 brought a lot of unwanted attention to Switzerland. The long time ruler who had a villa in Switzerland and money in Swiss banks was overthrown and replaced with the Derg, a military regime that was anti-West and sought an alliance with the USSR. Accusations in the Ethiopian press said that the deposed emperor had billions of francs in Swiss banks. As a result, Swiss embassy employees were verbally and physically attacked. Haile Selassie agreed to transfer his assets to famine-stricken areas in Ethiopia. The Swiss government’s reaction was to smooth things over, hide behind a legal framework demanding proof and stressing their independence from Swiss banks. While the amount
of the emperor and his family’s assets in Swiss banks is unknown, it was reported that he had over $1 billion in secret accounts. This was not the first nor the last time that Swiss bank holdings with governments or unpopular rulers would be questioned.

Wars in Angola and Ogaden also impacted Swiss foreign policy and economics. Angola was an export market for Swiss machines and pharmaceutical companies. The intervention of Cuban and South African troops there turned it into a Cold War battleground. The first and major preoccupation of Swiss policymakers was maintaining neutrality. Humanitarian aid was channeled through the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and this collaboration benefited the organization and the Swiss government. The Swiss were able to establish cordial relations with Angola’s new leaders and were one of the first Western and neutral states to establish diplomatic relations with them in 1976. Ogaden, a region of Ethiopia invaded by Somalis in 1977, was of less interest to the Swiss. They had few investments or goods to export there, but provided contributions to the ICRC relief mission. The Soviet Union and Ethiopia signed a military cooperation agreement and the United States encouraged NATO allies to discreetly send arms to Somalia. This conflict became more about containing communism in Africa and thus part of the greater Cold War objective of the Western powers. The author points out that Swiss neutrality during the wars in both Angola and Ogaden were never called into question.

South Africa would be the country that gave Switzerland the biggest headache. Due to its system of Apartheid, many other countries and organizations started to oppose its government and boycott doing business there. The Organization of African Unity (OAU) wanted Switzerland to take a stand against white minority regimes and stop investing in them. This included South Africa, Rhodesia, and the Portuguese colonies of Angola and Mozambique. Foreign policymakers were accused of using neutrality as a smokescreen for Swiss economic interests. Up to 80% of South Africa’s gold production was commercialized by Swiss banks. Leaders of Swiss companies wanted to tap into new markets in Africa
and lobbied the government not to restrict trade and investments in southern Africa. The majority of the Federal Council was not willing to curtail Switzerland’s economic relations with South Africa. As is the case with most decisions by governments and businesses, money talks and overrode decisions on appearances and public opposition. However, the Swiss government knew this was not good for its image of neutrality and they decided to contribute francs to the United Nations Trust Fund for South Africa. As Ambassador Felix Schnyder once said, “the Swiss traditionally avoid problems instead of solving them.” Money was often an acceptable solution, used to improve images and decrease scrutiny and unwanted attention.

_Switzerland and Sub-Saharan Africa in the Cold War, 1967-1979: Neutrality Meets Decolonisation_ is a good new work of revisionist history that explores Swiss bilateral relations with four African states. This is not a topic that has been widely researched and written about. Ms. Widmer conducted voluminous amounts of research, but as she pointed out in the introduction, was unable to consult archives in Africa, due to linguistic reasons and difficulties of access. This could be seen as a weakness in the volume, as she relied on Swiss and Western archives, sources and scholars, along with news articles from the time period. Disagreements over neutrality, economic interests and human rights would divide some Swiss government officials and citizens. As this book shows, Switzerland was actively involved and present in sub-Saharan Africa during the height of the Cold War. It faced controversies such as trade with South Africa’s Apartheid regime and its banks holding the assets of Ethiopia’s emperor by seeking compromise, offering humanitarian aid through the ICRC, and appealing to its long tradition and policy of neutrality. As John Richard Wraight, the British ambassador to Switzerland said in 1973, “Switzerland may be small and often narrow in its outlook, but its assets as a stable, democratic and wealthy State, with solid views on world affairs, more solid one might say than any of the other European neutrals, are not to be underrated.” This quote summarizes well how Switzerland operated and appeared as a powerful investor and trading partner in Africa during the 1960s and 1970s.
Dietmar Kuegler. (Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.)

Dietmar Kuegler
1951-2022

In Memoriam by Albert Winkler
A dear friend and strong supporter of the Swiss American Historical Society, Dietmar Kuegler, died on December 3, 2022, in the village of Övenum on the island of Föhr, Germany, where he had lived for several years. For many years, he translated and published my articles from the Swiss American Historical Society Review dealing with the Swiss in the American West in his Magazin für Amerikanistik in Germany. He also translated and published eleven of my books including The Germans and Swiss at the Battle of the Little Bighorn 1876, which was also published in the SAHS Review.

Dietmar had contracted the Covid virus in June of 2022 on a visit to the United States, which made him sick for about a week. When he recovered from this illness, he contracted Long Covid even though he had three shots to prevent the virus. This condition wore him down and finally killed him six months later. His death was unexpected, because he exercised, took care of his health, and his mother lived to be over one hundred years old.

Dietmar Kuegler was born in Dolberg, Ahlen, Germany, on June 4, 1951. He had one older sister. His father was a World War II veteran who had been deployed on the Russian Front, and he was too mentally disturbed to take on the responsibility of providing for a family and soon left. Dietmar’s older sister also left as soon as she could. A kind American helped support the family in the difficult years following the war. As a child, Kuegler was afraid of him but later appreciated what the man had done for them. This experience helped him have good feelings towards Americans.

As a young boy, Kuegler read many books by the famous German author Karl May, who wrote popular novels about the American West. Kuegler also enjoyed watching American TV shows including The Rifleman, The Life and Legend of Wyatt Erp, and Laramie, which helped his interest. Kuegler’s writing career began when he started reporting for a newspaper, and he wrote his first novel on the American West at age seventeen. At age twenty-four, he published his first history book about American gunfighters. For nearly the next fifty years, he
was a prolific author, and he wrote and published 70 history books and over 2,000 essays on American History mostly dealing with the American West, the United States Cavalry, the Indian Wars, the Civil War, and the Texas Rangers.

Kuegler’s works have been published in Germany, France, and Austria. He was hardly content in writing for others, and he began his own publishing firm, the Verlag für Amerikanistik, in 1982, which focused on American History. In the following years, he published over 250 books as well as a quarterly magazine the Magazin für Amerikanistik: Zeitschrift für amerikanische Geschichte. At the time of his death, the Magazin was the longest running magazine in Europe on American history.

Kuegler’s fascination with the United States kept him returning to America, and he visited the United States four times in 2022 alone. For many years, he took tour groups to various historical sites in America. He also participated in historical reenactments of events in the West, and he liked to joke that he fit the bill nicely when he was asked to portray the bad guys. Kuegler spoke perfect English, and he used that skill to give lectures at American academies, museums, and universities. He has also placed lectures on YouTube.

Kuegler was very close to his mother, and he was sad when she passed, but he soon met the love of his life, Karen Rogowski, who was a professor of biology at a university in New York City. Ms. Rogowski met Dietmar for the first time in 2014 when she and her mother stopped in Kuegler’s mill for dinner. He had just purchased the old mill on the island of Föhr, and he sold it two years later. Karen’s mother had come to visit the place where she was born and had grown up. She left shortly after the Second World War and had not returned since, but she remembered playing in Kuegler’s Mill as a little girl. Dietmar and Karen talked a bit and became Facebook friends. Karen and her mother visited the island again in 2016, and Dietmar and Karen became engaged later that year. The two married in April 2022, but sadly she became a widow later that year. I think Dietmar’s time with Karen was the happiest time of Dietmar’s life.
Kuegler was always kind and was a very good friend to me. For years, he would call me on the phone every week or two, and we would talk history and laugh and joke as well. Even though we chatted in English, he said my German was so good that he arranged for me to give lectures in German at a number of institutes in Germany on American History. I certainly had him fooled. Despite my fractured German, I managed to survive the challenge.

I received his last email on November 7, 2022 when he stated he and Karen had contracted LONG COVID.

“We still suffer from it. We are very exhausted, permanently tired, lost our taste and smell, have circulation trouble, a loss of concentration, pain in the joints I always thought of you, but to tell you the truth, I did not have enough energy to do correspondence. I can only do the most necessary writing for my business. . . . Now, I feel very, very weak. I do hope you and your family are doing fine. I wish you all the best. Please, forgive my silence. The last few weeks I had often the feeling I would die. Karen, too, is in a bad state. We do hope to survive. My feeling is, it is getting somewhat better, but very slow.”

Even in his terminal illness, he tried to be optimistic, and he was still kind and concerned about me. Dietmar was one of the finest men I have very known, and I am sure he will be sadly missed by everyone who knew him.

~ Albert Winkler
Utah Valley University

https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/sahs_review/vol59/iss2/13
Dr. Waseem Malick in Switzerland.

Remembering A Mensch—
Dr. Waseem A. Malick

In Memoriam by C. Naseer Ahmad

Dr. Waseem A. Malick, who spent over 30 years working for Swiss Pharmaceutical giant Hoffman-La Roche, was a mensch. He passed away in December 2022 in New Jersey. On February 5, 2023, about 150 of his friends, colleagues and family members gathered to remember him. Being by the side of Dr. Malick’s wife and his children, his Roche colleagues were a source of comfort for the family.

Mensch is “someone to admire and emulate, someone of noble character,” according to the American humorist Leo Rosten. This is exactly how many of Dr. Malick’s friends and family members remember him not only as a scientist par excellence but a truly generous spirit who inspired his colleagues to excel.
Dr. Malick’s older brother, said the following about him: “Waseem had the qualities and demeanor of our parents that included: caring, selflessness, calmness, and decency. I used to see both my parents in him in his everyday life.”

Dr. Malick’s father was in the government in the Punjab province, first in India and then in Pakistan after the partition of India in 1947. He was a distinguished officer in administering governmental functions in service of the people at all levels, which included besides being an administrator a magistrate too in performing judicial duties.

His mother was a tireless soul in performing voluntary service for the betterment of the poor and deprived. She got actively involved in improving the lives of those who were handicapped in any way and led an effort of establishing a center for rehabilitation of the disabled in Lahore, Pakistan. She approached the President of World Rehabilitation Fund, resulting in obtaining international support for the center in Pakistan.

Dr. Malick’s interest in formulation of medicine was from his childhood. He would fill up small bottles with colored water and line them up. When asked that what he was doing, he answered that these were perfumes called “romance” that he would give to others. This funny anecdote is perhaps a pre-cursor of what was to come in the future.

Along with his colleagues, Dr. Malick developed a number of medicines which play a critical role in fighting disease and in some cases extending life. Among such medicines is Zelboraf which received the Prix Galien Award in 2013 for best medicine. According to a Reuters report in June 2011, this medicine improved the survival rate by 63% in patients with advanced melanoma.

In fact, this report mentioned Dr. Paul Chapman of Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center in New York as the study’s lead investigator who called the results an “unprecedented level of difference” for patients with advanced melanoma, who typically survive just eight months on current treatments.
Listed below is a summary of some of the other medicines that Dr. Malick helped develop along with his team during his illustrious career at Hoffman-La Roche:

- **Xeloda (R)** for oncology indications such as metastatic colorectal carcinoma and breast cancer
- **Pegasys (R) and Roferon (R)** for virology indications such as Hepatitis C
- **Zenapax (R)** for the prophylaxis of acute organ rejection in de novo allogenic renal transplantation
- **Fortovase (R)** for the treatment of HIV-1 infected adult patients.
- **Fuzeon (R)** is indicated in combination with other antiretroviral medicinal products for the treatment of HIV-1-infected patients.
- **Versed (R)** for sedation before and during diagnostic or therapeutic procedures with or without local anaesthesia.
- **Accutane (R)** to treat severe forms of acne (such as nodular or conglobate acne or acne at risk of permanent scarring) resistant to adequate courses of standard therapy with systemic antibacterials and topical therapy.
- **Klonopin (R)** to treat acute management of epilepsy and acute treatment of non-convulsive status epilepticus (complex partial seizures or absence seizures)

It is natural for family members to have affection for loved ones and miss dearly someone who is no longer with them. In modern life, professional relationships become an extension of the familial bonds. Not only affectionate bonds are extended but also the loss of someone gets shared—sometimes just as much as with one’s own
family. So, in this context, it is relevant to share how Dr. Malick’s friends and colleagues remembered him:

“It is with a heavy heart that we share the news of passing of Dr. Waseem Malick. Waseem was a dear friend, a cherished mentor, and an esteemed colleague. Over the dedicated service of 32 years at Hoffmann-La Roche as Senior Vice President of Pharmaceutical and Analytical Research and Development (PARD), he touched the lives of many people with his kindness, thoughtfulness, and caring nature both directly and indirectly. While leading a major global function for a big pharmaceutical company, he seamlessly bridged the two continents covering Switzerland to California while passing through New York/New Jersey. With his leadership ability he helped create one of the best research groups in the industry that helped develop many complex and innovative technologies to bring the novel drugs to patients in need. The news of his passing was felt all over the globe but more profoundly by his research teams with whom he stayed in touch even after his retirement.”

During his tenure at Roche, he created and led a world-class global R&D teams recognized for innovative drug products. His team successfully developed, registered, and supported launch of several innovative medicines. He and his team led technical development from discovery phase (Clinical Lead Optimization) to late stage (NDA). The success of these products is true testament of Dr. Malick’s passion for science and care for the scientists. He was instrumental in not only recruiting the best talent in the industry but also bringing them together to work as a team, providing them the supportive environment and pushing the boundary ever so gently by inspiring them and infusing confidence and optimism while remaining vigilant about the nature of science. His unique mix of science, kindness, and leadership made him an effective leader who was respected across the globe. With over 150 publications, numer-
ous presentations, patents, and a book he helped advance the field of Pharmaceutics to new heights. In recognition of his professional excellence and sustained contributions to the pharmaceutical science, he was an invited speaker at major scientific meetings. His contributions were recognized by numerous awards that he received including the Fellow by American Association of Pharmaceutical Scientist, American Association of Indian Pharmaceutical Scientists.

Dr. Malick was recognized for his exceptional management and leading scientific personnel in multiple global centers, strategic planning, multimillion dollar investments, operating & capital budgets. During his tenure at Roche, he was leading the global formulation function with teams in Switzerland, America, Germany, China, and Japan. In addition, he served on technical committees with review and oversight responsibilities of all internal as well as licensed-in projects ensuring technical success. Dr. Malick also served on Board of Directors of non-profit organizations, Scientific Advisory Board of universities, non-profit organizations and held academic appointments. Most notably he served on the Research & Development Council of New Jersey, a nonprofit organization which advocates for progress in various research and development sectors in the state of New Jersey. Dr. Malick was also a great advocate for STEM education and served as advisor and speaker to a number of organizations.

He supported the development of science and the scientists across the globe. He treated each colleague with utmost dignity and respect. He was always there to celebrate and cherish the successes and support and encourage when something’s don’t go right. Several of his colleagues across the globe shared their personal memories during a special Memorial Service held in his honor by his friends and family. Some of the quotes from the Memorial Service transcribed below shows how he touched the lives of many colleagues in his professional life.
Dr. Ursula Redekar, Head of Technical Research and Development, Roche Basel, “Waseem was an extraordinary colleague and friend who will be missed dearly. I am grateful though for all the thoughts, ideas and memories Waseem gave and the time I had working with him, learning from him, and smiling together.

Dr. Navnit Shah, Group Head Formulation Development, Nutley, N.J., working under his leadership for last 32 years was a lot of excitement and fun. He brought all the scientists together in developing complex differentiated products to save many lives. Fond memories of our time at Roche will stay with us forever. He was a pharmaceutical giant and his legacy will stay forever.

Dr. Rainer Alex, Head of Formulation Development, Roche Basel, Worked with Waseem for over 20 years on many projects, initiatives, and transitions. Waseem was open to new ideas, and valued others’ opinions. Together we experienced and managed numerous challenges but it was through his impressive personality, optimism, and dedication that we found the best solution. He was a true and inspiring leader.
• Dr. Marcel Schmidt, Head of Formulation Development, Roche Basel His contributions to the pharmaceutical industry through his work at Roche in Basel and Nutley will always be remembered and unforgotten. It was my honor to work with such a wonderful person. He will forever be in my heart.”

• Dr. Rob Tudor, Head of Nonclinical Development, Roche Nutley, Waseem was kind, honorable man, who lived his life with positive intent, with never a bad word about anyone. I thank him for his council, unwavering support and for making us all better people. My thoughts are with his family and friends; I hope, like me, shared memories will bring some peace at this sad time and make us smile in the future.”

• Dr. Tom Alfredson, Head of Pharmaceutical R&D, Roche Palo Alto, Waseem was a great human being and a very thoughtful collaborator, mentor and scientists who will always be warmly remembered by the many whose lives he touched. Thank you, Waseem, for your kindness, help and valuable scientific insights over the years we worked together at Roche! You will always be in our prayers.”

• Dr. Hitesh Chokshi, Head of Analytical Research and Development at Roche Nutley, Waseem was my role model, teacher, mentor, best friend, and elder brother. He was a great scientist and an honorable leader exemplifying humility, empathy, and benevolence. His calm and caring aura made everyone valuable and appreciated. Waseem made an enormously positive impact on my life and on the lives of my parents, kids, and wife.

We believe his legacy will continue for many generations in the form of the products that improved the lives of many patients and their families worldwide and the science he developed will lead the way for future scientists.”
Scientists like Dr. Malick study pharmacology to embark on a path to use scientific methods to develop medicines that bring relief from disease for fellow human beings. Chemistry plays an important role and Theodore William Richards, who was the first American scientist to win the Nobel Prize in Chemistry wrote in the Atlantic in 1909: “The particular branch of science called chemistry … holds the key which alone can unlock the gate to really fundamental knowledge of the hidden causes of health and disease.”

An understanding of chemical bonds is required to advance in scientific research, whether in a laboratory—in Basel, Switzerland or Nutley, New Jersey—or in the library.

Just as chemistry and chemical bonds are important for scientific discovery, the chemistry between scientists as people is just as important for scientific research and development to succeed. So, the words with which his friends remember Dr. Malick are a testament of the chemistry in the work culture at Hoffman-La Roche as a senior executive, great leader, visionary scientist, and mentor. These precious words are exemplars of strong covalent bonds between scientists at the atomic level.

In addition to his professional ties with his Swiss colleagues in Hoffman-La Roche facilities and conference rooms in Basel, Dr. Malick had strong familial connections to Switzerland. His maternal grandfather Chaudhry M. Aslam served as Pakistan’s representative in the International Labor Organization, a United Nations agency based in Geneva Switzerland. “He knew Switzerland like the lines on the palm of his hand. He used to bring Swiss watches and chocolates for us; we as grandchildren used to eagerly wait for his trip back from Switzerland. I always used to tell my dear Waseem that he has taken the place of our Nana (Urdu word for maternal grandfather), having links with Switzerland. Our Nana’s link to Geneva and Waseem’s to Basel,” remembers Dr. Malick’s older brother.

In summary, Dr. Malick’s professional colleagues, in Switzerland as well as the U.S., will greatly miss him for everything but
most importantly for his kindness and caring nature. He was a real Mensch.

Our condolences to his family, friends and colleagues.
We look forward to partnering with the Swiss Center of North America to host our important annual general meeting on Saturday, October 14, 2023, in New Glarus, Wisconsin. “America’s Little Switzerland” was founded by Swiss immigrants in 1845. It is also the headquarters of the Swiss Center of North America.

Members and non-members are welcome as it has been many years since we have met in the Midwest. The agenda includes a cheese fondue demonstration/tasting, and a tour of the Swiss Center’s Tritt Library and Archives and new lower level display area.

Optional on Sunday is a tour of the Historical Swiss Village, Swiss Church and National Cheesemaking Museum.

New Glarus is a 50-minute drive from the Dane County Airport in Madison, and a 2-hour drive from Chicago O’Hare International Airport and Milwaukee Mitchell International Airport.

We recommend you visit the New Glarus Chamber’s website for lodging and other things to do at: swisstown.com.

Pre-registration is required for planning purposes. If we need to limit the number of people attending, this will be done in order of registration. Please complete the form linked below by August 15th. For those who may not use a computer, you can call Beth Zurbuchen, President of the Swiss Center of North America to pre-register at (608) 214-4000.

https://forms.gle/F98zfH9ZDL8YHi2Y7
Save the Date

- TENTATIVE ITINERARY -

Friday, October 13
• Officers Meeting & Dinner

Saturday, October 14
• 9:30-11:00 AM - Annual General Business Meeting
• 11:30 AM-1:00 PM - Cheese Fondue Demonstration and Tasting, Lunch and Performance by the Kalberweidil Büäblä Band

The Kalberweidil Büäblä Band consists of four brothers from the Betschart family of Trachslau, near Einsiedeln, Switzerland: Dominic, David, Luca and Julian. These adolescent Swiss folk musicians, who play Swiss Ländler music in the style of central Switzerland, will be on a twelve day journey performing throughout the Midwest.

(continued on the next page)
1:00-3:00 PM - Speakers/Presentations

**Dr. Lee Palmer Wandel**, "Zwingli and the Reformed Eucharist"

Dr. Wandel will be presenting research on the first Reformed Eucharist Huldrych Zwingli celebrated in Zurich, in 1525. It broke dramatically with the liturgy of a medieval Mass, rethinking both time and space in relation to worship. Her talk will center on just how radical Zwingli’s rethinking of worship was by setting his Eucharist in comparison with what he had been taught to celebrate as a priest. She will be talking about liturgical time and the spaces of churches as places of worship.

Dr. Wandel is Professor of History at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and author of several books including *Always Among Us: Images of the Poor in Zwingli’s Zurich* (1990) and *Voracious Idols and Violent Hands: Iconoclasm in Reformation Zurich, Strasbourg, and Basel* (1995).

**Dr. Pauline Boss**, "They Did It Quietly: The Meaning of Immigration for the Swiss Women Who Settled in New Glarus"

Dr. Boss will present a summary of her chapter that appears in the 150th anniversary book, *Amerika’s Little Switzerland Erinnert Sich* (1996, Buchdruckerei Schwanden). She will remind us that there has been no recognition or memorialization of the women who settled in New Glarus. The settlement would not have been possible without these women. Memorialization is encouraged and long overdue.

Dr. Boss is Professor Emeritus, Department of Family Social Science at the University of Minnesota and author of *The Myth of Closure: Ambiguous Loss in a Time of Pandemic and Change* (2021).
Save the Date

• 3:30-5:00 PM - Visit to the Swiss Center of North America, Tritt Library and Archives
• 6:30 PM - Dinner and Swiss Entertainment at the Chalet Landhaus Inn
• 8:30 PM - Possible showing of the film The Reformer—Zwingli: A Life’s Portrait (2019) in German with English subtitles.

Sunday, October 15
• 9:00 AM-11:00 AM - Tour of New Glarus, Swiss Village and Swiss United Church of Christ
• 12:00 PM - Visit to the National Historic Cheesemaking Center Museum, Monroe, Wisconsin (20 minutes from New Glarus)

For updates and additional information about the annual general meeting, please check our website (https://www.swiss-american-historical-society.org/). Members will receive email notifications and updates from swissamericanhistoricalsociety@gmail.com.
Jules-Ami Sandoz, aka “Old Jules” (1857-1928) and Oscar Tschirky aka “Oscar of the Waldorf” (1866-1950)—two Swiss from Neuchâtel who became famous in America.

In cooperation with the Public Library of Le Locle and the kind help of Yvonne Sandoz and Fabio Bestazzoni, this year’s annual outing will take place on Tuesday, September 12th, 2023, in Le Locle NE.

This year’s event is about two famous men from Le Locle who immigrated to the USA via New York: one staying there and the other moving to the Midwest.

We will meet at the train station in Le Locle at 9:40 for the annual general meeting or for those driving, at the Public Library Rue Daniel–Jean Richard 38 or Rue Daniel–Jean Richard 27 (guest house) at 10:00 hrs. We will then have a short meeting at the Library or at the guest house across the street. All information will be sent in advance for you to read through.

Afterwards from 10:45 hrs. to 12:00 hrs., Yvonne Sandoz will give us a presentation. Following the presentation, we will have lunch at 12:30 hrs. at Chez Sandro or the Ancienne Post. At 14:00 hrs., we will leave for the bus to go to the Moulin Souterrains for a guided tour at 14:45 hrs. until 16:15 hrs. Please note the tour will be in German, with Willi Müller translating it.

SAHS members in Switzerland and in the USA (or from any other destination) are cordially invited to attend this meeting. I do hope that many of you will join us!
The cost will be CHF 120.00 per person. Members in Switzerland are invited to pay this amount into the UBS account No.0235-196173.40N of the Friends of the Swiss-American Historical Society 3280 Murten. IBAN CH460023523519617340N. Participants from the United States have the choice of doing the same or to pay in Swiss francs at the event (please note we cannot take dollars).

Since travel to Le Locle is timely from the Zürich area, I have found a very nice guest house just across the street from the Library for anyone who might like to stay longer to see the Watch Museum, or enjoy a few days longer in the Jura area:

Guest House Le Locle
Rue Daniel-Jeanrichard 27 i
info@guesthouse lelocle.ch

Please kindly let me know of how you will be coming, and please register by July 15th, 2023 or ASAP.

Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Barbara Müller. I am looking forward to seeing many of you at this occasion.

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SAHS Review: The Swiss American Historical Society Review publishes three times each year in February, June, and November, and submissions for publication by members of the Society and other interested persons are welcome. Please send inquiries and manuscripts to:

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Ernest Thurston, Membership Secretary
65 Town Mountain Road
Asheville, NC 28804
Email: Eswisst@gmail.com

For Overseas members, please contact:
Kurt Morf, Treasurer, Swiss Chapter, at: kurtmorf@aol.com

Membership in the Swiss American Historical Society is open to all. Each year, members receive three copies of the Swiss American Historical Society Review, a personal copy of each book newly published by the Society, and an invitation to attend the Society’s annual general meeting.