

Edited by DAVID P. BARROWS and THOMAS H. REED  
**Government Handbooks**

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# Government and Politics of Switzerland

BY

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**“This house is a visible emblem of the friendship between Switzerland and the United States, a friendship that rests upon common principles of life, common ideals, and common aspirations.”**

**Inscription written by PRESIDENT WOODROW WILSON for the Rest House at Dübendorf erected by Americans resident in Switzerland to shelter Swiss soldiers standing guard at the frontier.**

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## EDITORS' INTRODUCTION

**T**HERE are several reasons which make a new book on the Swiss federal republic extremely timely in this year of the greatest crisis of the great war. Placed in the geographical center of an unprecedented conflict, Switzerland has to date maintained an irreproachable neutrality. During four years which have made waste paper of the legal and diplomatic formalities of a century, Switzerland still holds to the validity of every treaty and convention to which she is an adherent. Almost alone of the civilized countries she continues to practice those principles of consideration and humanity whose advocacy has lifted her historic town of Geneva into a position of light and leading for the whole world.

Nor can any one claim that the smallness of Switzerland's numbers or resources has made her a victim of aggression or intimidation. Whether her integrity be due to the prudence and consideration of her battling neighbors, or to the spirit and martial discipline of her own people, the fact stands.

Her example may help to the solution of some of the most difficult of the issues of the war.

It has been authoritatively stated that this war is

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*for the establishment of the rights of small nations — the right of peoples to “self-determination.” But what are the small nations whose rights are thus to be established? Are such nations to be defined in terms of German national philosophy, which emphasizes homogeneity in blood and language as alone conferring the right both to add to and to take away, to aggrandize and to dismember? Poles and Serbs have long contended for this right. Shall equal consideration be accorded to Livonians, to Ukrainians, to Irish, and to Finns? Has every local community conscious of its particularism the right to separate itself from empire or federation? Will the moral justification of the Civil War in America be impaired by the triumph of the cause for which America is now fighting?*

*Switzerland, with her population composed of three of the main European folks, her people speaking four languages and professing two forms of Christian faith, yet holds tightly to her national solidarity. Her example may help us to a wise analysis of the problem.*

*Furthermore, Switzerland is of ever present interest by reason of her democracy. To war to make the world safe for democracy is a noble conception, but it demands analysis. How is democracy to be conceived, and what form of democracy is America championing? It can scarcely be denied that the faith of the Bolsheviki*

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*is democracy — perhaps the most thorough-going democracy that the world has ever seen attempted on a large scale. So are the radical reforms of the Carranzistas of Mexico. Are we fighting to make safe their place in the world? Switzerland, whose conservative democracy by contrast seems to place it in a different category of political experiment, should help us to clear thinking on this greatest of themes. There is still a further reason why Swiss government must possess unusual interest to Americans, and that is the fact of our extensive imitation of its inventions. Our period of political creativeness gave to the world an astonishing series of new institutions, — federalism, written constitutions, the Senate, a Supreme Court, a guaranteed field of civil liberty, presidential government, and universal manhood suffrage. These among other triumphs belong to the first years of our national history. For a hundred years now we have been borrowers, not originators, in government. The original system has remained in theory unaltered. Where corrective devices were necessary, we have in the main lifted them from the statute books of foreign countries, — our civil-service reform laws from Great Britain, our ballot system from Australia, proportional representation from Belgium, and from Switzerland the initiative and referendum. Switzerland is a laboratory of adventurous experiment in govern-*

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*ment, and her successes contribute to the instruction of all republican peoples.*

*Professor Brooks has written this useful and welcome addition to the Government Handbook Series under the disadvantages of war-time conditions, but also under the stimulus of an active participation in the problems of the war and of democracy, and with the invaluable advantages of intimate assistance from Swiss statesmen facing the problems of their country amidst the great testing which government, the world over, undergoes as war continues.*

THE EDITORS

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## AUTHOR'S PREFACE

**T**HE aim of this volume is to describe the organization and functioning of the government and political parties of Switzerland. Historical origins and development are discussed, it is true, but only in a summary way. In the main the author has directed attention to modern instances and recent illustrations, endeavoring thus to present his subject as it really is; namely, a small but very successful "going concern" in the line of democratic government.

Although designed primarily as a textbook, it is hoped that the volume may have an appeal outside academic circles, — among writers, editors, statesmen, men of affairs, and others who are interested in civic problems and their solution along popular and progressive lines. The author freely confesses that "a man's other country" in his case has always meant Switzerland, chiefly because of its thoroughgoing and efficient application of the principles of democracy. Frequently in the last 130 years American political experience has quickened Swiss political life, and quite as frequently Swiss political experimenting has quickened American political development. No doubt this reciprocal influence will continue throughout ages yet to come, to

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the betterment both of the little republic of the Alps and her mighty sister overseas. If this volume contributes ever so slightly to that process of mutual democratic fertilization, it will have attained its higher purpose.

To the editors of this series of Government Handbooks — Major D. P. Barrows, now stationed at Manila, P. I., and City Manager T. H. Reed of San José, California, both of whom were formerly professors in the Department of Political Science at the University of California — the author wishes to extend his grateful acknowledgment for constant helpful assistance and much sound criticism.

One of the most delightful experiences in connection with the preparation of this book has been the widening which it brought about in the writer's circle of Swiss friends. Every citizen or former citizen of Switzerland to whom appeal was made for information responded with a generosity as warm as their love for the little country that gave them birth. Among these many kindly collaborators the author feels especially indebted to Professor William E. Rappard of the University of Geneva, whose extensive writings and recent public service as a member of the Swiss Commission to this country form a very substantial bond of understanding and amity between Switzerland and the United States. To his wise counsel much that is of value in the chapters on Swiss political

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parties and foreign relations must be attributed. Thanks are also due to Professor Fritz Fleiner of the University of Zürich for assistance in preparing the critical bibliography which completes the volume. At the Swiss Embassy in Washington, His Excellency, Dr. Hans Sulzer, Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary, and Dr. Charles P. Hübscher, Secretary of Legation, proved themselves ever ready sources of accurate information. Mr. F. Dossenbach, General Manager of the Official Agency of the Swiss Federal Railroads in New York City, kindly read the manuscript of the chapter on "Communication and Transportation: National Ownership and Operation of Railways," supplying much additional material thereon. To his generosity also are due the most of the illustrations used in the volume.

Finally, the author's indebtedness is particularly great to two Swiss friends and neighbors, the Reverend Carl Vuilleumier, Swiss Consul at Philadelphia, and Professor Emil Schoch, formerly of the Swarthmore Preparatory School, now of the Blake School, Minneapolis. Upon the wide knowledge of these gentlemen he drew constantly and never in vain during the three years that the book has been under preparation.

ROBERT C. BROOKS

SWARTHMORE, PENNSYLVANIA

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# Government and Politics of Switzerland

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## CHAPTER I

### PHYSICAL BASIS OF THE SWISS FEDERATION: LAND, PEOPLE, INDUSTRIAL AND SOCIAL CON- DITIONS

**S**WITZERLAND lies in the mountainous Location  
heart of southwestern Europe. Germany  
is her neighbor to the north, Austria and  
the diminutive principality of Liechtenstein to  
the east, Italy to the south, and France to the  
west. Besides Serbia, Switzerland is the only  
considerable European state without direct ac-  
cess to salt water. From the ports on the North  
Sea or the English Channel her industrial cities  
are distant 350 miles. The Mediterranean and  
the Adriatic are much nearer, but the nature  
of the intervening country is such that it offers  
great difficulties to transportation.

In outline the boundaries of Switzerland form Area  
a rough quadrilateral. From east to west the  
greatest length of the country is  $226\frac{1}{2}$  miles; from  
north to south the greatest width is 137 miles.  
The area of Switzerland is 15,976 square miles.

## GOVERNMENT OF SWITZERLAND

Italy, the smallest of the four adjacent powers, is nearly seven times as large. France and Germany each have an area thirteen times, and Austria-Hungary an area fifteen times, that of the little Alpine republic. Compared with American states of familiar dimensions, Switzerland is one third the size of New York and twice that of Massachusetts.

The lowest point in Swiss territory is 646 feet above sea level. Her highest peaks tower to an altitude of 15,000 feet. Only 2 per cent of the area of the country is below 1000 feet in elevation, 58 per cent is between 1000 and 4000, and 34 per cent is over 4000 feet high. Lakes, glaciers, and perpetual snow fields cover over 6 per cent of the surface. Nearly a quarter of the territory is put down as unproductive by ordinary economic processes.<sup>1</sup>

Switzerland falls naturally into three great divisions: first, the region of the Alps, which with their ramifications cover the whole central, southern, and eastern sections of the country; second the Jura district, the lesser ranges of which are merely outlying spurs of the Alps; and third, the plateau or basin which lies between these two mountainous divisions.

### I. The Alps

With their giant and tortuous convolutions the Alps occupy nearly three fifths of the territory of Switzerland. Narrow river valleys pierce

<sup>1</sup> According to the "Statistisches Jahrbuch der Schweiz," 1916, p. 5, exactly 22.4 per cent of the soil is unproductive.

## PHYSICAL BASIS OF THE FEDERATION

deeply into the central mountain mass, the largest being those of the Rhine in the east and the Rhone in the west. Between these flow the Reuss, the Aar, and smaller streams, and in the south there are the Ticino and the Toce, the valleys of all of which converge like the ribs of a Titanic fan about the mighty massif of the Gotthard. Several of the most picturesque lakes in the world emerge from the northern foothills of the Alpine region, and others even more beautiful lie enfolded by the lower mountain slopes on the Italian side.

The limestone chain of the Jura extends from southeast to northwest along the French boundary of Switzerland. Its highest summit, Mont Tendre, reaches an altitude of only 5500 feet. Many of the rivers which traverse this section have pierced deep gorges for themselves. There are also a small number of high, wind-swept, and rather infertile valleys inclosed between the narrow parallel ranges. The Jura occupies somewhat more than one tenth of the area of Switzerland.

II. Jura

Lying between the Alps and the Jura, the plateau or basin region of Switzerland is by far the most favored, both agriculturally and industrially, of the three great divisions of the country. It extends in a belt fifteen to twenty miles wide from Lake Geneva to Lake Constance, and occupies nearly three tenths of the area of the country. On the side of the Jura, where it is lowest,

III. Plateau region

## GOVERNMENT OF SWITZERLAND

the plateau has an elevation of from 1100 to 1500 feet. On its higher Alpine side it reaches an extreme elevation of 6500 feet.

### Climate

Switzerland's wide differences of elevation produce a corresponding variety in weather conditions. Confined within less than two degrees of latitude (from  $45^{\circ} 49' 2''$  to  $47^{\circ} 48' 32''$  north), the country nevertheless exhibits the normal climatic range of thirty-four degrees. There are sheltered regions in the south which enjoy the soft, warm climate of northern Italy, while but a few miles away, measured vertically rather than laterally, are icy, arctic solitudes. The crests of the higher Alpine ranges form a gigantic dividing wall between polar and equatorial winds. In consequence rainfall is generally abundant and the country well watered. Air increases in purity directly in proportion to the height above sea level, and Switzerland is justly famed in this respect. Beauty of landscape abounds on every hand, — the grim, terrible, and awe-inspiring side by side with the gentle, soft, and pastoral.

So great has been the bounty of Mother Nature to Switzerland in all these ways that one is likely to forget how stepmotherly she has been in other respects. Apart from building stone, cement, and salt, the mineral resources of the country are negligible. Coal and iron, the fundamentals of modern industry, must be imported. On every hand transportation has great natural

## PHYSICAL BASIS OF THE FEDERATION

barriers to overcome. No country has richer meadow or farm lands, but the overshadowing mountain masses limit them narrowly in extent.

With such heavy handicaps upon industrial and commercial development, it is not strange to find that Switzerland is still in the main an agricultural and pastoral country. Every inch of arable land is fertilized and intensively tilled. Earth originally carried in baskets upon the backs of peasants and deposited wherever the rocks gave foothold yields its carefully garnered quota to the year's crop. Of the entire productive area of Switzerland slightly more than a third is devoted to grass and meadows, and nearly three tenths to forestry. Much of the land devoted to these two purposes could be made to yield a return in no other way. The remaining one third of the arable land of the country is divided between fruit production and ordinary crops, — 18.7 per cent of the whole being devoted to the former and 16.4 per cent to the latter. Swiss fruit enjoys a fame in Europe not unlike that of Californian fruit in the United States, and is largely exported in the form of preserves. In addition to orchards it is the Swiss custom to plant rows of fruit trees on both sides of the highways running through the country, thus adding materially to the output.

Perhaps the most striking single fact with regard to the various uses of Swiss arable land, however, is the relatively small portion —

Agricultural  
and  
pastoral  
pursuits

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slightly less than one sixth of the whole — under crops and in gardens. It affords some index of the limitations set by nature to the supply of land available for such uses, and also of the difficulty of adapting Swiss “perpendicular farms” to this form of cultivation. Switzerland imports a larger proportion of its grain supply than any other European country, for only about one fifth (21.5 per cent) is produced at home, and that of rather inferior quality.<sup>1</sup> Potatoes are produced in quantities almost sufficient for the domestic demand. Hemp, flax, and tobacco also are grown to a small extent. In five cantons the grape is cultivated, chiefly in vineyards terraced with extreme expenditure of skill and labor upon the sides of steep hills. The industry is suffering under competition from Italy, France, and Spain, but still produces about one half of the annual consumption of wine.

It is on the side of animal husbandry, however, that Swiss farmers are most successful. Nearly three fourths of the total value of their annual production is due to this branch of agriculture. A considerable number of hogs and some goats are raised, but beef cattle, cows, and milk products are the fundamental reliance of peasant cultivators. It is the custom of Swiss farmers to

<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise noted, statistics quoted in these pages with regard to Swiss industries are the latest obtainable which deal with conditions as they existed before the outbreak of war in 1914.