

THE CLEAVAGE BETWEEN THE GERMAN-SPEAKING AND THE
FRENCH-SPEAKING SWISS WITH RESPECT TO EUROPEAN
INTEGRATION: INTERPRETATIVE ESSAY

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1. INTRODUCTION

On December 6, 1992, a majority of the Swiss population decided not to adhere to the European Economic Area (EEA). 50.3% of the voters and 16 out of 23 cantons pronounced themselves against the EEA. In the German-speaking part of Switzerland, 56% of the population expressed a negative vote.

In the "Germanophone" cantons of Uri, Schwyz, Unterwald and Appenzell,¹ close to 70% spurned the EEA treaty. In the Italian-speaking part of Switzerland, the rejection rate reached 61.5%. On the other hand, in the French-speaking part, approximately 72% of the citizens expressed themselves in favor of European integration. In the "Francophone" cantons of Neuchâtel, Jura, Geneva and Vaud, close to 80% approved the Treaty. Moreover, certain peripheral regions of the French-speaking part favored the EEA to a much greater extent than such economic, political and cultural centers as Zurich, Basle and Berne. Indeed, agricultural and traditional valleys of the Valais such as the Val d'Hérens approved the Treaty by 65.9% whereas the approval rate in the first german-speaking city reached but 55.5%.

This study aims only to understand why such a cleavage occurred,² and at a better conceptualization of the debate. A great number of analyses has already been published. Nevertheless, a general synthesis that would integrate all explanations is still missing. The Swiss case is especially interesting because it is the first time that the challenge of the European integration along the EC lines divides so sharply the main populations of a country.

We shall proceed in the following manner: as a first step, we introduce without *a priori* the notions that have been given on this rift. Second, we illustrate these interpretations with pertinent quotations. In a third part, we critically comment the different arguments (negatively and positively). Finally, in conclusion, we try to elicit a general synthesis.

2. EPISTEMOLOGICAL REMARKS

For the corpus, we have taken into account but analyses by intellectuals (academics, journalists, politicians, writers). It is our hypothesis that they reflect a significant part of the interpretations that characterize Swiss public opinion. In order to give the reader the opportunity to better situate these thinkers, we will systematically provide a short biographical reference.

1. See the map of Switzerland enclosed at the end.

2. We do not analyze here other elements concerning the relationships between Switzerland and the European Community. For more details, on, especially, the causes and the consequences of the Swiss refusal to join the EEA, see (Schwok, 1994 (a), 1993 (b), 1993 (c)).

Some of the interpretations that we present may seem crude, simplistic, abusive, or even racist, a situation that calls to mind the problem of scientific caution. In other words, by considering such theses at par with other, more founded and developed, reflections, do we not incur the risk of legitimizing ideas that do not warrant such a treatment?

Reflection on this question has brought us to choose to study all the interpretations that have been proposed. Indeed, these theses reflect their time. They reveal certain trends characteristic of our period. An inventory of this sort will function as a kind of archaeology of intellectual opinion. It will also allow historians to find the main strands of the debate between the French-speaking and the German-speaking Swiss on the European question. Indeed, certain affirmations that seem absurd today, may be seen as expressions of the greatest truths by our descendants. In any case, such an approach will allow us to become aware of some of our prejudices.

Most of the reflections considered here have appeared either in academic publications, or, as is the case for the bulk of them, in newspapers (dailies, weeklies). We are aware of an overuse of non-academic sources. Yet this is so for two main reasons: (1) the events of December 6th, 1992, are too recent for a number of scientific works to have been completed; (2) many analyses will not be published because Switzerland lacks enough journals for the humanities.

It is important to note that our approach aims at a conceptualization of the debate on the rift between the French-speaking and the German-speaking Swiss on the European question. Its aim is to offer the clearest and most fruitful typology possible. We therefore regret having been obliged to cut the train of thought of many intellectuals. It should, however, be obvious, that most of the thinkers studied here do not limit themselves to one single thesis. They often offer several interpretations. It would therefore be wrong to think that they are advocates of monist explanations. Thus the reader should refer to the original texts, as well as to the footnotes, in order to get a more precise idea of the thought of each author.

3. CULTURAL APPROACH

According to this approach, the origin of the rift between the French-speaking and the German-speaking Swiss is to be found mainly in cultural differences. Different values have come to manifest themselves through the European question:

"The EEA vote has mainly evidenced a cultural conflict which ran along the linguistic border. The language factor can explain almost 70 percent of the varying voting behaviors of the Swiss communes" (Hug, Kummer & Vatter, 1993: 2).³

3. Daniel Hug, Lorenz Kummer & Adrian Vatter are assistants to professor Wolf Linder of the Political Science Department of the University of Berne.

3.1. The cosmopolitanism of the French-speaking Swiss

Due to their history, their culture and their values, the "Francophone" Swiss are more open to the world. French-speaking intellectuals look abroad. Some cities such as Geneva are completely international to the point that one may ask whether the latter is truly Swiss. This would explain a more tolerant attitude of the French-speaking Swiss towards abroad. Adherence to the system of the European Community would be no more than the logical continuation of a propensity towards openness which is almost concomitant to the personality of the French-speaking Swiss:

"How to explain this inclination towards Europe? For one, probably through the generally and traditionally greater openness of French-speaking politicians and intellectuals towards questions of foreign policy. (...) Also, one should not forget that precisely Geneva is not only a Swiss city, but, as seat for the UN and for conferences, at the same time one of the capitals of the world" (Frenkel, 1990).⁴

To this has to be added that the "Francophone" Swiss have developed a worldview oriented towards foreign policy. Their values are marked by this fact, and are naturally more prospective than those of the German-speaking Swiss:

"The French-speaking Swiss have developed a European consciousness for a longer time and more clearly thanks to their stronger foreign-oriented perspective and their prospective values" (Longchamp, 1993, p.11).⁵

Comments:

The opposition between French-speaking cosmopolitanism and German-speaking closed mindedness should be moderated. Indeed, the German-speaking part of Switzerland does also harbor openness to the world, in particular in the cities. Furthermore, certain regions of the French-speaking part are not particularly open to the world (the countryside in the canton of Fribourg, the mountains of the Valais, the hinterland of the Vaud, the bernese Jura), yet they massively voted in favor of the EEA.

Let us remind ourselves that this cosmopolitan factor had already been evoked as far as Swiss adhesion to the UN was concerned. In the end though, it had not even allowed for a majority of the people of Geneva (the archetype of the so-called cosmopolite) to be in favor of adhesion to the universal organization.

In passing, it is important to avoid a certain number of misinterpretations. Indeed, certain French-speaking cosmopolitan milieus have for a long time been very unfavorable to European integration. In favor of free trade, and of privileged relations

4. Until the end of 1992 Max Frenkel was correspondent for the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* in the French-speaking part of Switzerland.

5 Claude Longchamp is a political scientist in Berne. He is responsible for political analyses for the GfS Institute. Guy Mettan, editor in chief at the daily *Tribune de Genève* (Mettan, 1992), advances quite similar arguments.

with the United States, (as well as with certain leaders of the Third World), they were nevertheless suspicious as of the plague of fortress Europe, prone to socializing and a planned economy, dominated by the Franco-German axis.

Finally, there is nothing that indicates that the French-speaking Swiss are more prospective than the German-speaking ones. On a number of topics, such as the environment, they seem to lack any kind of long-term vision.

It is nevertheless true that some urban "Francophone" milieus have elected an opening towards abroad as a certain virtue. Perhaps this is indicative of an underlying sympathy with respect to any idea of an opening towards abroad. Above all, the observation that the "Francophones" have developed a European conscience for a longer period of time than the German-speaking Swiss is very important. Particularly when one keeps in mind, as is shown by another analysis by Claude Longchamp, that close to 44 % of the French-speaking Swiss consider themselves Europeans, a higher percentage than in most countries of the European Community! (Longchamp, 1993: 11). This could mean that the myth of an ideal Europe is profoundly anchored in the French-speaking part of Switzerland.

3.2. Latins prefer politico-cultural aspects, whereas German-speaking favor the economy

Latin peoples have developed an approach of the world in general and of Europe in particular different from the one developed by Germanic peoples. For the former, political and cultural aspects must come prior to any other consideration. Any problem has to be considered in its entirety. It is the end that determines the means. If Europe is a good thing, it follows that any rapprochement with the European Community has to be privileged.

In contrast, Germanic populations have more down to earth and mercantile visions. Having become more realistic with the failure of such Germanic systems as Marxism and national socialism, they adopted Anglo-saxon economic pragmatism, thus finding back to a sort of peasant spirit which had never completely disappeared.

Expressed differently, one can make the following typology (Longchamp, 1991: 27):

(1) the Gallic model (France, Belgium, Luxembourg). In these countries a strong acceptance of cultural integration is found. On the other hand, they are more reserved with respect to eventual economic advantages that they might glean.

(2) In the Germanic model (Germany, Netherlands, Denmark) one observes a marked reserve with respect to the cultural dimension of European integration.

Thus there is a clear tendency of the German-speaking Swiss towards the Germanic type. Like the Germans and the Danes, they are little prepared for cultural integration. The French-speaking Swiss, on the other hand, are very close to the Gallic model.

"Ever since the war, the "Germanophone" world has given priority to the economic over the political. The Latin tradition

is quite different, favoring the political over the economic sphere. With respect to the European question, the French-speaking Swiss first asked themselves the question about the openness or closeness of our country, in a very Cartesian manner. In the German-speaking part, however, people have more of the accountant. They precisely weighed the advantages and the drawbacks" (De Weck, 1993).⁶

Comments:

With German reunification, Bonn increasingly furthers the political dimension (Maastricht, Ostpolitik, the recognition of Slovenia and Croatia forced on its partners, indirect participation in NATO intervention in Bosnia...). To hold that Germany has a purely economic vision of European integration is thus exaggerated. Moreover, a great number of studies shows that the French, the Belgians and the Luxemburgers are very attracted by the economic elements of the Community.

The proposition that the French-speaking Swiss are Cartesian is also doubtful. All the more so that they pride themselves in being different from the French, precisely on this point of Cartesianism. It seems to us that the French-speaking Swiss can be just as down to earth as the German-speaking ones when a given situation disturbs them.

We should also remind ourselves that the European Economic Area, as indicated by its name, is but exclusively an economic construction. It is therefore difficult to characterize the attraction of the French-speaking Swiss for this organization as a cultural element.

Finally, the notions of the Latin tradition and of the Germanic tradition are over-generalizing. The best proof of their inadequacy is that the canton of Ticino (Latin) has massively voted against the EEA.

3.3. The French-speaking Swiss are more collectivist than the German-speaking Swiss

According to this interpretation, the French-speaking Swiss have a greater propensity than the German or Italian-speaking ones to analyze their situation in collective terms. They define themselves to a greater extent through their group. In contrast, the Swiss Germans and the Swiss Italians are more inclined to stress their social class, their economic situation and their profession. They have more of an individualist vision of the European question:

"The origins of the vote in favor of the EEA in the French-speaking part of Switzerland are to a greater extent to be found in the collective allegiance to the linguistic and cultural area, whereas the decision in the German-speaking part and the Ticino is rather connected to a belonging to social

6. Roger De Weck is editor in chief of the center-left Zurich daily *Tages Anzeiger*.

strata, certain milieus or economic branches, than to a belonging to a linguistic area" (Hug, Kummer & Vatter, 1993: 8).

Comments:

Again, we are facing a succession of stereotypes. Yet no analysis has ever shown the French-speaking Swiss to be more collectivist than the German or Italian-speaking ones. It is amusing to note that the stereotype usually has the "Francophone" Swiss as more individualistic than the German-speaking ones. At least that is what had been suggested during the famous vote on seat belts, in 1980.

3.4. The Swiss-Germans analyze more in depth than the Swiss-French

This proposition follows from the preceding considerations. The "Francophone" Swiss are Latins with a love for life and who like to revel in positive myths. They are interested in grand visions but do not study the details of proposed treaties. If the vision is to their liking they do not look at the documents in depth.

The Swiss-Germans, on the other hand, are much more conscientious. They are not fooled by the negative sides of European construction. They analyze in depth the texts on which they must pronounce themselves. They therefore did not fail to remark the inconsistencies of the treaty on the European Economic Area:

"In questioning the man of the street on his yes to Europe [in the French-speaking part of Switzerland, R.S.], one is surprised by the blurred contours of his ideas" (Frenkel, 1990).

Such cultural propensities explain why electors who had been undecided until the last days finally joined the majority of their cultural area. Thus the "Francophone" electors who had not chosen their side on the eve of the vote pronounced themselves massively in favor of the EEA. By contrast, "Germanophone" voters who had hesitated until the last moment finally took the side of the opposers. Such a phenomenon had the effect of increasing the cultural polarization of the vote:

"If a hesitant "Francophone" in the end says well yes, a Swiss-German translates this with oh no!" (Longchamp, 1993: 24).

Comments:

This type of interpretation advances that it was the least informed citizens who had voted for the EEA. Yet many analysts think that if they had been better informed, they would have been more favorable to European integration.

An underlying tenet to this kind of stereotype on the "Francophone" Swiss is that they should have changed their opinion once

they would have better understood the real nature of the vote:

"Talk is of a good whose price one does not know. (...) Such a situation can change radically in the course of an election campaign" (Frenkel, 1990).⁷

The explanation of the rift between the French-speaking and the German-speaking Swiss through a cultural approach is extremely dangerous. The risk of reification is great. It is absolutely necessary to avoid considering cultures as real entities. (Badie, 1986, p.11-16). Culture is not a substance inherent to a collectivity, but the consequence of a fashioning.

One must therefore be careful not to conceive of culture as a kind of peoples mentality or a system of common values. Following Clifford Geertz, one should rather conceive of it as a language through which people communicate in the social game, and simultaneously, as the particular meaning taken on by action and social institutions in each collectivity (Geertz, p.89). Thus, and only thus, does culture give a sense to the notion of identity itself (infra, point 9.4).

4. LINGUISTIC APPROACH

During the debate on the European Economic Area, the problem of the Swiss-German dialect, and, more generally, of the lack of communication between the two big linguistic regions of the country, was often remarked. For instance, on the evening of December 6th, in an important debate that lasted several hours on Swiss-French Television, most of the speakers expressed themselves on the means to be found in order to take up the dialogue with the German-speaking part of Switzerland. The main points of discussion were the learning of the Swiss-German dialect, exchange programs for youths, apprentices and students. Europe was almost not mentioned at all...

Thus, many French-speaking Swiss have established a dialectic relation between the use of the Swiss-German dialect and the European question; most of the Swiss-Germans, on the other hand, cannot really see the link between the vote on the European Economic Area and the usage of their language.

4.1. The French-speaking part of Switzerland is disadvantaged by the emergence of the Swiss-German dialect

Certain people who have a foot in each culture have realized the importance of the "Francophone" uneasiness with respect to the advance of the Swiss-German dialect. They have tried to better con-

7. Kaspar Villiger, Head of the federal military department, shares the same idea:

"I am certain that if we discussed the Community seriously, the francophones would change their minds. For the moment, I think that the tendency which is manifest in the French-speaking part of Switzerland is based on a political error."

(Kaspar Villiger, "Interview," *L'Hebdo*, February 3rd, 1989. Cited by Eric Hoesli, (Hoesli, 1992, p.92).

conceptualize the link between the increased use of the Swiss-German dialect and the "Francophone" malaise. Underlying this analysis is the feeling of an abusive usage of this dialect which is perceived to be the mark of stultification:

"I perceive a certain interiorization of the French-speaking part of Switzerland. One of its causes is external: it is the obsession of the dialect in the German-speaking part of Switzerland, which is a vehicle for populism" (Blankart, 1992: 4).⁸

Comments:

The expression interiorization is inadequate for characterizing the attitude of the French-speaking Swiss in so far as we are rather witnessing a form of an opening to Europe. As we have seen beforehand, one would rather tend to stress the cosmopolitanism of the French-speaking.

What is more, it may not be very judicious to qualify the success of the Swiss-German dialect as obsessive. To relate it to the notion of populism is abusive. It is mainly important to seek the factors that explain its increased use, without value judgment, and to try to relate them to the notion of a quest for identity.

Nevertheless, Franz Blankart has the merit, on the one hand, of showing the dialectic between the emergence of the dialect in the German-speaking part of Switzerland and the "Francophone" malaise, and, on the other hand, of completing the reasoning by showing the link to the europhilia of the French-speaking Swiss.

4.2. The advance of the Swiss-German dialect is a mark of differentiation

Article 116 of the Federal Constitution does not list the Swiss-German dialect among the national languages of Switzerland. Yet, more than four million Swiss speak and think on the fringes of the Constitution. In the corridors of the federal administration, in the audio-visual media, in the army, in big national firms, the Swiss-German dialect is increasingly used, even in the presence of French or Italian-speaking Swiss.

Most Swiss-Germans consider that the use of their mother tongue in their day-to-day relations is nothing more than a natural phenomenon. But other observers see in it the will of being different from the exterior world, in particular from the Germanic world. Consciously or not, in legitimating the usage of the dialect in spheres where it was traditionally improper to use it, Swiss-Germans would be in the process of trying to differentiate themselves from the exterior world, in particular the German one:

"Minoritarian instinct, historical tradition, prejudices: all of this makes one seek differentiation. Notably by using the

8. Franz Blankart is Secretary of State for external economic affairs and associate professor at the Geneva-based Graduate Institute of International Studies.

dialect, which takes up a considerable place in local radios and on television" (De Weck, 1992).

Comments:

The notion of a minoritarian instinct seems ambiguous for explaining the Swiss-German attitude. With respect to whom? With respect to Germany? Is then the conflictual relationship between Swiss-Germans and Germans a problem of minority?

It is not obvious to see a causal factor in historical tradition. Indeed, historical tradition may be modulated differently according to different cultures. Thus, in some countries, historical tradition could not prevent the death of a dialect.

Nevertheless, it is true that dialect takes up a considerable place in the Swiss-German universe, and that its advance may not be analyzed independently of a will to differentiate oneself from other "Germanophone" countries.

4.3. French, rather than German, is usually spoken in Brussels

The language question has also appeared under another light in the reflection on the rift between the French-speaking and the German-speaking Swiss with respect to the European question. According to some analysts "Francophones" are naturally at ease in the European Community because French is one of its principal working languages, especially in the "Francophone" city of Brussels.

In Switzerland, on the other hand, the "Francophones" incur a marginalization which is due, among other things, to the lack of consideration given the French language. In the EC, however, they find a palliator for their Helvetic frustrations:

"How to explain this turn towards Europe? (...) For instance the fact that the French language seems less marginalized within Europe than within Switzerland thanks to the imperial European policy of France" (Frenkel, 1990).⁹

A fortiori the Swiss-Germans feel a certain malaise with respect to the European Community. Since the latter only allows the German language a limited place and since, moreover, the Swiss-Germans are not too enthusiastic about speaking Goethe language, they manifest a normal hesitation with respect to the European Community. This reasoning can even be pursued further: the educated strata of the German-speaking part of Switzerland do not feel overly complexed when using the German language thanks to their education, whereas the sectors of the population that have no higher education are sometimes embarrassed when they have to speak the good German. This corroborates the observation that the most educated German-speaking Swiss are also the most europhile:

9. The same analysis is found in Thomas Widmer and Christof Buri (Widmer & Buri, 1992: 382-383 and 386).

Comments:

The notion that the "Francophones" appreciate the EC because French is one of its languages has not often crept up in the discussions. What is more, all the negotiations on the EEA have been conducted in English, and this language increasingly takes on importance in the Community. Yet, this does not make the Community more popular with the British.

More generally, it is important to develop more studies on the relations between language and trends of identity, ethnicity and national feelings. Indeed, language is a basic element of any quest for identity, be it not the only one (Fishman, 1972: chap.II & V).

Most individuals learn a language. They use it in the setting of their family and with their close ones, and with those with whom they feel at ease. They consider as strangers those who do not participate in the sense of community conferred by the usage of a common language. Moreover, nationalist leaders often use the language question as a means to affirm the identity of the group, rejecting those who are not capable or who do not want to use it. Thus in the campaign on the EEA, some Federal Councillors from the French-speaking part of Switzerland have been insulted by anti-integrationists because they expressed themselves in good German.

Language has often been used by nationalists as a major expression of belonging and identity. It is a means to maintain cultural unity, to distinguish oneself from others and to revive buried traditions and memories. In the debate on the EEA, the usage of the Swiss-German dialect has also been a weapon for rejecting certain high-ranking civil servants such as Franz Blankart who generally refuse to speak the dialect on television or in public reunions. Anti-integrationists have used this argument to show that the real patriots are those who express themselves in Swiss-German, while the supranational bureaucrats, who are removed from daily preoccupations, use a foreign language, German. However, one of the weaknesses of the Swiss-German nationalists is that this dialect has no clear written form. Yet, according to the theoreticians of nationalism, one of the conditions for the emergence of a national identity requires a written technique of communication (Anderson, 1983: 122; Gellner, 1983: 127).

This being said, it is important not to overstate the point. It is indeed possible for a country to maintain a strong sense of national conscience even if the populations that compose it speak different languages. This remains the case not only in Switzerland, but also in Canada and Belgium where the secessionist tendencies that are linked to language issues are far more important (Seiler, 1989: 193-205).

5. THE RELATIONSHIP TO BORDERING STATES

Many analysts have remarked on the question of the relationship to bordering states. This expression is composed of two notions: that of state, and that of border. For a long time, the tendency was to mix the two. More recently, the trend is to differentiate the two concepts.

5.1. The proximity of the French-speaking Swiss to the border

For some analysts, there is an obvious link between the proximity to the border and the pro-European vote. The closer to the border a population is situated, the easier it sheds its prejudices. Indeed, neighborly relations allow to humanize and banalize the relationship. They make the citizen of another country appear very close to oneself. Economic and family links are constructed. It is therefore normal that cantons located on the border be more open towards Europe. As it happens, most "Francophone" cantons are thus situated:

"With the exception of Fribourg and the bernese Jura, all "Francophone" cantons and the Ticino are located on the border. (...) The physical presence, at a few kilometers, of a foreign state and society, the fact of being close to a border, notably influence the attitude of the population. (...)" (Hoesli, 1992: 94).¹⁰

Comments:

At the outset one should remark that some Swiss-German cantons have a lot of contacts with foreign bordering regions, be they commercial, political, cultural, ecological or family contacts. Thus Switzerland has, to take but the example of Baden-Wurtemberg, a foreign trade with this region more important than the one it has with Japan or the United States (De Weck). Yet all Swiss-German cantons situated on the border, with the exception of Basle, pronounced themselves against the EEA, sometimes massively so as in Schaffhausen, Thurgovia, the Grisons and Saint-Gall where the rejection rate of the treaty was largely over 60%.

In passing, one remarks that the prediction in the case of the Ticino, a border canton par excellence, was off the mark. In fact, there is a border problem, but it cannot be studied independently of the country on the other side of the border.

5.2. The essence of the German-speaking part of Switzerland is located far from the borders

Contrary to the "Francophone" cantons which are often close to the border, many "Germanophone" cantons have no neighbors among the states of the European Community. As a consequence, these Swiss-German regions are less open to the world. They cultivate a suspicion towards foreigners. They have a tendency to exaggerate their sectarian particularities. Lack of contact to the exterior and relative isolation do not facilitate the establishment of a supranational identity; on the contrary, they contribute to the reinforcement of interior links:

"This morning, Switzerland is no longer what it thought it was. Divided as never in its history. Without doubt between linguistic regions. More deeply, between a cosmopolitan Switzerland that lives close to a border that no longer is

10. Eric Hoesli is associate editor in chief of *L'Hebdo*.

one and a central and oriental Switzerland fixed on the myth of its own perennity" (Zendali, 1992).

Comments:

It should be remembered that only part of German-speaking Switzerland is removed from the borders. What is more, the physical distance to the border does not exclude a wealth of daily contacts with Europeans; this is the case of the throughway region of Uri (Zurfluh, 1992), but also of the very cosmopolitan and touristic canton of the Grisons. Above all, this criterion of distance to the border does not explain the large differences in attitude with respect to the EEA that could be observed between the "Francophone" and "Germanophone" parts of the Valais, of Fribourg and of Berne.

5.3. The French-speaking attraction towards France

A supplementary refinement of the analysis consists in a differentiation of the countries located on the other side of the border. Many observers have remarked that the relations are not the same whether the neighboring country is France, Germany or Italy. The first is considered to be particularly attractive. This would explain why it is perceived positively not only by the "Francophone" regions, but also by the canton of Basle, the only "Germanophone" canton of any importance to have a common border with France.

More importantly, France is seen as a modernizing country, sort of a model for a lagging Switzerland. In a sense, the rapprochement with France prefigures an adhesion to the European Community as well as all the economic and technological advantages that Switzerland could gain from it:

"In France, the European challenge is often associated with the modernization effort of society and the state. Multiplication of television channels, high-speed trains, "Minitel" while they may not convince the French-speaking Swiss that Europe is a paradise, they persuade them of the fact that one can be member of the community and do better than Switzerland" (Hoesli, 1992: 96-97).

Comments:

It is true that France's image remains positive in the French-speaking part of Switzerland. But is it from a technological and modernizing point of view, or merely from a cultural one? The analysis would have to be refined with opinion studies.

Moreover, one can ask the question whether France still appears as a country particularly favorable to European integration after the referendum on Maastricht. In any case, the very large opposition by close to half of the French population to this new stage of Community construction has been noticed in Switzerland. Yet this does not seem to have affected the very massive support of the French-speaking Swiss to the EEA. These restrictions being

stated, one may nevertheless remark that for many "Francophones", it is not anathema that it may sometimes be possible to do better in Europe than in Switzerland. Finally, it is undeniable that the "Francophones" consider the French as a sympathetic people with whom they can get along well. Indeed, according to an opinion poll, 48.7% of the French-speaking Swiss find the French very sympathetic people, and 40% find them sympathetic (Widmer & Buri, 1992: 380).¹¹

5.4. Swiss-German hesitations with respect to Germany

Due to the fact of murderous dreams of greatness that Germany has nourished twice in this century, the project of European integration naturally engenders disquiet in the German-speaking part of Switzerland. For many "Germanophones", the European Community evokes implicitly the conquests of the Third Reich. Swiss-Germans have twice been threatened by their distant parents. Even today, they have a more conflictual relationship with Germany than the "Francophones" with France. German reunification and the growing economic influence of Germany on the Old Continent accentuate these fears even more:

"Swiss-Germans detest anything foreign to them and detest even more those who speak the same language as they do, i.e. the Austrians and the Germans" (Bichsel, 1993).¹²

Comments:

Greater reflection is needed on the terms to be used for describing the ambivalent feelings of Swiss-Germans with respect to Germans. Do the notions of hate and contempt express precisely the complexity of this relationship?

Nevertheless, many observers attest the importance of the German factor in the suspicion of Swiss-Germans with respect to the Community. What is more, according to an opinion poll, only 8.8% of Swiss-Germans consider Germans to be very sympathetic and 38.8% see them as sympathetic. (Let us remind ourselves that, using the same criteria, 48.7% of "Francophones" find the French very sympathetic and 40% find them sympathetic (Widmer & Buri, 1992: 380).

11. Thomas Widmer and Christof Buri are assistants in the Department of Political Science of the University of Zurich.

12. Peter Bichsel ranks among the most famous writers in the German-speaking part of Switzerland. There is a comparable sentence coming from the heart: "We do not love the Germans" (Bichsel, 1992). Gerd Löhner, a journalist for *Bilanz*, expresses the same thing: "our German neighbors. We do not love them" (Löhner, 1992: 52). See also (De Weck, 1993), (Hoesli, 1992: 97), (Schenker, 1991: 24) and (Action pour une Suisse indépendante et neutre, April 1991).

5.5. The case of the German-speaking part of Switzerland is not unique, in all of Europe, fears about Germany influence the negative votes with respect to the EC

The mix of proximity and fear with respect to Germany is not specific to Switzerland. The same is true for the link that is made by voters between European integration and suspicion towards Germany. In other words, leaders in Bonn may well proclaim that they desire to build a European Germany rather than a German Europe, yet many citizens of neighboring countries remain skeptical.

The following formula summarizes the situation: the closer a country is to Germany, the greater the number of its citizens who have hesitations to enter into a coercive system dominated by the big Germanic neighbor:

"I find that in the four referenda on Europe of 1992, three results were very close and situated near 50%: in France, in Switzerland and in Denmark. These are three neighboring countries of Germany. As if the latter was feared" (De Weck, 1993).

Comments:

All the same, it should be remarked that certain fears of Germany may lead to sustain European integration. After all, let us not forget that one of the principal motives for the construction of the Community, as well as for its revival through the Treaty of Maastricht, was precisely to counter the German danger (Bulmer & Patersen, 1987: 5-7; Knipping, 1992: 517-529; Weidenfeld, 1986: 9-11; Hrbek, 1986: 19-21).

Nevertheless, numerous studies testify to the negative role of Germany's image with a large part of the electorate in neighboring countries. For instance, according to a poll conducted at the occasion of the French referendum on Maastricht in September 1992, only 21% of those in favor of the treaty admitted their suspicion of Germany, whereas 40% of opponents of the treaty said that the fear of German domination over Europe had determined their vote (Marsh, 1993).

With respect to Denmark, academics of that country have also found that the image of an horrible militarist and imperialist nation on its southern border continues to haunt Danish imagination, to the point that consciously or not resistance or skepticism towards the EC rest without any doubt on the sign of an equation between EC and German sphere of interest (Hedetoft, 1990: 22).

6. ECONOMIC APPROACH

The economic factor also appears as an explanatory element for the difference in attitudes towards European integration between French-speaking and German-speaking Swiss. We should note that this approach is less common than other, more cultural, types of interpretation.

The economic approach encompasses the correlations that can exist between the degrees of approbation/refusal of the EEA and

levels of economic development, crisis-vulnerability or unemployment rates.

6.1. The "Francophones" are more favorable to the EEA because they have more unemployment

The "Francophone" cantons have high unemployment rates. This is particularly so in Geneva, Vaud, and Neuchâtel. They are also among the most favorable to the European Economic Area. Therefore there is a correlation between the two phenomena.

Another observation corroborates this affirmation: the "Francophone" regions of the canton of Valais and Fribourg have an unemployment rate sometimes twice as important as the one of the neighboring "Germanophone" regions in the same cantons (Saborit, 1993).

In consequence, since "Francophone" Switzerland is confronted with an important surge of unemployment, it is more favorably inclined towards change. On the other hand, the German-speaking part of Switzerland is in a relatively more favorable phase. Fearing insecurity, it holds on to its traditional values. It still believes in its own strengths:

"The attitude with respect to an adhesion to the EEA may possibly have been influenced by the economic situation (keyword: unemployment). According to an additional questionnaire within the framework of the EEA polls, approximately one "Francophone" in five (around 20%) was either personally or in his immediate surroundings confronted with unemployment. In the German-speaking part of Switzerland this percentage was but 8% (Feusi & Stofer, 1992: 5-6).¹³

The political scientist Claude Longchamp summarizes the same idea in one formula:

"On the evening of December 6th, compare the unemployment map with the one of the voting results" (Longchamp, 1992).¹⁴

Comments:

To begin with, a misinterpretation has to be avoided: the regions of Switzerland that have the highest unemployment rates are not necessarily the poorest. Indeed, Geneva, Vaud and the Ticino are among the cantons with the highest income per head, and yet their level of unemployment is among the highest in Switzerland. Similarly, the poorest parts of Switzerland (central Switzerland) are among those that have the lowest level of unemployment.¹⁵

13. Roswitha Feusi and Josef Stofer are political scientists working for the Link polling institute in Lucerne.

14. A similar analysis is found in Hugo Bütler, editor in chief of the conservative daily newspaper *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*.

15. François-Georges Dreyfus makes the same type of observation with respect to the French referendum on Maastricht. He warns against abusive generalisations of the type: "The rich and dynamic

The argument of the correlation between the unemployment rate and the vote on the EEA must not be exaggerated for five reasons: first, even though certain "Francophone" regions such as the Arc Jurassien have massively voted in favor of the EEA, they nevertheless do not have more unemployment than the German-speaking part of Switzerland (Saborit, 1993).

Second, it is not obvious that the cantons most affected by unemployment are the most favorable ones to the EEA. One could just as well have developed the inverse argument: that is that the regions most affected by the crisis fear an economic opening.

Third, the Italian-speaking part of Switzerland massively rejected the EEA treaty, whereas its unemployment rate was among the highest in Switzerland (about 6%) in December 1992.

Fourth, the unemployment rate in the German-speaking part of Switzerland should reach in June 1993 as high a level as that of "Francophone" Switzerland six months prior, and yet, nothing indicates that this would induce a modification of the Swiss-German attitude with respect to the EEA.

Fifth, and most decisively, europhile tendencies of the "Francophones" and Euro-skeptic ones of the "Germanophones" had already been observed since 1986, even before unemployment affected the French-speaking part of Switzerland (Ruffieux & Thurler Muller, 1989: 237-252).

Thus, one has to be suspicious of the apparent correlation between unemployment level and European sympathy. But it is nevertheless possible that the fact of being affected by unemployment has made populations in the "Francophone" cantons, which are *a priori* francophiles, more receptive to arguments that foresee an increase in economic difficulties in case of refusal of the EEA.

Let us not forget that the "Francophones" have a greater sense of economic precariousness than the Swiss-Germans. The watch-making regions of the cantons of Jura, Neuchâtel and Vaud know that prosperity is not definitive as of yet and that only international competition offers a lifeline. The relationship between the economy and the vote on the EEA is therefore less a problem of objective reality of the crisis as it is one of perception, itself conditioned by a subjective historical memory.

7. THE RELATIONSHIP TO POLITICAL OR MEDIA POWER

Some analysts have also observed differences between the two principal linguistic regions of Switzerland in the relationship to political and media power. In order to understand the extent of these differences, more than the profound nature of the rifts, it is therefore necessary to study the role played by political and media elites, as well as the degrees of trust/distrust that manifest themselves.

regions have voted yes and the less advanced parts have voted no" (Dreyfus, 1993: 82).

7.1. Swiss-Germans trust their authorities less than do the "Francophones"

Several political scientists have remarked a core of German-speaking Swiss suspicious of their political authorities. For historical reasons, part of the "Germanophones" are a priori hesitant with respect to any governmental project. This rebellious spirit is mainly present in the peripheral countryside of central and oriental Switzerland:

"At the juncture of the vote on the EEA, suspicion towards government is almost twice as strong in the German and Italian-speaking parts of Switzerland (48%) as in the French-speaking part (25%). One then has to realize that the impact on the vote of suspicion has been far more important in the German-speaking part than in "Francophone" Switzerland" (Kriesi, 1993: 46).¹⁶

This interpretation has even been distorted so as to say that there have been no differences between "Francophones" and "Germanophones", that the only true rift was between the elites and the rest of the population:

"If there is a rift in this country, it is not between the German and the French-speaking Swiss, but truly between the population and the political elite" (Wahli, 1993).¹⁷

Comments:

One has to be careful not to use the rift between elites and the population as an alibi for denying the rift between "Francophones" and "Germanophones". Unhappily, this is what Catherine Wahli does, contrary to Hanspeter Kriesi.

One should also reflect on the fact that popular votations carried out before and after December 6th have shown that it is rather the "Francophone" cantons and not the Swiss-German regions which distanced themselves from their elites and the federal authorities (for instance the vote on a 20 cents increase in the price of gasoline).

Nevertheless, these analyses concerning the existence of a nationalist and populist core in the German-speaking part of Switzerland are particularly clarifying. Indeed, they are of one trend with studies carried out in other countries where referenda on the European Community have recently been held. Thus, studies on the Danish vote (Lyck, 1992: 237-239) and on the French vote (Dreyfus, 1993: 85; Habert, 1992-93: 877) confirm the existence of these nationalist resistance cores, systematically opposed to the international openings of their governments.

16. Hanspeter Kriesi is professor of political science at the University of Geneva.

17. Catherine Wahli is responsible for the newscast on the French channel of Swiss television.

7.2. The unanimity of "Francophone" elites as compared to the partial division of "Germanophone" elites

To the suspicion of part of the Swiss-German electorate towards political power was added the role played by the elites. In the German-speaking part of Switzerland, some political parties were mainly negative on the question of the EEA (Democratic Union of the Center, Ecologists), and others appeared hesitant or divided, depending on the moment (the Socialist Party and the initial moods of its president, Peter Bodenmann; cutting remarks sometimes proffered by Carlo Schmid, president of the Christian-Democratic Party). Professional organizations in the German-speaking part of Switzerland also appeared more hesitant than the ones in the French-speaking part (Swiss union of professions, Swiss peasant union).

It should also be noted that the demand for adhesion to the European Community (May 1992) has caused more trouble among "Germanophone" elites than among their "Francophone" counterparts.

Added to this is the fact that certain populist tribunes, belonging to the establishment, such as Christoph Blocher, have managed to strongly influence Swiss-German public opinion. In the French-speaking part of Switzerland, on the other hand, no leader of any weight took part in the fight of the opponents of the EEA:

"These preconditions, combined with an almost complete consensus of the elite, permitted the development of a fundamental and stable disposition in favor of integration, which began to determine everything" (Longchamp, 1993, 11).

Comments:

Again, one has to ask oneself whether there is not a confusion of cause and consequence. Were the "Francophone" elites ahead of the population, or have they, on the contrary, followed it? Have they felt the europhilia of the "Francophone" citizens, or have they fashioned it?

To this has to be added that one should not exaggerate the audience of "Francophone" elites. No leader of the yes has emerged during the campaign on the EEA. Moreover, these elites are often in the minority in popular votations. One may also ask oneself whether unanimism is well perceived by the population.

Nevertheless, even if the "Francophone" elites have not created the populations europhilia, their homogeneous action must certainly have reinforced the mobilization in favor of the EEA. Above all, it is undeniable that the division of part of the "Germanophone" elite has spread discord in the Swiss-German population. Finally, the Blocher factor has unanimously been highlighted. This man knew how to play his role of populist and nationalist tribune, while simultaneously and generally giving the impression of a responsible company director, and of a member of parliament from a traditional party close to the true values of the country.

7.3. The manipulation of the "Francophone" media as compared to the half-heartedness of the "Germanophone" media

Some observers, in particular on the side of the "no", but not exclusively, have remarked on the very massive commitment of the "Francophone" media in favor of the European Economic Area. Some have interpreted this as an important factor of vote differentiation. Others suggest that the "Francophones" had been manipulated by their information organs.

The implicit message of this trend of thought is that if things had been more honest, the French-speaking Swiss would have behaved normally, that is like the majority of German and Italian-speaking Swiss who have rejected the treaty on the European Economic Area:

" In the case of December 6th, it is less the different sensibilities between Latins and Swiss-Germans that played, than other criteria grounded (...) in "Francophone" institutional and media unanimity in favor of the EEA project" (*Action pour une Suisse indépendante et neutre*, February 1993: 5).¹⁸

The importance of the role of the media is also stressed by a professional of the trade who describes herself as being hesitant with respect to the EEA:

"You think that the "Francophones" said yes because they were under pressure! In a certain sense, yes. The press and the political class were completely taken-in by the EEA and the opponents could not say a word" (Wahli, 1993).

Finally, even a declared supporter of the EEA underlines the role of the "Francophone" media, although with the underlying regret that the "Germanophone" newspapers had not been as efficient:

"The following factors may probably explain the greater readiness of the "Francophones" to an opening towards Europe: (...)
- The media in the French-speaking part of Switzerland, who have recognized in time the radical change in governmental policy, and supported or even preceded it" (Linder, 1993, p.17).¹⁹

Comments:

To begin with, let us remind ourselves that the "Germanophone" media, with a few very rare exceptions, were also favorable to the EEA. Moreover, the explanation using the media is often an alibi for the losing side to justify its poor performance. This is certainly the case of the Action for an Independent and Neutral Switzerland in the French-speaking part of Switzerland (cf. quote, supra).

18. The Action for an Independent and Neutral Switzerland is the principal lobby opposed to the EEA. It is led by Christoph Blocher, National Councillor and businessman from Zurich.

19. Wolf Linder is professor of political science at the University of Berne.

The importance of the role played by the "Francophone" media has thus to be relativized. All the more so since polls show that only 17.1% of the "Francophones" and 23.7% of the "Germanophones" say that they have been influenced by the media (MIS, 1992, sheet "What has influenced you most?"). To this must be added a study undertaken in the German-speaking part of Switzerland which reveals that the readers of the *Blick* newspaper had become, over the months, more opposed to the EEA, while the political line of the newspaper was favorable to it (Longchamp, 1993: 18). *Mutatis mutandis*, one can thus relativize the influence of the media on the comportment of "Francophone" public opinion.

Nevertheless, it is useful to note the importance of the media, especially the "Francophone" ones, in the intellectual preparation to European integration. These organs of information have played an unusual role in Swiss political life. They have created an emotional climate about identity unique in the history of the French-speaking part of Switzerland. Certainly the media have not created "Francophone" europhilia, but surely they have reinforced it.

Such considerations confirm certain observations by specialists of nationalism on the importance of the media in the formation of identities. Thus, echoing a famous formula by McLuhan, Ernest Gellner affirms that the media are the message (Gellner, 1983: 126). On the whole this reasoning is akin to that of Benedict Anderson and the idea of ethnic or national identity as imagined community (Anderson, 1983). More than its contents, it is indeed the penetration and importance of an abstract communication that engenders the basic idea of the feeling of collective identity. The essential message is that only the style and emotion of identity are what is transmitted (Gellner, 1983: 127).

8. PSYCHOLOGICAL & PSYCHO-ANALYTICAL APPROACHES

To our knowledge, no psychologist or psycho-analyst has expressed himself on the rift between French and German-speaking Swiss. Nevertheless, psychological or psycho-analytical terms have appeared on the off-the-rack market for fashionable ideas. Should one linger on them? Prudence is counselled for these analyses lack any rigor. Yet these interpretations are part of their time. They are widespread among large strata of the population.



8.1. The minority-complex of the "Francophones" in Switzerland and of the "Germanophones" in Europe

The "Francophones" are a minority in Switzerland. They increasingly face a wall of incomprehension from their "Germanophone" compatriots. Having to accept each time the diktat of the majority, they have a legitimate desire to find a release for their frustrations. Europe in its vastness provides such an outlet. On the other hand, Swiss-Germans fear losing their majority in Switzerland. In a big Europe, it would be as if they were drowned. Which explains their almost instinctual hesitations towards the European Community:

"The minority has for a long time had to learn to content itself with partial sovereignty, that of the cantons, though increasingly derisory. All the centers of gravity of the "Francophone" universe are situated far from their territory. (...) When one is on the side of the week, one does not disdain an additional means of recourse" (Hoesli, 1992: 98).

A similar type of analysis is found in Wolf Linder:

"The following factors may probably explain the greater readiness of the "Francophones" to an opening towards Europe: (...)
- The minority-syndrome, in which the German-speaking part of Switzerland must lose, but in which the French-speaking part must win (the "Francophones" are a national minority in many walks of life, but could belong to the majority in decisions from Brussels -- the obverse is correspondingly true for "Germanophones" (Linder, 1993: 17).

8.2. Swiss-German arrogance

Certain "Francophone" journalists have gone very far in their interpretation of the vote of December 6th. Not only have they seen in it a manifestation of the "Francophone" malaise vis-à-vis the "Germanophones", but also a sort of deliberate will on part of the Swiss-Germans to impose their domination on the "Francophones". A little as if the Swiss-Germans had wanted to remind their "Francophone" compatriots who commands in this country:

"Swiss-Germans, with the happy exception of the people from Basle, tell us that they consider the "Francophones" as negligible quantity" (Ribeaud, 1992).²⁰

20. José Ribeaud is editor in chief of the catholic newspaper *La Liberté* of Fribourg. Other francophone journalists take up the same points:

"There is arrogance and contempt in that no, a disgusting way of telling the exterior who is the best and the interior who commands" (Péclet, 1992).

8.3. The "Francophone" complex of inferiority

A variant in the analysis of the "Francophones" is to observe not only a minority-complex, but also a complex of inferiority. The French-speaking Swiss would need to compensate their ridiculed pride:

"How to explain this turn towards Europe? (...) It certainly also flatters "Francophone" self-esteem to be, in this field, once again ahead of the German-speaking part of Switzerland, that is of the ambivalently looked-upon big brother" (Frenkel, 1990).

8.4. The Swiss-German superiority-complex with respect to the rest of the world

For some Swiss-Germans who are very critical of their society, the problem is not as much one of relations with the "Francophones" as it is one of relations with the rest of the world. Due to their economic prosperity, their interior peace and their absence of war, the Swiss-Germans have developed the conviction of belonging to a superior species. In the light of this, why should they adapt themselves to the Europeans when it should rather be up to the latter to imitate the Helvetic model?

The Swiss-Germans have developed a pathos of superiority. They are convinced of being better than the other European peoples. Such is the fundamental explanation of their refusal to enter the system of the Community:

"I think that it was essentially arrogance, the feeling of being better than the others, which was determinant" (Bichsel, 1993).

Eric Hoesli expresses quite a similar idea, though in political terms and without using psycho-analytical vocabulary:

"The Swiss-Germans are masters in their home. They are masters in Switzerland, simply put. Their intuitive fear (more than unconscious) of seeing Switzerland joining the aggregate of the Community is that of the sovereign who will lose part of his power" (Hoesli, 1992: 98).

Jean-Claude Pécelet is editor in chief of the center-left weekly magazine *L'Hebdo*.

"The francophones are stunned at the contempt that is expressed, here and there, at their address" (Cornu, 1992).

Daniel Cornu is the former editor in chief of the Geneva based daily paper *La Tribune de Genève*.

8.5. The Swiss-German inferiority-complex with respect to the rest of the world

Other analysts, sometimes the same ones, suggest that the real problem is that of an inferiority-complex of the Swiss-Germans vis-à-vis the rest of the world. In contrast, the "Francophones" are seen as surer of their identity. They have resolved a long time ago their relationship to France. They are more open to other cultures. They therefore do not have the visceral reactions of rejection that are shown by the Swiss-Germans:

"The "Francophones" are surer of their identity, more proud of their culture than the Swiss-Germans. It is this insecurity which drives the Swiss-Germans to reject the external world, while wanting this world to recognize them, admire them" (Bichsel, 1993).

The same type of language is found in the writing of the journalist Gerd Löhner:

"The xenophobia that is spreading here may be fed for a good part by the consciousness of the progressive loss of our own importance. (...) Switzerland cannot allow itself to concede that in fact it is a small state without importance. (...) So, in order not to have to concede all this, it must present itself as a special case among the other nations" (Löhner, 1992: 52).

Comments:

To start with, we should note that the psychological and psycho-analytical terms are used here by non-specialists. The views under discussion are merely popular ones that have the shine of psychological or psycho-analytical scientism.

The dangers provoked by the abuse of this type of expression have already been stressed many times, as for instance with respect to Nazi anti-semitism (Friedländer, 1974).

First, analyses reserved to individuals by psychology and especially by psycho-analysis are applied to collectivities. And second, some terms are used vaguely and ambiguously: complex of inferiority, complex of superiority, minority-syndrome (Widmer & Buri, 1992: 374) etc.

Besides, studies undertaken in other countries show that regionalist movements in Europe do not have a univocal attitude towards the European Community (Hermann, 1992: 4-5; Jaffe, 1993: 61-80; Watson & Jones, 1992: 316). Thus, the nationalist movement in Corsica is divided over the Europe of Maastricht: the MPA votes in favor of it, the ANC against it, and other branches commend abstention. In the Basque country, the ETA and the HB refuse the European Community, whereas the PNV is one of its strong supporters. In Ireland, the Sinn Fein is opposed to European construction, but moderate Catholics are favorable to it. Finally, we have seen that the other Swiss minority, from the Ticino, has massively rejected European integration.

To these empirical remarks has to be added that there is a risk of racism in the abuse of psychological or psycho-analytical

terms: that is passing judgment on populations not in consideration of what they do or want to do, but in view of a supposed ontology of their action and their unconscious.

More precisely, as far as Swiss-Germans are concerned, we can only judge their feelings towards the rest of the world with difficulty. Do they suffer from a complex of superiority or of inferiority in relation to their neighbors? Or both at the same time, which is not necessarily contradictory. Many Swiss-German writers (Frisch, Dürrenmatt, Lötscher, Bichsel) have published memorable pages on this topic. But how to explain that those who should be the most arrogant (rich and cultivated urban Swiss-Germans) are precisely those who were most favorable to the EEA and European integration (Kriesi, 1993: 44)?

In any case, nothing shows that the refusal of the EEA may be interpreted as a vote of arrogance towards the "Francophones". Swiss-Germans have voted on European integration following their own logic which has nothing to do with the moods of the "Francophones".

This being said, in spite of the numerous epistemological and empirical difficulties we just mentioned, we still have the intuitive impression that certain deep psychological factors had a role to play. In particular, for the French-speaking part of Switzerland, we are convinced that a feeling of minority (which is not a complex of inferiority), hampered by an autistic wall (the question of inaccessibility to the Swiss-German language) and political and economic domination has provoked for a long time a deep desire to get rid of the Swiss-German yoke, at times too heavy.

Let us risk the hypothesis that the European idea has been perceived as an outlet for certain frustrations of the minority, all the while it permitted the Francophones to unearth ideal Helvetic myths through an idealized Europe.

9. NATIONALISM

Common language has seen the appearance of the notions of "Francophone" identity and nationalism on one hand, as well as those of Swiss-German identity and nationalism on the other. More precisely, in the latter case, Swiss-Germans have been reproached of annexing Swiss nationalism to their profit.

9.1. "Francophone" nationalism

Certain observers have viewed the enthusiasm of the "Francophones" for Europe, as well as their excessive reactions as a manifestation of a foul nationalism. The term nationalism is most often analyzed as an illness that has to be fought. Implied is that the "Francophones" should not kindle the fire of language rivalry and should not abusively politicize the differences in culture and mentality:

"This nationalism was clearly apparent, during the referendum, (...) in the disproportionate "Francophone" reaction" (De Azaola, 1993).²¹

²¹ José Miguel de Azaola is a Spanish writer and journalist.

9.2. Swiss-German nationalism

Almost all analysts have interpreted the negative vote of the peripheral regions in the German-speaking part of Switzerland as a manifestation of nationalism. Adversaries of the EEA did not want to jeopardize their national identity. Some people underlined the questions of direct democracy, neutrality, federalism and independence which are constitutive elements of Swiss national identity.

Others have drawn attention to the fear of foreign immigration which, in all societies, is a way of differentiating oneself from the Other. Xenophobia is analyzed as a primary characteristic of nationalism.

Finally, another point has been underscored, that of the fear of jeopardizing the Helvetic homeland, the humus of the Swiss nation. Adversaries of the EEA opposed European integration fearing a later adhesion to the Common Agricultural Policy of the EC which would jeopardize Swiss agriculture. Unconsciously, there is a will to preserve Swiss nationalist myths of attachment to the land (the prairie of the Grutli, the concept of the national alpine réduit...):

"This nationalism was clearly apparent, during the referendum, in the Swiss-German *pruritus*" (De Azaola, 1993).

9.3. "Francophone" nationalism does not exist

It is interesting to note a quarrel with respect to the use of the terms (Seiler & Knüsel, 1989). Is it possible to call the "Francophone" affirmation that was manifest in the vote on the European Economic Area a form of nationalism? For most observers, such a term is abusive and dangerous. Indeed, it could legitimize the development of such a trend:

"I contest the so-called identity-crisis of "Francophone" Switzerland; because "Francophone" Switzerland as a French ethnic nation (Roland Béguelin)²² is as little a reality as is Swiss-German Switzerland" (Blankart, 1992: 2).

Such an affirmation is echoed by Thierry Beguins analysis in relation to the notion of francophony itself:

"Let us not listen to false prophets of division who speak of the francophony, an empty concept that does not correspond to any reality. There are "Francophone" cantons whose common denominator is the use of the French language, but that is it" (Beguins, 1993).²³

22. Roland Béguelin was the leader of the separatist movement in the Jura canton and the strongest proponent of a "Francophone" identity.

23. Thierry Beguins is State Councillor and Attorney General of the canton of Neuchâtel.

9.4. Of the good use of the notion of identity

In order to analyze the Swiss refusal of adhesion to the EC, the term identity has often been used (Federal Council, 1988: 124 & 127;²⁴ Melich, 1991:13; Kriesi, 1993: 40; Reszler, 1986: 105; Sciarini, 1993: 57; Schwok, 1992; Widmer & Buri, 1992: 383-384).

Yet, some specialists refuse the usage of this notion of identity to describe the types of "Francophone", Swiss-German or Swiss affirmation. The critiques that are generally advanced are the following (Kreis, 1992).²⁵ First, the term identity is vague and makes things more confused. This concept can comprise all kinds of meanings. To this must be added that representations of the Swiss being vary according to age and region, profession and formation. This notion of identity occults the debate on the real nature of the EEA.

Moreover, this term gives the impression that things are eternal. The notion is too static. It prevents all possibility of evolution.

More surreptitiously, this term allows the adversaries of the EEA to refuse any innovation and reform. It is a conservative concept that aims at legitimizing Swiss national immobility.

The Danish professor Ulf Hedetoft is also profoundly suspicious of the usage of the concept of national identity. Indeed, this term is the discourse of (human) nature and it constructs nations and nationalisms simultaneously as socio-psychological needs and biogenico-cultural inclinations. This kind of discourse is therefore dangerous for the following reasons (Hedetoft, 1992, pp.14-16):

(a) The notion of national identity postulates the existence of a national community deeply entrenched not only between the people and the State, but also between diverse sections of the population, in spite of dissimilarities and conflicts. This community (in the sense of a grand solidarity, following Renan) is supposed to be rooted whether one likes it or not in the nature of each individual, and hence in his will, even though people may not always be conscious of this fact. Thus the discourse on national identity affirms in each individual the existence of a general will.

(b) The corollary of this argument is the reference to all the formal elements of national identity: race, culture, birth,

24. The following sentence shows some of the risks of abusive usage of the word identity:

" Adhesion would directly affect our state structure. The transfer of sovereignty rights to the supranational organs of the EC (...) would have repercussions on federalism and direct democracy, the foundations of Helvetic identity (Federal Council, 1988: 124) (...) It would disrupt our democratic mechanisms and our foreign policy principles to such a degree that the traditional identity of our country would be profoundly transformed" (Federal Council, 1988: 127).

25. Georg Kreis is professor of history at the University of Basle and has directed the program of the Swiss National Fund of Scientific Research on Cultural Plurality and National Identity.

language, history, territory etc. In Switzerland one would look for notions such as neutrality, direct democracy and federalism. Above all, it is important to understand that they all aim to give credibility to the objectivity of national identity.

National identity portrays itself as a fact and an explanation at the same time. This notion pretends to be objective, tolerant, cultural and non-racist, but in fact it is, for Ulf Hedetoft, the modern racism of nationalism.

Comments:

These analyses by Georg Kreis and Ulf Hedetoft must focus our attention on the abuse of certain terms such as identity. This notion indubitably carries its toll of ambiguity. First, because this term is increasingly common-place in political analysis. By dint of being used for political parties, regions, as well as for Europe, it tends to acquire an almost rhetorical value. If it can connote everything, it can no longer mean anything. It loses its differentiating function.

A second problem with the notion of identity concerns the relationship to the Other. Indeed, the notion of identity postulates similitude and difference at the same time. Third, one of the difficulties with the word identity comes from the fact that this term suggests an idea of permanency.

These remarks remind us that we have to avoid the risk of reification. One must avoid to consider the identities as real entities. Identity is not a substance inherent to a collectivity. Of course, the word identity suggests an idea of permanency, but one can also conceive of identity as not being an immutable state. Just as a persons status can change from being single, to being married, divorced, widowed, in the same way identity can constantly be redefined. According to particular situations, the sense and the values of identity change and sometimes may even undergo a metamorphosis. Conflicts change into peace and the adversary becomes the principal ally as between the French and the Germans (Martin, 1992: 582-593). Thus, the term identity is interesting only if it is understood as the consequence of a political fashioning: it is power relationships that give relations between collectivities a meaning.

Finally, let us not exaggerate the risks of identity concerning relations to the Other. Indeed, one of the interesting aspects of the notion of identity is precisely to remind us of the relation to the Other. In showing the idea of similitude and difference, it suggests that the group cannot recognize its own similitude in the absence of a relation to the Other. In the words of Franz Blankart: Could it be that "Francophone" nationalism has been imported from the German-speaking part of Switzerland? (Blankart, 1992: 3).

Thus it appears to us that the notion of identity can be useful to analyze the rift between the French and the German-speaking Swiss. It is not as much a question of using the term in a static way, than one of placing it side to side with other substantives, as in the expressions: affirmation of identity, exacerbation of identity, claim of identity.

10. CONCLUSION

The first difference between the German and the French-speaking Swiss lies in the question of the relationship between majority and minority (which is however not comparable to a minority syndrome or complex). The "Germanophones" control political and economic power in Switzerland. Adhesion to the EC provokes fears for some of losing their domination over the country since European integration implies the delegation of certain competences to Brussels. Yet it is abusive to employ expressions such as complex of superiority towards abroad. More simply put, for most of them notions such as independence, sovereignty, neutrality, direct democracy and federalism still harbor a wealth of significance.

Notwithstanding this, still not well explained as of yet is the paradox that it is those who have the least power in the German-speaking part of Switzerland (the least educated persons and the poorest of the peripheral regions) who are most attached to it. Perhaps the least favored of the marginalized regions have intuitively understood that an adhesion to the system of the Community would entail a strengthening of the central State (Berne) to the detriment of direct democracy and cantonal competences? This would confirm the writings of Alan Milward which show that states use Community integration in order to reinforce their competences²⁶ (Milward, 1990: 253-270, Milward, 1992).

"Francophones", on the other hand, are a minority in Switzerland (less than 20%). They have a stronger tendency to doubt their independence since they often have the feeling of not being in control of the destiny of Switzerland. In consequence, they have a more relativized vision of the virtues of sovereignty and direct democracy. Suffering the indifference of many Swiss-Germans, they hope, sometimes in a mythical manner, to gain more autonomy by playing the Brussels card against Berne. In fact, they believe that European integration will diminish the weight of the central state (Berne).

This to the point that the European myth now seems more powerful than the Swiss myth. To be sure, "Francophones" still think proudly of being Swiss (Melich, 1991: 30-32) and continue to cherish Swiss values such as direct democracy, federalism and neutrality (Melich, 1991: 20-22). And one can find in "Francophone" Switzerland as much xenophobia and hostile attitudes towards abroad as in the German-speaking part of Switzerland (Windisch, 1978). In other words, the "Francophones" still share most of the Swiss myths. They do not have the impression of having been forced to join this country or of having been humiliated as feel some Canadian or Belgian "Francophones".

26. In our various writings (Schwok, 1992, (b), (c), (d)), we show that Swiss adhesion to the EEA will put into question Helvetic specificities such as direct democracy and restrictive immigration policy. As for an entry into the EC, it should erode neutrality, the protectionism of Swiss agricultural policy and, on a lesser level, federalism. Nevertheless, we argue that these forms of integration would be positive for two reasons: first, because these Helvetic specificities sometimes warrant reforms and second, because the *Alleingang*, the going alone, is not a *status quo* and entails economic marginalization of Switzerland, as well as political marginalization and satellization.

But the "Francophones" are sometimes ill at ease at being a minority in Switzerland. For many "Francophones", Europe rhymes with openness, with communication to other cultures and respect of minorities. Thus the "Francophone" Swiss who support the Community have developed two myths: the Swiss myth of liberty, autonomy and federalism with the European myth of liberty, autonomy and federalism.

Second, Swiss-Germans try to differentiate themselves from Germany (is it hate?). They fear that certain real (physical, technical and fiscal) and symbolic borders be abolished. The "Francophones", on the contrary, have more sympathy for France; which however is not comparable to a will of identification. One explanation of this is the fact that Swiss-German collective memory is marked by the remembrance of the process of German unification and the two world wars, in particular the second one. "Francophones", for their part, have not been threatened by France since the beginning of the 19th century. To be sure, the gap between the German-speaking part of Switzerland and Germany is much wider than between the French-speaking part of Switzerland and France.

Third, there is a dialectic link between the growth of the two affirmations (which may well be qualified as identity affirmations). The more the Swiss-Germans try to differentiate themselves from the external world, and in particular from the Germans, the more they express themselves in the audio-visual media, in the administration, and sometimes even at university in a dialect that most of the "Francophones" do not understand.

This reinforces the feeling of exclusion of the "Francophone" minority which has the impression of dealing with an autistic majority. To this must be added that the dialogue between the two principal communities of the country has become more difficult than in the past because of France's loss of cultural influence as compared to the Germanic, and especially Anglo-saxon, worlds.

Finally, it is important to remind ourselves that at least since 1986, all opinion polls have shown the tendencies of the two communities. For instance, the difference in sympathy with respect to European integration has almost always been above 15% between "Francophones" and "Germanophones" (Widmer & Buri, 1992: 367). This means that the rift between the French and the German-speaking Swiss is independent of the details of the Treaty on the EEA, of the differences in unemployment rates, of German unification, of the role of "Francophone" media, of the division among Swiss-German elites, of the personality of Christoph Blocher, even if these elements may sometimes have reinforced pre-existing tendencies. Therefore, the differences between the principal Swiss communities are due to rationalities of identity which are largely indifferent to the real nature of the EEA.²⁷

27. We have not analyzed in this study the EEA Treaty rejection at 61.5% by the Italian-speaking Swiss. Using the methodology developed in this paper as well as the few available analyses (Bernasconi, 1992, Club Svizzero di Marketing, 1993: 5, Manzoni, 1992, Pichard, 1992, Rezzonico, 1992, Rossi, 1992), we propose the following three hypotheses which should be developed:

First, the Ticino has created its prosperity on cheap labor, tourism and fiscal fraud from Italy. EEA adherence would have led to the elimination of the status of daily border-crossers and sea-

sonal workers. It would also have led to the repealing of the Lex Friedrich which prohibits to foreigners the acquisition of real estate in Switzerland . Moreover, under the EEA, there would be increased administrative cooperation between the European fiscal administrations.

Second, many Italian-speaking Swiss are anxious about the prevalent situation in Italy. On one hand, they fear the anarchy and corruption of southern Italy. And the idea that Swiss contributions to the cohesion fund of the EC will also be profitable to southern Italy (implied: the mafia) does not reassure them. On the other hand, they fear the economic, political and cultural power of northern Italy. This disquiet is put to use by the Lega Ticinese, a political movement that put everything on the anti-European card.

Third, there is the problem of the identity of the Ticino. When Swiss-Italians cross the border, they find the same architecture, the same countryside, and the same cuisine. Only their passport and their bank-notes separate them from their Lombard brothers. If borders were abolished, there would not be any Swiss-Italian area left, there would even be no more Swiss-Italian identity. Any weakening of the borders may thus be perceived as an identity-threat for the Swiss-Italians.

In conclusion, the interest of the negative vote of the Ticino on the EEA lies in the fact that it puts into question certain *clichés* on the more cosmopolitan or less serious Latin mentality, on the notion of the minority syndrome, as well as on the supposed correlation between unemployment rate and acceptance of European integration.

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