

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: - (1968)

Heft: 1560

Artikel: "All men are free and born equal to dignity and rights..."

Autor: [s.n.]

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-696190>

Nutzungsbedingungen

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

Conditions d'utilisation

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

Terms of use

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

Download PDF: 18.03.2025

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

these sleighs were gaily decorated. Young couples in their Sunday best boarded them. And under the cloudless sky, the long row of sleighs, with the little bells ringing joyfully on the horses' heads, drove out of the village, to one nearby or to one even beyond it. There, a big meal was served to all, wine and good food enlivening everybody's spirits. Thus, under the blue Engadine skies, everyday cares were relegated to oblivion for a few blissful hours. Under a silvery moon, accompanied by the tingling of the horses' little bells, the sleighs turned homeward, back into everyday's reality.

Today, in spite of all the accomplishments of modern technique, the people of the Engadine still celebrate their "Schlitteda" holiday. They thus reaffirm their love of their country by keeping alive another aspect of sincere, pure folklore.

These unusual sleighs take a couple each, and it is quite a delicate business to decide who goes with whom. An engaged couple has no problem, but with the other youngsters lots have to be drawn at times. The young man sits astride the back of the sleigh, whilst the girl rides in front of him in a kind of "side-saddle" as it were. Both rest their feet on the single skid. The young man holds the reins and becomes some kind of cavalier reminding one of the courtesy of past epochs. The *Schlitrünza*, having made sure that her embroidered bodice and her little bonnet fit well, sits on the sleigh like a

decorative doll, but oh, so alive in her flaming red skirts.

The procession starts out from the village square. A confirmed bachelor in *tricorné* and lace *jabot*, on a fine horse, leads the procession. First, the sleighs drive round the village once more and then out in the open snow landscape. In the middle of the procession is the sleigh with the musicians, (clarinet, violin, double bass and flute). They play old traditional dance tunes, and thus the gay group proceeds to the next village, sometimes at a brisk canter, then again at a comfortable trot. Once arrived at the neighbouring place, there is fool and drink, dancing and festivities in which the local youth join.

The expert says that the return ride is the best, with the star-lit skies above the white winter landscape. Once back home, there is another dance, whilst the horses have gone to rest in their warm stables.

There are many local varieties of the *Schlitteda*. The largest, that of St. Moritz, leaves before lunch and makes several halts. Its sleighs are the finest, and there is a beautiful collection of magnificent costumes. The Tourist Office has been buying up antique sleighs for some time, wherever there is an opportunity. They are well aware of the cultural value of old customs, and the fine collection is given pride of place once a year (mid-January) when the *Schlitteda* takes place.

(Compiled from information received by courtesy of "St. Moritz Courier".)

"ALL MEN ARE FREE AND BORN EQUAL TO DIGNITY AND RIGHTS . . ."

The End of Human Rights Year — Whither Now?

When Hitler began the terrible persecution of the Jewish race and thus went against the basic principles of 1789, Freedom, Equality and Brotherhood, but especially from the moment his attacks on other nations plunged the world into a new war, voices began pleading to make the great struggle a kind of crusade for the basic rights and freedoms. In addition to peace, it would be, they claimed of paramount importance to have recognition of such principles anchored in a charter and to make it one of the main aims of a new organisation of nations. On 14th August 1941, in the middle of the war, Churchill and Roosevelt met to discuss strategic planning, but they also laid down the principles of fundamental freedoms and rights of the individual, which should serve as a basis of peace after the war was over. Out of that grew the Atlantic Charter.

The Conference of San Francisco was in full agreement with the principles when they prepared the United Nations Charter in the spring of 1945. The discovery of the Nazi extermination camps forced governments to use pressure, and in Art. 68 of the Charter, a Commission for Human Rights was foreseen and a special section created in 1946. A first meeting of the 18 members took place at Lake Success early in 1947, when this problem was tackled with much goodwill, practical idealism and "excluding philosophical and doctrinal debates". Mrs. F. D. Roosevelt, widow of the late U.S. President, chaired the deliberations.

The second meeting took place a few months later in Geneva, and it was decided to issue a charter in form of a triptych whose centre piece, the declaration itself, should be framed by a pact on one side and a row of directives on the other. The next session in spring of '48 was decisive. The Commission had succeeded in finding a balance between private and political rights on one hand

and social and cultural ones on the other, fully aware at the same time that these depended on means and structure of each nation, as well as on international co-operation.

Great Britain pleaded through Lord Attlee, then Prime Minister, to proceed forthwith, as the "Cold War" had already started. Thus ECOSOC (Economic and Social Council of United Nations) included the draft on the agenda of the UN ordinary session in 1948, at the Palais de Chaillot in Paris. Eighty-seven plenary and ten meetings of the special commission were spent on it. The text was reduced to thirty Articles and improved in various ways.

It was nearly midnight on 10th December, when the Assembly accepted the draft. None were against, Russia and satellites, as well as South Africa and Saudi-Arabia abstained, but 48 nations were in favour. With it, an instrument was created to secure the rights of all men and women.

This last word brings us straight into Switzerland: Women have no general suffrage, only in some local and cantonal matters, and that only in a few Cantons. This is almost an anomaly, for Switzerland had opened her universities to women already in the 'forties of the 19th century, and the first woman doctor in Europe, Marie Heim-Voegtlin, was a Swiss who qualified in 1874. As early as 1911, the male electorate of Zurich accepted an Article for their Constitution, which visualised women's vote one day. Today, on the federal level, a good two million adults are excluded from voting; they are in company with their sisters in Kongo-Kinshasa, the Northern regions of Nigeria, Jordania, Kuwait, Saudi-Arabia and Liechtenstein.

This is one of the stumbling blocks why Switzerland, champion of freedom and direct democracy, has not been able to sign the Declaration, the only one next to France

out of the 18 nations of the Western European hemisphere, who are united in the Council of Europe. It is not only the missing vote for women, however. There are a few other "black spots" not compatible with fundamental principles, although the Federal Constitution states that all Swiss are equal before the law. There is the ban on activities by the Jesuits; the ban on founding new monasteries or religious orders; the ban on the Jewish ritual method of slaughtering cattle; the provisions of some Cantonal Constitutions regarding people in need of care. Although Swiss law and legal protection of the individual shows up well in comparison with other Western countries, there are a few inequalities in some Cantons, which should be straightened before the Convention can be signed.

In March, the Federal Council decided to take part in the UNO Conference on Human Rights — it had been announced in 1961 that 1968 should be Human Rights Year — which was held in Teheran in April/May. The Swiss delegation was led by the then Ambassador to USSR, Dr. A. Lindt. On 20th June, the President of the Confederation, Federal Councillor Spuehler, stated in connection with the Government Programme that the Federal Council would propose to join, though with reservations. The Europa Union put up a resolution that Switzerland should join the European Human Rights Convention, they believe, in contrast to women's suffrage organisations, that once Switzerland has signed, she will be morally obliged to make order in her house. The women believe that franchise should be granted *before* joining. They have been extremely active this year and have taken full advantage of Human Rights Year to bring up the subject whenever possible. In June, the Swiss Federation for Women's Suffrage recalled the decision of the Swiss UNESCO Commission, based on a recommendation of the Council of Europe, to carry out a thorough and comprehensive investigation into women's position from all angles. They also asked the Government to bear the cost of this work.

Eminent personalities gave special lectures on the subject of human rights, such as Prof. Dr. Karl Schmid ("Switzerland in the European Reality") and Prof. Dr. Werner Kaegi ("The Fight for Human Rights"). At Gwatt, Social Democrat women of Switzerland and seven other countries held a three-day seminar at which a woman M.P. from Vienna and the former Councillor of States, Dr. Ed. Zellweger, gave the basic addresses. Finally, on 23rd November, there was the special Day of the Refugee in Berne. A large number of fugitives met, former nationals of Eastern European countries, Egypt, Albania, Spain, Germany and Austria. Dr. h.c. Getrud Kurz, the *Flüchtlingsmutter*, addressed the assembly.

On going to Press, we have no news yet of how Parliament reacted to the proposal to join, but some decision will, no doubt, be taken. If Parliament decides to join, no plebiscite is required. A Constitutional Referendum is only needed for pacts and agreements tying down the Confederation for 15 years or more.

What are the Human Rights? They are not, as is so often believed, just a few additional rights next to constitutional and political ones. They are the fundamental rights, the basis for every free community. They belong to every man, woman and child, and are not connected at all with birth certificate or State passport. The four basic freedoms are those of Speech (opinion, information, expression, organising and meeting) and of Faith (conscience and religion). Freedom from Want (Right to livelihood, work, protection from loss of work) and Free-

dom from Fear (the right to live, free choice, safety of the person, to be judged fairly, prohibition of slavery, cruelty, degrading punishment, discrimination on the grounds of sex, class or race).

In fact, the principles comprise everything touching upon the individual and his development as a personality, his private, social, occupational and public life. The Declaration of Human Rights is not a description of a state of affairs — not a single country would stand muster — they are an ideal, a programme and directives for the future. Originally, the Declaration was intended as an international Document of State for the protection of the citizen, but it concentrated more and more on the direct relations between individuals.

Looking at reality, one is only too quick in discarding the whole matter on the grounds that nobody keeps to it anyway. But if we remember what is said of the Gospel that it works like yeast, we realise that like the Gospel, the Human Rights could act like a ferment. Indeed, already, groups of oppressed people have appealed on the strength of them; remember the Czech Communists and the Russian authors. New States in the underdeveloped countries have included them in their Constitutions, and more and more they become an instrument of conscience.

Human Rights Year ended a few days ago. Have we really come all that closer to the ideal state of affairs? Looking at some of the recent happenings in the world, we seem to be further away than twelve months ago. But let us remember the yeast which goes on working. In Switzerland, too, the yeast is active, and it is not really vital whether the Confederation signs now with reservations or clears up the incompatibilities first — the main thing is that the consciences are alive and things begin to happen.

As individuals we should not leave the catalogue of fine principles behind in the old year, but take it with us into 1969. We can continue, or perhaps only start to reflect just where in the wider fields of our activities and above all in our personal lives we are not yet in harmony with the fundamental freedoms and rights — and the ensuing duties.

MM

(Based on information received by courtesy of "UNESCO Kurier" (German edition), "Baeuerin", "Basler Nachrichten", and "Agence Télégraphique Suisse".)

CONFERENCE CITIES ON THE LAKE OF GENEVA

Organising Conferences, as an important aspect of tourism, is playing an increasingly significant role in the activities of the Lausanne Tourist Office. Thanks to the excellent technical facilities available in the Palais de Beaulieu, the capital of the Canton of Vaud has become an important convention centre, and the charming municipality on the shore of Lake Geneva is bending every effort to further consolidate its prominent position among Europe's congress cities. For 1969 Lausanne has already booked eight major international conventions and a dozen other important meetings.

The city of Montreux is located just one hour away from Geneva's intercontinental airport, at the threshold of the trans-alpine rail and highway tunnels Simplon and Great St. Bernard. Its situation along Lake Geneva is also climatically favourable. With excellent conference facilities available, Montreux is an ideal spot for international congresses, conferences, assemblies, exhibitions and other events.

[S.N.T.O.]