

Zeitschrift: The Swiss observer : the journal of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK
Herausgeber: Federation of Swiss Societies in the United Kingdom
Band: - (1951)
Heft: 1152

Artikel: A National yearbook
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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-688384>

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A NATIONAL YEARBOOK.

Once again the Swiss National Yearbook published by the N.S.H. has made a welcome appearance, this being the twenty-second year of its publication. Neatly bound in black cloth with gilt embossing and clearly printed on good paper, it is a fine and elegant production.

Like its predecessors, the 1951 Annual is an intellectual feast, a monument of wisdom and knowledge. It certainly does not fall short of the high standard set by the previous issues. Anyone interested in the welfare and in the economic and cultural development of Switzerland will find in it a rich and comprehensive selection of studies and essays written in French, German and Italian by men and women who are experts in their particular sphere and masters of their subject.

The subjects dealt with cover a wide range. economics, armament and national defence, international politics and their impact on Swiss neutrality, financial reform, radio and television (called "Fernseher"), films, literature — these are some of the topics reviewed.

Considerable space is devoted to the problem of national and regional idioms. It is well known that special efforts have been made lately to preserve and restore the dialects which in some parts of the country were in danger of decay; those of the French-speaking cantons having in fact, almost completely disappeared. Organisations such as the "Heimatschutz" are engaged in an endeavour to promote this worthy aim and the revival of the Rätö-Romanisch speech in the Grisons is not the least of the achievements attained.

Dr. Ernst Schürch, in his treatise "Tragt Sorge zu den Mundarten" points out how rich and colourful the dialects are and what a wealth of native wisdom they contain. He has discovered no less than eight different words in the Bernese dialect to convey the meaning of 'Comfortable' (Gäbig, wohl, chummelig, handtlig, ring, schickig, Kumod, fuul) and he quotes that lovely saying "Chlyni Chind trappen ein uf d'Fuess u grossi uf ds Härz".

From a different point of view, Dr. Alfred Zäch of Zurich, in an absorbingly interesting essay, discusses the general inability of the Alemannic Swiss to express himself in correct German (Hochdeutsch).

Apart from the stage, he says, good German is seldom heard. He quotes the story of the German tourist who conversed with a Swiss native, the latter speaking in what he believed to be impeccable Hochdeutsch, the German afterwards saying that he never thought he would be able to understand the Swiss language so easily. Yet the Swiss lay claim to exceptional linguistic facility and many of them have learned to speak three or four languages fluently and correctly. Why then not German when the land of Schiller and Goethe lies so near to them?

The diversity of Swiss bilingual culture is well illustrated by the lively contribution by Professor Clerc under the heading "D'un contact plus réel entre Suisses". Its light and pleasing touch provides a marked contrast to the more sober and solid style of the German essays. The same can be said of the forceful and enthusiastic Italian contributions.

The usual chronological tables compiled by Dr. K. Weber and Dr. Hans Ehinger, covering the period October 1949 to September 1950, record the principal events in the political and cultural internal history of Switzerland.

It is not possible, in a short review, to do justice to all the twenty-five contributions which make up this remarkable collection. They throw much light on the excellent work performed by the N.S.H. The highest praise is due both to the Editor and those who have supplied the material.

J.J.F.S.



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