

**THE UNITED STATES AND SWITZERLAND**

**ASPECTS OF AN ENMESHMENT**



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## PROLOGUE

### Perspectives on Two Nations in Contact

Although the nation state, in its post-French Revolution form, may soon be a thing of the past, nationhood, national allegiances, rivalries, and special relationships between nations are still potent realities that shape individual as well as collective, elite as well as rank-and-file behavior. Celebrations like the American Bicentennial, the centennial of the unveiling of the Statue of Liberty in New York Harbor, or the heated controversy over the (mis-)treatment of the American flag, they all testify to the symbolic vigor of nationality, although economic and military powers of nations have long since been overtaken by transnational economic, technical, and military establishments.

On one plane, then, it appears nearly absurd for a small nation like Switzerland to celebrate its seven-hundredth year of existence. Despite its neutrality it has long since become a player of at best middling importance in the dealings of transnational conglomerates. Yet symbolic systems appear always to lag far behind economic and political realities and continue to shape the collective consciousness of a nation's people. From the perspective of *Realpolitik* then this topical *Yearbook of German American Studies* acknowledging Switzerland's septcentennial is an anachronism, from the perspective of the politics of symbols, however, perhaps timely and of use. The issue aims to explore some facets of the enmeshment between Switzerland and the United States on three levels.

Part one offers essays that explore how three Swiss, each representing a different century, viewed "America." A first essay analyzes the 1711 pamphlet of Johann Rudolph Ochs on the promise of "Carolina," which was for the Swiss until the mid-eighteenth century nearly synonymous with "America." Although Ochs never crossed the Atlantic, he wrote an emigrant guide that is impressive in its concern for reliable and useful information. In the 1730s, Ochs, by then the royal

mintmaster in London, continued to shape the North American image of Swiss immigrants who passed through London by giving them reliable advice and assistance. Next, Hans Rudolf Guggisberg's study concentrates on a nineteenth-century Swiss, the influential American theologian Philip Schaff. The author shows how the views of this Swiss-born and German-trained scholar fused Christian and secular convictions into a moderate, centrist American nationalism. In contrast, Philip Bohlman explores the image of America of the noted twentieth-century composer Ernest Bloch. Bohlman reads Bloch's annotations to his symphonic composition *America*—joined by works titled *Helvetia* and *Israel*—like an immigrant letter which reveals the composer's glowing assessment of his adopted country.

Part two deals with uses of the Swiss past from an American perspective by three writers, the journalist Henry Miller, the scholar William Denison McCrackan, and the reform-minded William Bross Lloyd, Jr. Gregg Roeber analyzes Miller's stance in comparison to that of the rival journalists of the Sauer family. He shows that Miller's cosmopolitan outlook made him a valued interpreter of the interests of Anglo-American elites to an upper-class, German-speaking element in Colonial British North America. Miller used Swiss historical events for promoting anti-British agitation that aimed not at reform like John J. Zubly's, but at the winning of independence. Urs Hammer, in turn, explores the uses of Swiss history and of Swiss political institutions made by William D. McCrackan. The author describes how this American Progressive strove to demonstrate in several works that the adoption of the initiative and referendum would improve and intensify American political life and transform it from an essentially republican, i.e., representative, system to one of direct democracy. As in the Swiss polity, Americans would then not only elect governmental officials to represent their interests, but also directly decide on vital political issues. In the third essay of part two Christian D. Nøkkentved examines the Swiss ties of the Lloyd family. He shows that William B. Lloyd, Jr., carried on Henry Demarest Lloyd's attempts to use Swiss political traditions to further political reform, yet not of American civic life but, rather, for "waging peace" in a post-1945 war-threatened world of superpowers and emerging post-colonial nations.

In part three case studies highlight Swiss involvement in three aspects of American history: the founding of white settlements, the conquest of the trans-Mississippi West, and twentieth-century technological development. Leo Schelbert's essay features the emergence of the winegrowing settlement "New Switzerland" on the Ohio in 1804 and of its counterpart "Chabag" in Bessarabia, then a domain of Russia. The study delineates structural parallels in the emergence of these settlements and shows how individual concerns were embedded in the designs of the two expanding nation states. In a second essay Christa Landert reconstructs the life of Heinrich Lienhard who emigrated in 1843 to Highland, Illinois, and three years later journeyed overland to California where he met up with John August Sutter, the ruler of New

Helvetia. Sutter entrusted Lienhard with bringing his family from Burgdorf, Switzerland, to California, then engaged him as manager on his vast estates where gold was discovered in 1849. Landert then follows Lienhard's journey back to Switzerland, his return to Madison, Illinois, and his final settlement in Nauvoo where he died in 1903. Landert's case study shows that emigration could involve far more than simply a move from one place to another.

The final essay of part three investigates a hitherto unknown aspect in the career of Othmar Ammann. On the basis of newly discovered documents Jameson W. Doig studies Ammann's meteoric rise from obscurity and near unemployment to the role of chief engineer of the Port of New York Authority. The essay sketches the complex interplay between the demands of politics in the states of New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut and the vision of an ambitious engineering genius. The final contribution to this *Yearbook* serves as a guide to further readings. Regula A. Meier selected thirty titles from her and her late husband's bibliographical work on Switzerland which was recently published by Clio Press of Oxford, England. The selection represents not only a valuable guide to some secondary works relating to Switzerland, but also intimates the expertise that characterizes the Meiers' outstanding research tool.

Unfortunately, essays on Swiss immigrant women failed to materialize. Premature death prevented Heinz K. Meier from preparing a sketch of Swiss-American diplomatic relations since 1950 as a sequel to his book *Friendship under Stress*. Illness hindered the completion of a study of Bernese German linguistic survivals in Adams County, Indiana, and pressing commitments delayed an essay on the Swiss among the Pennsylvania Dutch. Also the worlds of literature and the visual arts are not treated as, for instance, represented by the works of Marie Sandoz or Karl Bodmer. Nor is the influence featured of such major Swiss figures as the educator Heinrich Pestalozzi, the psychologists Carl G. Jung and Jean Piaget, or the architect Le Corbusier. Thus the essays that are included in this issue of the *Yearbook* provide merely some glimpses of the enmeshment between the United States and Switzerland that is far richer than is generally assumed.

In conclusion some words of thanks are due. Don Heinrich Tolzmann, president of the Society of German American Studies, the members of the Society's executive board, and the *Yearbook's* regular editors Helmut Huelsbergen and William Keel, gave not only their consent to this project, but also their valuable advice. The Swiss Foundation Pro Helvetia supported this issue of the *Yearbook* with a generous grant that was further supplemented by a subsidy from the Swiss Benevolent Society of Chicago as well as from the Swiss-American Historical Society. The help of Erdmann Schmocker, its president, deserves special acknowledgment in obtaining these financial contributions. The writers of these essays, finally, were as generous with their time as they were patient with the editor's repeated inquiries. Their labors enhance the cause of German-American studies, under-

stood not as pan-German arrogation, but in the Society's sense as the task of exploring the involvement of German-speaking peoples of various nations in the manifold aspects of North American history and life.

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