The French Popular Front, the First Blum Government and Events in Switzerland as seen by the Vaudois Press, 1934-1937

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Thesis Research

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ABSTRACT

The attitude of the Vaudois press toward the French Popular Front and the first Blum government between 1934 and 1937 has been examined through five newspapers which represent the existing political spectrum in the canton of Vaud. The inferences drawn from the press' coverage of the Popular Front are backed by an analysis of the press' coverage of Swiss issues. Thus are defined the main currents of opinion in the Vaudois press, the chief preoccupations of the newspapers in regard to the Popular Front, their view of the cultural, political and economic relationship between France and Switzerland at the time and the way in which the Vaudois press perceived the role of their canton within the Swiss Confederation. Moreover, this study helps to shed light on the dynamics of party politics in Vaud at a time when the main issues of the day were often of world-wide importance.

RESUME

J'éxamine l'attitude de la presse vaudoise à l'égard du Front populaire français et du gouvernement Blum de 1934 à 1937, vue à travers cinq journaux représentant les courants politques au canton de Vaud. J'appuie les conclusions tirées des reportages de presse sur le Front populaire par l'analyse des reportages sur les événements suisses. De cette façon je définis les principaux courants d'opinion de la presse vaudoise, les préoccupations majeures des journaux envers le Front populaire, leur vision des relations culturelles, politiques et économiques entre la France et la Suisse ainsi que la façon dont la presse aperçoit le rôle du canton de Vaud au sein de la Confédération suisse. De plus mon étude permet d'éclaircir la dynamique de la politique partisane dans le canton de Vaud quand les principales questions de l'époque eurent souvent des conséquences d'importance mondiale.

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ABBREVIATIONS

The following abbreviations are used in the notes in reference to the five newspapers studied:

LDP....Le Droit du peuple

FAL....La Feuille d'avis de Lausanne

G.....Le Grutli

PV.....Le Pays vaudois

R.....La Revue

INTRODUCTION

This thesis studies the attitude of the Vaudois press toward the Popular Front and the Blum government in France, and toward related events in Vaud and Switzerland during the period of February of 1934 to July of 1937. The argument and basis of the thesis is that a study of how the French Popular Front was perceived by the Vaudois press helps define not only the biases and "tendances" of that press, but also the interrelation of events in France and Switzerland (or Vaud) and the way in which the Vaudois press used that relationship to define the position of their canton vis-à-vis the Swiss Confederation.

The canton of Vaud is an interesting case study because of its significant position among the cantons constituting the French-speaking regions of Switzerland, that is the Romandie. By virtue of its economic and demographic importance, Vaud can be taken to be representative of many of the unique characteristics shared by the Romand cantons. The most significant of these are the condition of the Romand population as a minority group in Switzerland and their commitment to a political federalism which protects their autonomy and identity within the Confederation.

The canton of Vaud had the largest number of newspapers in Romand Switzerland during the period studied, accounting for roughly forty percent of the total Romand press.(1) These papers were largely local and of small circulation with little influence outside the commune of origin not to say the canton. Yet, there existed a

respectable number of newspapers which appeared six or more times per week, and the majority of these could boast a circulation of over ten thousand. Due to such heavy concentration of newspapers, the Vaudois press represent an exceptionally wide political spectrum including official organs of all of the major Swiss political parties with the notable exception of the Catholic-Conservative Party.

All of the larger newspapers and many of the smaller ones devoted a considerable portion of their articles to international news. The importance given to international events by the Swiss press in general is natural given Switzerland's economic dependence on foreign resources and markets and its resulting extreme sensitivity to international change on both the economic and political planes. Vaud's close cultural and historical ties with France account for the particularly keen awareness on the part of its press of events in that country.

Switzerland's vested interest in international commerce translates easily into Swiss "foreign policy". Rather than having the effect of withdrawing the country from international concerns, the policy of "neutrality" places Switzerland in an exceedingly delicate and precarious position. In the 1930s, the problems of neutrality resurfaced with an urgency surpassing that of 1914. Anxiety over the possibility of German sanctions or even invasion was evidenced by the various measures taken by the Federal Council to appease the Nazi regime. These special and unusual circumstances combined to shape the Vaudois press attitude toward the sometimes turbulent situation in France

between 1934 and 1937. Surpassed in economic and political importance by other cantons, especially German-speaking, Vaud had been forced, over the years, to define itself increasingly in cultural terms. Since this culture was closely associated with that of France in many respects, the emergence of the Popular Front which, in the eyes of many, threatened to overthrow the old society created a certain excitement in a large portion of the Vaudois press.

The events and issues studied in this press during the given period fall into two chief categories. One consists of those issues such as the economic crisis, the extension of state powers, the rise of fascism and national defense - all of which had a major impact on the shaping of the press' treatment of foreign events. The second category consists of issues which involved the Popular Front directly - those aspects which were particularly highlighted by the press have been noted as they reflected the most urgent concerns of the press at that time. On the whole, emphasis was placed on the divergence of attitudes within the press and on any transformations or developments of opinion during the period covered. This method of concentrating on aberrations in perspective is valuable in defining the press' sensitivities to a given issue.

The newspapers studied were: Le Droit du peuple, La Feuille d'avis de Lausanne and La Revue, which were daily newspapers, as well as the two weekly papers, Le Grutli and Le Pays vaudois. A description of each of these newspapers is provided in Chapter One.

Each newspaper's treatment of the issues involved was

analysed primarily according to a qualitative approach which involved interpretation of the language and content of the articles. A short statistical analysis was also made of the three daily newspapers' coverage of a limited number of subjects during the months of June of 1936 and March of 1937. This approach helped clarify the relative importance, in quantitative terms, accorded to given issues by each newspaper. Both methods were deemed helpful to the analysis of the Vaudois press' coverage of the Popular Front and related events in France and Switzerland between 1934 and 1937.

In the interest of simplicity, all the newspapers except for Le Droit du peuple are referred to as "bourgeois" newspapers or the "bourgeois press".(2)

NOTES

1) Jacques Meurant, La presse et l'opinion de la Suisse romande face à l'Europe en guerre (Neuchatel: La Baconnière, 1976), pp. 40-1.

2) For a study of previous works on the Romand press see: Jean-David Candaux, "Histoire et historiens de la presse romande au XXe siècle," Alliance culturelle romande 23 (Nov. 1977): 56-62.

CHAPTER ONE - THE POLITICAL STRUCTURE OF MODERN AND CONTEMPORARY SWITZERLAND

There are three distinct but interrelated levels of government in Switzerland: communal, cantonal and federal. The commune is the basic element of the country's political structure. In the twentieth century, communal governments lost much of their former significance chiefly because of diminished financial resources and the steady process of centralisation. In most cases, they function as municipal administrations but always consist of an elected council or "Conseil communal" headed by a president or "syndic". The communal councils are entitled to draught legislation and levy taxes in much the same manner as cantonal governments. Despite decreasing power, communal governments remain the most accessible authority for the average citizen.

The next level of authority are the cantonal governments which act much like the governments of sovereign states. Every canton is indeed considered a sovereign state within the Confederation but in reality the constitutions of the Swiss cantons vary little. Their differences depend more heavily on the social, religious, economic and linguistic compositions of their respective populations. Cantonal governments consist of the "Grand conseil" or Grand Council, a legislative assembly elected by direct suffrage for a period of four years, and the "Conseil d'état" or the State Council, an executive body elected by the former for a

period of three years. Cantonal executives are collegiate institutions consisting of seven members headed by a "Président du Conseil d'état".

The Federal Parliament is a bicameral institution consisting of a National Council and a Council of States. Representatives to the former are elected in electoral constituencies; however, a minimum of one deputy is required from each canton. Despite this stipulation, the smaller cantons tend to stand at a considerable disadvantage in the National Council. This disadvantage is somewhat alleviated in the Council of States which consists of two elected deputies from each canton regardless of its population. All federal legislation requires the approval of both chambers in Parliament.

The federal executive, or Federal Council, are composed of seven members who are elected or, as is usually the case, re-elected every four years by both chambers of Parliament seated together. Every member of the Federal Council heads a particular department of state and the offices of President and Vice-President rotate from one Councillor to the next on a yearly basis. Federal Councillors may not occupy a seat in either the National Council or the Council of States but they may, and often do, participate in parliamentary debates. In such cases, one member normally speaks on behalf of the entire executive so that the collegiate and anonymous nature of the institution and its actions is rarely compromised.

In addition to the voice which the Swiss citizen is accorded in legislative matters by virtue of an elected

representative, there are three avenues of what is known as semi-direct democracy open to him. These are the compulsory and optional referenda, and the popular initiative. The compulsory referendum requires that all changes to the Constitution be subject to approval by the electorate; the optional referendum allows the citizen to challenge any piece of legislation passed by Parliament, and the popular initiative gives him the opportunity to propose legislation or Constitutional amendments. The last two measures require the collection of a minimum number of signatures. Introduced in 1874 and 1891 respectively, the optional referendum and the popular initiative were for many years the sole means by which Swiss political or cultural minorities could excercise influence in an electoral system which effectively concentrated political power in the hands of a single party for three quarters of a century.

The Party System of Modern Switzerland

The party system of twentieth-century Switzerland is the product of the political, economic and social transformations which occurred between 1798 and 1874, that is from the founding of the Helvetic Republic to the revision of the Federal Constitution. Created with the assistance of French diplomatic and military forces, the Helvetic Republic's chief accomplishment was to transform the loose confederation of autonomous states into an unitarian state with a central administration modelled upon

that of France. Accompanied by the abolition of the more oppressive practices of the ancien régime, this experiment in national unity was surprisingly popular. In fact, the idea of the unitarian state, so foreign to the Confederation of cantons, attracted general support among the populace and was rarely questioned by the governing elite of the Helvetic Republic.

"La révolution d'où est issue la République helvétique de 1798 est l'oeuvre du parti révolutionnaire suisse et de l'action militaire et diplomatique de la France."(1) It was a "necessary" event in that the extreme economic and political division within the Confederation under the ancien régime had made its continued existence practically impossible in the context of nineteenth-century Europe. Between 1798 and 1874, four dominant issues were to confront Switzerland: the creation of a central government, the extension of democratic principles and practices to the cantonal and federal levels, Church-State relations, and the government's role in the economy.(2) The conflicts and divisions created by these issues lay the foundation of the system of political parties in modern and contemporary Switzerland.

In 1803, Napoleon's Act of Mediation imposed a federative constitution on Switzerland, thereby abolishing the unitarian state. His defeat in 1815 led Switzerland into a period characterised by a return to power of the former aristocracies and the restoration of many of the pre-Napoleonic titles. Although a complete return to the situation that prevailed before 1798 was impossible, a

considerable number of the former practices were restored. Cantonal autonomy regained lost ground and the increased number of commercial tariffs within the Confederation was instrumental in precipitating an internal economic crisis.

The authoritarian regimes of the Restoration imposed some order in the economic and social life of the Confederation such as, for example, the building up of the states' finances which had been exhausted by the militarism of the Napoleonic era. However, the cantonal divisions which marked the Restoration period made a consistent foreign policy difficult and Switzerland's prestige in Europe suffered accordingly.(3) At the same time, this period saw the beginnings of modern Conservatism in Switzerland and its attempt to preserve, as much as possible, the old order of things. However, the conditions under which the old order had existed were rapidly changing. Industrialisation was accompanied by a bewildering growth in population. While the intellectual circles protested against the country's general decline in prestige, the peasantry condemned the age-old privileges accorded to towns at the expense of rural communities.

Combined with the influence of the revolutionary movements in the rest of Europe, these conditions encouraged revolts throughout Switzerland and the creation of Liberal cantonal Constitutions between 1830 and 1833. These Constitutions reintroduced a certain measure of representative democracy in the cantons and communes at the expense of the aristocratic and urban bourgeois authorities. The Revolutions of 1830-1833 divided the cantons into two

camps: the "Regenerated" cantons - those with Liberal Constitutions - consisting of Aargau, Berne, Lucerne, Saint-Gallen, Solothurne, Thurgau, Zurich, and the "Conservative" cantons: Basel, Neuchatel, Schwyz, Unterwald, Uri and Valais. Hence, even under the influence of the "Regeneration", Switzerland was a long way from the economic and political cohesion which it had known during the Helvetic Republic.

The Regeneration saw the emergence of the Radicals and Liberals as dominant forces in Switzerland. With the widespread support of the industrialists, bankers, artisans and industrial workers on one hand and the professional classes on the other, Radicalism presented the most formidable challenge to the power of the Conservatives who were mostly Catholic. In December 1845, seven Catholic cantons - Fribourg, Lucerne, Schwyz, Underwald, Uri, Valais and Zug - formed an alliance known as the Sonderbund or "Separate League" which sought to secede from the Confederation. The civil war which followed was exceedingly swift and relatively bloodless - with a total of approximately one hundred dead - and marked the unquestionable triumph of the secular, Radical ideology. In the words of Urs Altermatt,

> The Sonderbund war was not a civil war between Catholics and Protestants, even if one side, the Catholic, was actually or supposedly fighting for the Catholic cause. The Radicals at least were not defending the Protestant cause, even though they used anti-Catholic, or more precisely, anti- Jesuit sentiments to mobilize their mass-support. What they were fighting for was a modern Switzerland, based on their Radical-Liberal principles. Beneath its denominational surface, the civil war was a conflict between tradition and modernity, between country and town, between the periphery and the

> centre. At the national level, the Separate League represented a last desperate effort by Conservative anti- modernism to save the old order by means of an already antiquated form of alliance between a group of cantons.(4)

The Federal Constitution of 1848 was the creation of the Radical Party which, having defeated Conservatism by force, proceded to realise its aim of transforming the Confederation into a nation- state. It was not altogether a return to the unitarianism of the Helvetic Republic - the cantons continued to exist as sovereign political entities - but Switzerland emerged from the Sonderbund war a federal state with a federal government seated in Berne. Moreover, the Radical Constitution gave Switzerland the economic unity which had eluded it under the Restoration and whose continuation might ultimately have resulted in the country's complete loss of independence.

The 1848 Constitution was not considered infallible by its authors. They prudently inserted a clause allowing for frequent revisions and amendments. Any such action would automatically be subject to a referendal vote by the electorate. It was the means by which Switzerland was set in the path of a process of political change, invariably in a centralising direction, which no longer depended on the foreign invasions, coups d'état or civil wars of earlier years.

Yet, the question was not merely one of centralisation versus federalism; neither was it exactly one of secularism versus clericalism, although these were pivotal issues. Radicalism in 1848 represented the most progressive elements of Swiss political thought. The Radical Party was

distinguished by its striving for greater political and economic equality, that is for the eradication of the abuses of the ancien régime and by a resistance to the bourgeois elitism and laissez-faire economics of the Liberals. A statement by the commission given the task of preparing the 1847 Constitution for the canton of Geneva sheds light on the aspirations of the Radicals at that time:

> Notre véritable nationalité...c'est d'être sans cesse en avant... Il s'agit de prouver au monde que le plus haut degré de liberté pratique pour un peuple est aujourd'hui le meilleur moyen de résoudre de (sic) certaines questions sociales embarrassantes, de donner des solutions à tous les problèmes de l'aquisition et de la distribution des richesses, de répandre le bien-être par un travail toujours bien entendu sous de pareilles conditions, enfin d'assurer le mieux l'ordre et la paix...(5)

In 1847, the Federal Constitution underwent a major revision which extended the direct democracy existing in the cantons to federal politics. The optional referendum was introduced in that year as was the popular initiative in 1891. Between 1848 and 1920, the Radicals dominated the Federal Assembly and the Federal Council. The Catholic-Conservative opposition remained rooted in the Sonderbund cantons but even there, for instance in the Catholic strongholds of Fribourg, Lucerne and Valais, the Radicals found adherents to their cause. In short, Radicalism was represented in almost every canton. Its mass following was due mainly to its flexible and non-doctrinaire philosophy. It was at once the party of agriculture, industry, commerce and business. The Catholic-Conservative Party on the other hand suffered from its denominational character. The majority of Protestant-Conservatives joined the Radical Party after 1874 and it was only after the First

World War that they emerged as a distinct political entity. Hence, traditional Conservatism remained strongly Catholic and rural. Between 1874 and 1891, it exerted influence almost exclusively by means of the plebiscitary rules with which the revised Constitution had armed it. By using the optional referendum to full extent, the Catholic-Conservative Party systematically resisted the centralising and secularising policies of the Federal Council. Only in 1891 was a Catholic-Conservative elected to the Federal Council and a marginal cooperation established between the then two dominant Swiss parties.

The Swiss Socialist Party (Parti socialiste suisse, PSS) was founded in 1888 by Albert Steck at a time when the rate of industrialisation in Switzerland had reached its peak. It was the sole Swiss political party to have been organised at the national level from the outset. Nevertheless, the party was structured according to the federal principle in that it consisted of cantonal parties which were in turn made up of smaller geographical "sections". Adherence to the party was only possible through a particular section and direct adherence, as such, did not exist.

Unlike the Radical or Catholic-Conservative Parties, the PSS has always acted in accordance with a defined and clearly expressed programme. This is not to claim that its social, political and economic objectives have not varied, even in the most fundamental sense, with changing historical circumstances; on the contrary, the party has seen extremely radical transformations in doctrine over the years. The

original programme of the PSS called for the formation of an unified Swiss state: a response probably to the narrow cantonalism of the late-nineteenth century.(6) This stance was to change as the Socialists gained greater support among the population and began to play a significant role in politics.

From its origins, the PSS defined itself as a mass party representing all classes of society. Albert Steck declared in 1889:

> Il ne s'agit pas seulement pour nous d'améliorer le sort des salariés; le socialisme partirait d'un mauvais pied s'il n'avait en tête que le bien-être d'une partie du peuple!...Non, le but de notre parti est plus élevé...Les riches, les pauvres, les obscurs, les nantis, les incultes et les lettrés, les intellectuels et les manuels, tous ceux qui croient au socialisme et à la démocratie sont appelés à coopérer pour la réalisation du but que s'est fixé le PSS.(7)

The growth of influence and following of the PSS from its founding to 1919 was not reflected by electoral gains. Certainly, the position of the Radicals was considerably weakened by the emergence of a party to their left and they were forced to resort to electoral alliances with the Liberals in order to maintain their dominant position. The Radical Party continued to dominate the Federal Parliament and Federal Council owing primarily to the electoral system and partly to its ideological position on both the left and right of the political spectrum. In the face of the socialising and unitarian policies of the PSS, the Radical Party posed as the protector of small business, private property and cantonal autonomy.

Nevertheless, the appeal of the PSS' programme to major sectors of the population was undeniable. With the more

conservative leanings of the Radical Party, the PSS attracted the leftist elements in that party. Its appeal was augmented by the fact that the Socialists were not inspired exclusively by Marxist principles. As observed by François Masnata:

> Le sentiment d'appartenir à une société inspirée par le christianisme a toujours empêché les responsables de jeter par-dessus bord toutes notions "morales". De nombreux membres, et non des moindres, estiment que le christianisme tout autant que le marxisme est à l'origine du mouvement socialiste.(8)

Moreover, the economic hardships imposed by the First World War led to increased syndical militantism which culminated in a general strike in 1918. Although the strike was largely unsuccessful, it bore witness to the PSS' close association with syndical organisations and its powerful presence on the political left - a position which a half-century earlier had been exploited by the Radical Party.

Since the turn of the century, the Radicals' domination of the federal government had lost much of its basis in electoral support. Thrice - in 1900, 1910 and 1919 - Socialists and Conservatives had spearheaded the initiative for a Constitutional amendment which would introduce proportional representation (PR). In 1919, they were joined by the newly formed Parti des paysans, artisans et bourgeois (PAB), an agrarian party formed initially in the cantons of Berne and Zurich from elements of the Radical Party. The passing of PR in that year permanently changed the structure of party relations in Switzerland. Accounting for 28.8 percent of the votes cast, the Radicals' representation in the National Council shrank from one- hundred-and-five to

sixty seats. The Catholic-Conservatives gathered twenty percent of the votes and forty-one seats while the Socialists won an equal number of seats with 23.5 percent of the votes. The PAB gained twenty-nine seats in this first attempt, capturing 15.5 percent of the votes.(9)

The introduction of PR made the PSS the second strongest party in the National Council. In response to this, the Radicals, Catholic- Conservatives and Agrarians set aside their former hostilities and formed a solid although heterogenous bourgeois block against the Socialist group in Parliament. This coalition succeeded in excluding the Socialists from the Federal Council until 1943. Yet throughout the 1930s, the PSS continued to make solid electoral gains, due mainly to the economic and political climate of the time. The strengths of the four major parties in terms of National Council seats from 1919 to 1943 were as follows:(10)

YEAR	R	C	S	A	TOTAL
1919	60	41	41	29	189
1922	58	44	43	35	198
1925	59	42	49	31	198
1928	58	46	50	31	198
1931	52	44	49	30	187
1935	48	42	50	21	187
1939	51	43	45	22	187
1943	47	43	56	22	194

(R = Radicals; C = Catholic-Conservatives;
S = Socialists; A = Agrarians)

The remaining seats fell to the smaller parties such as the Liberal Party, the Democrats, the Communist Party, the National Front and the Independents who first participated in 1935. With the exception of the Communist, all of these

parties fell squarely on the political right and their influence varied considerably from one geographical region to the next.

The electoral losses of the Radicals after the introduction of PR brought about some long-awaited changes in the composition of the Federal Council. In 1919, the federal executive consisted of five Radicals and two Catholic-Conservatives. In 1930 an Agrarian replaced a Radical and only in 1943 did a Socialist reduce the Radical representation to three.

At the cantonal level, the situation is more complex. Since 1919, the cantonal executives have generally consisted of a coalition of the most influential parties in the canton, regardless of their performance in elections. Where the popular support for a given party is veritably minimal, that party is excluded from the "government coalition". Yet, the conditions for entering the government coalition are relatively fluid. By consensual agreement among the major parties, another may be given access to government according to the degree of influence, responsibility or "legitimacy" it has gained in the canton. Hence, in almost all cases where a single party has received a majority of votes, executive power is still shared with the minority parties. The Socialists are invariably represented, be it as a majority or minority party.(11)

The Party System of the Canton of Vaud

The oldest political party in the canton of Vaud is the Liberal Party which took power in 1830. Its electoral successes were somewhat diminished by the subsequent rise of Radicalism; yet, the Liberals remained a respected force in Vaudois politics. Their ideology was one of secular conservatism based on an unshakeable faith in laissez- faire economics and political federalism. The Liberal Party, then, constituted the rightist opposition to the Radical Party between 1845 and 1893.

The emergence of the Socialist Party near the end of the nineteenth century brought about a certain rapprochement between Radicals and Liberals in Vaud. This reconciliation flourished into a solid coalition between 1893 and 1946, during which time the two parties shared all seven seats of the State Council. After 1946, the growing influence of the Socialist Party made its inclusion in the government coalition imperative and the ensuing rapprochement between Radicals and Socialists allowed the Liberals to fall back partially into their former role as rightist opposition.

The Radical Party was formed in Vaud in 1845 from left-wing elements of the Liberal Party. Disillusioned with the elitism of the Liberal leaders, these Radicals sought to win the support of all classes of the population. They found this support mainly in the petite bourgeoisie, the peasants and, to some extent, the working class, which in Vaud constituted only a small portion of the population. The appeal of the Radical Party was in its willingness to

compromise certain principles of liberal economics in order to protect small businessmen, artisans and rural workers against larger enterprises. The Radical Party's openness to ideological transformations, its non-doctrinaire attitude and its overt anti-clericalism guaranteed widespread support in the canton of Vaud.(12)

The Vaudois Socialist Party was founded in 1890 by the former Radical, Aloy Fauquex. The impact of the Socialist Party on Vaudois politics was considerable: within seven years, it managed to have ten deputies elected to the Grand Council.(13) Although the PSS was originally formed on a national scale, the cantonal parties, as is the case in most Swiss political parties, possessed a great amount of autonomy vis-à-vis the national institution. Yet, the organisation of the cantonal parties remained relatively similar from one canton to the next.(14)

In Vaud, it was the left wing which dominated the Socialist Party. This was partly as a result of the weak influence exercised by the Vaudois and French-speaking members in general in a party which was controlled by German-speaking Swiss.(15) Another factor might have been the influence of the French Communist Party. The open sympathy exhibited by many Vaudois Socialists for the Third International and the Soviet Union up to 1938 helped confine the party almost entirely to an oppositional role in cantonal politics. In 1939, the left-wing leanings of the Vaudois Socialist Party resulted in its banishment, along with the Genevan Party, from the PSS. They then reorganised under the name of Fédération socialiste suisse which was

dissolved in 1941 by federal decree.

Another party which gained a certain importance in Vaudois politics was the Parti des paysans, artisans et indépendants (PAI), the Vaudois section of the PAB. The rural character of the Vaudois economy made the implantation of the PAI inevitable, but the Radical- Liberal block made the party's expansion extremely difficult. Hence, Vaudois Agrarians and Socialists were forced into a strategic rapprochement despite their evident differences in ideology. The two parties joined forces over PR and then, having gained a certain influence in the Grand Council, formed a governmental opposition with the aim of breaking the Radical-Liberal domination of the State Council.

The positions of the parties in the Grand Council are given below:(16)

YEAR	R	L	S-N	YR	A	S	I	P-I	TOTAL
1921	145	64	5	1	3	25	1	-	244
1925	126	54	2	2	4	16	-	-	204
1929	129	50	2	-	5	16	1	-	203
1933	135	53	2	-	6	20	1	3	220
1937	130	53	2	-	10	21	2	-	218

R.....Radicals
L.....Liberals
S-N...Socialistes-nationaux
YR....Young Radicals
A.....Agrarians
S.....Socialists
I.....Independents
P-I...Progressive Independents

The composition of the State Council throughout this period remained the same: two Liberals and five Radicals.

The Press in Modern Switzerland and the Canton of Vaud

On first examination, two characteristics of the Swiss press appear to stand out from the others: the abundance and the diversity of the newspapers. This comes as no surprise in a country of twenty-three cantons (at present), four languages (not including the various Swiss-German dialects), two major religions and numerous cantonal political parties. The system of semi-direct democracy which requires the citizen to participate to some extent in the approval or rejection of major legislation serves to underscore the political significance of a diversified press. It is in the role of intermediary between the electors and their parliamentary representatives and interpretor of the great issues of the day that the Swiss press are most important.

Impressive and perhaps admirable on the surface, this aspect of the Swiss press rings false upon deeper examination. Several problems emerge: that Swiss electors often do not follow the advice of their political parties during referenda or initiatives and the circulation of a given party's press does not always reflect its popularity. Also, the increasing tendency toward press concentration, that is the ownership or administration of several newspapers by a single political or commercial interest, undermines the diversity of the press.

The fact remains that, before the outbreak of the Second World War, Switzerland possessed 114 daily newspapers - a greater number than France or Britain, both of which had

populations several times greater than that of Switzerland. To this number can be added some three hundred other newspapers appearing less frequently. Hence, the vast majority of the press consisted of small local papers which appeared two or three times per week, with circulations of one to three thousand and which were invariably associated with a specific political party or expressed the interests of a particular social category. The number of newspapers published in Switzerland has remained relatively stable throughout the century. For example, between 1913 and 1975, the number of daily newspapers increased by only eleven: from 105 to 116.(17)

In the canton of Vaud, out of the forty-two newspapers which existed in 1939, only seven could be called "dailies", that is appearing five or more times per week. No more than eight of these had a circulation of over five thousand.(18) La Feuille d'avis de Lausanne was the only French-language newspaper in Switzerland which could boast a circulation of over fifty thousand.

Of the forty-two Vaudois newspapers, twenty-six claimed to be politically "neutral". There were six Radical and an equal number of Liberal newspapers, one Agrarian, one Independent and two Socialist newspapers, one of which was Le Grutli, mouthpiece of the Parti socialiste national. However, more often than not, the neutral newspapers betrayed Radical or Liberal, that is mainstream, sympathies. They were without exception openly anti-socialist and favoured a federalist, parliamentary national state with a liberal economy. In the words of Ernst

Bollinger:

> S'il est relativement facile de croire un journal qui se declare indépendant de tout parti politique, il est beaucoup plus difficile de connaître les relations qu'il entretient avec les milieux économiques, bancaires, professionnels, militaires, par exemple. Le silence et la discrétion de la presse sont absolus à cet égard. Il est vrai que les liens sont plus subtils: il ne sont pas moins influents.(19)

Whatever the formal or actual connexions of the "neutral" press, the majority of the Vaudois press were of the right or moderate right.

The newspapers studied in this thesis were chosen according to their circulations, the number of times they appeared per week and their political leanings. Representing the extreme left of the spectrum was Le Droit du peuple, official mouthpiece of the Vaudois Socialist Party. This newspaper had once been the central Romand organ of the PSS under the title of Le Grutléen. After 1927, Le Grutléen became the mouthpiece of the former extreme-right wing of the Vaudois Socialist Party, then distinguishing itself by the name of Parti socialiste national. Le Droit du peuple was then to occupy the former place of this newspaper. Throughout its existence it remained openly Marxist and pro-USSR. The principal targets of the newspaper were the Vaudois Radical and Liberal Parties. Highly critical of the policies of the Vaudois State Council (and by extension of the Federal Council) during the 1930s, Le Droit du peuple became the principal organ of leftist opposition in Vaud. Among its editors were Paul Golay, leader of the Vaudois Socialist Party and National Councillor, and Léon Nicole, future founder of the Fédération socialiste suisse and

President of the State Council of Geneva during the Socialist administration of 1933-1936. Albert von der Aa was the newspaper's chief editor during the period studied.

Le Droit du peuple concentrated chiefly on local and national news with ample coverage of syndical issues in Switzerland and the world at large. Its foreign section was comparable in size to that of other major Vaudois papers. The Socialist newspaper's foreign coverage was consciously opinionated, sometimes at the expense of fact. Part of the reason for this was the scanty budget on which the newspaper operated and the consequent shortage of foreign correspondents. Hence, most of its international reports were interpretations of the reports of official news agencies or correspondents of other publications. Le Droit du peuple was the sole Vaudois newspaper to report regularly on the internal and external affairs of the Soviet Union. Its relatively small circulation (thirteen thousand) was in no way a reflexion of the support summoned by the Socialist Party in Vaud. The most significant proof of this is the municipal elections of Lausanne in November 1933 in which the Socialists received fifty-one percent of the votes and occupied three of the five seats in the Communal Council. The newspaper appeared six times per week.

La Feuille d'avis de Lausanne, with its impressive circulation of fifty-three thousand, remained principally a local paper with a negligeable readership outside of Lausanne, not to mention the canton of Vaud. This was not surprising. The newspaper concentrated on local news with national coverage occupying a secondary position. As its

title suggests, it was replete with advertisements and notices for the consumer and average reader. During the period studied, these notices occupied the entire front page and news coverage only appeared further inside. The back cover presented the habitual "Dernières heures" section in which some of the most significant events were concisely reported.

Although La Feuille d'avis described itself as officially neutral and unattached to political interests, it was edited by an influential Liberal, Otto Treyvaud, and tended toward a Liberal interpretation of social, economic and political issues. Its columns were inclined normally to approve of the policies of the Federal Council but resisted any effort to undermine the autonomy of the cantons, and of course resented the rise of authoritarian movements in Europe, especially in Germany. It made no effort to disguise its hostility to socialism and communism abroad or within Switzerland itself.

The newspaper's international coverage depended mainly on the reports of the official news agencies, which it interpreted either in a more-or-less objective fashion or reproduced directly. The exceptions were the regular reports from French correspondents. These were highly opinionated and invariably signed only with initials. They normally appeared under the heading "Lettre de Paris". La Feuille d'avis was distributed seven times per week.

To the political right of La Feuille d'avis was the mouthpiece of the Vaudois Radical Party, La Revue. The almost fanatically anti- socialist stance of La Revue was a

reflexion of the Vaudois Radicals' increasingly conservative outlook in the face of the unmistakable advances made in Vaud and in Lausanne by the Socialists during the twenties and thirties. This hostility was also directed toward the Agrarians who had entered into an electoral alliance with the Socialists in order to overthrow the Radicals in the State Council or to at least undermine their domination.

Highly nationalist, La Revue was the unwavering champion of federalism in Switzerland. At the same time, it rarely criticised the actions of the Federal Council which, at any rate, were dominated by Radicals. With regard to international affairs, La Revue's virulent attacks were directed toward the Soviet Union, even more so than toward Nazi Germany. Reports on France were normally given a privileged space on the front or second pages. As with La Feuille d'avis, the more comprehensive reports were written by French correspondents. The newspaper appeared six times per week and had a circulation of ten thousand.

Besides the three daily newspapers mentioned above, two weekly papers were studied in order to provide a more representative sample of the Vaudois press which, as already noted, was predominantly local and non-daily. These two newspapers were Le Grutli and Le Pays vaudois.

Le Grutli was the official mouthpiece of the Parti socialiste national from 1927 to 1940. This party consisted of former members of the extreme-right wing of the Vaudois Socialist Party. The party leaned strongly toward corporatism and, unlike the Socialist, was staunchly federalist and nationalist. On the other hand, it was

violently anti-Nazi.

Le Grutli was mainly preoccupied with local and national politics and its international coverage was accordingly small, appearing in the form of interpretive and thought-provoking essays rather than direct news reports. The newspaper had a circulation of one-and-a-half thousand.

Le Pays vaudois enjoyed a somewhat higher circulation than Le Grutli: four thousand.(20) This was the official mouthpiece of the Parti vaudois des paysans, artisans et indépendants (PAI), also known as the Parti national paysan (PNP), and originally appeared under the name of Le Pays romand. The newspaper catered exclusively to the interests of the Vaudois agricultural class and took little interest in international issues. Where it did show some concern, Le Pays vaudois' articles were refreshingly bold and original. The Agrarian organ showed little sympathy for Radicals or Socialists although the PAI was engaged in a "rapprochement de circonstance" with the latter. This rapprochement was purely strategic and not doctrinal as the Agrarians clashed with the Socialists over social reforms which they considered favourable to salaried workers at the expense of agricultural workers. Their principal point of common interest with the Socialists was that both parties represented an exploited minority fighting for a more equitable society.

NOTES

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8) Ibid., p. 107.

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12) Jean Meynaud, Les partis politiques vaudois (Sarthe: Bellanger et fils, 1966), p. 17.

13) Ibid., p. 18.

14) Masnata, p. 61.

15) Ibid., p. 65.

16) Meynaud, Etudes politiques vaudoises (Sarthe: Bellanger et fils, 1963), pp. 260-9.

17) Ernst Bollinger, La presse suisse: structure et diversité (Berne: Herbert Lang, 1976), p. 3.

18) Meurant, p. 42.

19) Bollinger, p. 59.

20) All circulation figures apply to the year 1939 and were derived from: Meurant, p. 48.

CHAPTER TWO - SWITZERLAND IN THE 1930S: Switzerland in Relation to Europe

The dilemmas faced by Switzerland in the 1930s were, from a superficial point of view, scarcely different from those faced by other European democracies. The two major areas of concern were the economic crisis sparked by the Wall Street crash of 1929, and the rise of fascist movements throughout Europe. If this period marked an important phase in the histories of nearly all European states, it was of utmost significance for the definition of Switzerland's economic and political position among these states. The situation of the mid- to late 1930s, the war and its aftermath forced Switzerland to make an unprecedented departure from the specifically European orientation of its policies. It was a period during which Switzerland was obliged to reassess both its position vis-à-vis the major European and world powers such as Germany, France, Britain, Italy, the Soviet Union and the United States, as well as its own political and economic development.

Switzerland's small size and mountainous geography have for centuries placed it in an unique economic situation. Contrary to popular notion, it has never been particularly well-suited to agriculture - unexploitable land accounts for as much as twenty-two percent of its territory.(1) By 1930, only twenty-one percent of the active population of Switzerland were directly involved in agriculture as opposed to forty-four in industry.(2) In contrast, some thirty

percent of the active population of Germany were involved in agriculture and forty-one in industry,(3) and in France, the corresponding figures were thirty-seven percent in agriculture and only twenty-nine in industry. (4) The result of this agricultural disadvantage was two-fold: Switzerland has never been capable of producing sufficient food to support its population which until recently were forced to emigrate at an extremely high rate, and from an early stage, Swiss agriculture was geared toward a market economy and was exceedingly commercialised.

The scarcity of agricultural resources was surpassed by that of raw materials for industry, for which Switzerland depended almost entirely upon imports. A relatively small home market and the high rate of raw-material importation naturally aimed Swiss industry toward manufacturing products for competitive foreign markets. Thus, both in industry and agriculture, there developed a strong impetus for commercialisation. Moreover, the export industry became highly specialised. In other words, goods of a very particular nature and quality were manufactured for a very specific demand. As stated by André Siegfried, "Ce n'est pas exactement qualité contre standardisation, mais c'est l'articulation contre un automatisme tendant à l'anonymat."(5) Such attention to detail and quality helped balance the difficulties of manufacturing in Switzerland, those of high production costs and low quantitative output.

Although this made Swiss products more competitive on foreign markets, such high-level specialisation made the export industry extremely dependent on the stability of the

international trading and monetary environment. The vast majority of Swiss exports were destined for European markets - the principal importers before the Second World War were, in order of importance, Germany, Great Britain, France, the United States and Italy. As late as 1938, Europe's share of all Swiss exports was seventy-two percent. By 1946, this figure had been reduced to only fifty-six percent.(6) All of the above mentioned countries, with the exception of France, had devalued their currencies long before Switzerland with the result that, between 1929 and 1936, Swiss products abroad were overvalued by an average order of twenty percent. For instance, in the single year 1931-1932 the value of exports to Britain in Sterling declined from 230 to 87 million pounds as a direct consequence of British tariffs and currency manipulations.(7)

Between 1932 and 1936, the effects of the Depression on the Swiss export industry began to show clear repercussions in the internal economy of the country. Whereas before 1932 half of the total number of unemployed were in the export industry, after 1932 that fraction was reduced to a quarter, with home industries accounting for the remainder.(8) The overall effects of the economic crisis on Switzerland have been categorised by William E. Rappard. The first effect was unemployment which reached the figure of approximately one-hundred thousand in 1936. Then, the Depression created increasing discontent among small-businessmen, probably the hardest-hit in the population, who showed avid resistance to large retailers and cooperatives. Thirdly, solutions to the economic crisis required an increase in expenditure by

federal, cantonal and communal governments which in turn produced high budget deficits. "A fourth consequence of these developments was a tremendous extension of government enterprise, government intervention and government regulation, which for want of a better word might be called state socialism."(9)

The economic crisis was the prelude to a time of disillusionment with the mechanics of economic liberalism. Although considered the near-sacred principle behind Swiss commerce and one of the major causes of the "boom" of 1925-1929, free enterprise was pathetically lacking in solutions to the economic crisis for which it was at least partly responsible. The Swiss authorities were slowly persuaded of the necessity of greater, institutionalised controls over the economy, as opposed to the occasional forays the state had made before 1929 into the private sector in order to relieve ailing enterprises.(10)

In more concrete terms, the dilemma which confronted the Swiss federal authorities after 1933 was one of devaluation versus deflation. Both approaches had the same aim: to bring Swiss products on foreign markets to a more competitive level. This could be done either through currency manipulation or by reducing the costs of production, that is deflation. Despite much resistance from the left, a general deflationary trend similar to that in France afflicted Swiss labour between 1933 and 1936. During this time, hourly wages declined by an average of six percent. Imports were forcibly reduced through a special programme of austerity in order to alleviate the commercial

deficit and increasingly large sums were spent by the state to aid crippled industries such as tourism and watch-making.

By 1936, it was evident that the state's deflationary policy was ineffective. Hourly wages had fallen continually since 1931 and yet unemployment had reached its highest level of the decade. With the export industry still suffering from the relative strength of the Swiss franc, the commercial deficit reached 384 million francs and state aid became more and more difficult to procure. The famous "bloc d'or" consisted only of the Netherlands, France and Switzerland. The question of devaluation posed itself with greater urgency but the government continued to reject the notion under pressure from the major banks and for fear of a flight of currency. While the left remained formally opposed to a devaluation, the principal syndical organisation, the Union syndicale suisse (USS) secretly suggested the inevitability of the measure to the Federal Council, considering it infinitely preferable to deflation if steps could be taken to avoid consequent inflation and profiteering. Moreover, devaluation would make it easier to subscribe the enormous 235-million-franc defense loan without disastrously overburdening the budget.

Despite the fears expressed by the left and the Swiss financial circles, the Swiss devaluation, precipitated in September 1936 by a devaluation of the French franc, was instrumental in the economic recovery of 1936-1939. Production in all key industries showed a definite increase and the general decline of average hourly wages was checked and slightly reversed in 1937.(11) Tourism, a vital Swiss

industry, was tremendously regenerated due to the greater appeal of the devalued franc, so much so that the number of tourists visiting Switzerland in 1937 was more than triple the number for 1936.(12) By 1938, the commercial deficit had fallen to 290 million francs.

The devaluation was accompanied by severe price controls in order to fight inflationary tactics on the part of retailers. The government also empowered itself to "adjucate, without appeal, collective wage disputes which cannot be settled between the parties." (13) This act was the final impetus to the signing of the "paix du travail" by representatives of the metallurgy and watch-making syndicate and the Swiss "patronat" on 19 July 1937. A highly controversial agreement which effectively ruled out the strike as an instrument of bargaining, the "paix du travail" was purely an outcome of the existing economic and political conditions. As Christopher Hughes observes:

> The remarkable Swiss atmosphere of mutual cooperation and proportional distribution of the good things of politics, and the cult of patriotic mythology, did not prevail before 1940, and has considerably weakened in recent years. It is consistent with the Peace Agreement and in a very loose sense partly a consequence of it, but not a cause of it in the first instance.(14)

Above all, the "paix du travail" was a result of the increasing heavy-handedness of the Federal Council in both economic and political matters. Certainly, the conditions in Switzerland in 1937 - the crisis in the export industry, unemployment, fascism in neighbouring countries - warranted a certain concern for social order, yet there were few indications of a veritable threat to society, at least from the left. On the political scene the Socialists and even the

Communists had clearly espoused the cause of national defense and had suspended their hostility to Swiss democracy. On the social scene, the number of strikes in the period 1931-1936 was significantly lower than during 1919-1922 and the worst effects of the devaluation had been successfully absorbed by the recovery that it had set in motion. On the other hand, the "paix du travail" did open the door to further legislation in the realm of labour conflicts and syndical rights, legislation which was to be integrated into Swiss economic life and, in certain cases, into the Constitution.(15)

The years 1932-1936 bore witness to an exteme polarisation of political forces which ranged the PSS against nearly every bourgeois party. Gradually, the two sides modified their positions and, to a certain degree, resolved this conflict. On one hand, the Radicals began to see the failure of their economic policies during the period of the crisis, and on the other, the Socialists, realising the dangers of fascism in Germany and Italy, developed a more conciliatory attitude toward the Swiss political system and national defense. The support shown for the ill-fated "initiative de crise", the PSS-USS attempt to introduce a planned economy to Switzerland in 1935, was evidence of the general disillusionment on the part of a large portion of the public with the economic policies of the government, if not with the country's economic system altogether. The succeeding "lignes directrices" of the PSS were evidence of the Socialists' acknowledgment of the Swiss political system and the need for its defense against anti-democratic

movements. They called for, unconditional recognition of democracy and a refusal to collaborate with any anti-democratic organisation or movement, a positive attitude toward the military, economic and spiritual defense of the country, respect for the religious convictions of all citizens and the promulgation of a common programme of economic relief and solutions to social problems. The "lignes directrices" gained the support of numerous cantonal Radical Parties.(16)

Despite this more flexible attitude of the bulk of the Swiss left, the Federal Council passed a series of decrees between 1932 and the outbreak of the War which were aimed overwhelmingly against the activities of leftist political movements and organisations. As early as 1932, Communists were excluded from the Federal Administration, and by 1935 there were a variety of arbitrary methods which allowed for the dissolution of political groups on the basis of their foreign connexions. In 1936, a Federal decree was passed which forbade Swiss newspapers to pass judgment on the policies of foreign states - especially Germany - in a manner which could compromise official Swiss "neutrality". At the same time, the postal service was required to confiscate foreign newspapers with leftist leanings, such as l'Humanité and the Daily Worker. In June of the same year, a speech by Léon Jouhaux on the subject of the forty-hour work-week in France was cancelled in Geneva, and the World Peace Conference was forced to meet in Brussels because of severe Swiss restrictions on the admission of leftist delegates.(17) By August 1936, Berne had established

official relations with the Nationalist forces in Spain in order to protect Swiss interests there, while forbidding any public demonstrations of support for either side in that conflict.(18)

Nineteen thirty-four saw the proposal, for a second time, of a law "on public order" which aimed to restrict dramatically the liberty of political action in Switzerland. If accepted, the law would have allowed authorities to act against organisations upon suspicion of "illegal" intentions rather than having to await an infringement of the Constitutional Code. It is significant that the law was rejected by referendum despite its full endorsement by every major political party except the PSS and by nearly the entire bourgeois press. It demonstrates the relative lack of loyalty to political parties during referenda or Constitutional initiatives in Switzerland. More important, the rejection of the law was a reflexion of widespread discontent with the Federal Government's policies, economic and political, a sentiment which often had little to do with political leanings or regional biases.

The Canton of Vaud in Relation to the Swiss Confederation

Representing 7.8 percent of Swiss territory and approximately eight percent of the country's population, the canton of Vaud is one of the largest of the Swiss cantons. Yet by 1930, its rate of growth, both demographic and economic, remained significantly below the national average. Throughout the nineteenth century, when other cantons, both

French- and German-speaking, were developing increasingly industrial or artisanal economies, the canton of Vaud remained predominantly agricultural, concentrating heavily upon wine production. Only in the twentieth century did industry gain any kind of foothold. Even so, by 1951, only 6.8 percent of the active population of Vaud were employed in factories, despite a rate of industrialisation which far surpassed the national average. In the cantons of Neuchatel and Geneva, by contrast, the respective percentages of the active populations employed in industry were 17.4 and ten.(19) In terms of industrial production, Vaud's share of the total national output was well below the figure warranted by its population and its contribution to the Swiss economy remained largely agricultural and self-contained.(20) One of the consequences was a sharply-felt and disturbing loss of influence in the federal consultation process which lays the framework for the development of state policy. This lack of political and economic leverage was aggravated by an industrial/commercial centralisation which concentrated the vast majority of Swiss industries in an area representing scarcely more than three percent of the territory, most notably in the cantons of Zurich and Basel.(21)

The cultural-historical relationship between Vaud and Berne is defined, more than anything else, by the former's subjugation to the latter from the middle of the sixteenth to the end of the eighteenth century. The Bernese rule was strict and sometimes harsh but not without its benefits, one being the development of the country's material and human

resources. The Bernese contributions to Vaudois society included the refinement of administrative and political institutions, as well as the gradual abolition of the feudal system. In this pursuit the Bernese often invoked the support of the population against the local aristocracy, and so gained a considerable measure of respect from the Vaudois. Moreover, by uniting the country under a single administration, the Bernese gave the Vaudois a national spirit which in turn gave rise to the desire for independence.(22)

Although the linguistic difference between Vaud and Berne can be considered fairly minor in an age when social and especially religious animosities were the major causes of conflict, it had a lasting effect on the way in which the Vaudois were to perceive their canton. In the words of Christopher Hughes:

> It puts a different interpretation on Vaudois and Bernese history under the old regime: the Bernese can look at this history with pride but the Vaudois escapes from a certain humiliation only by dwelling on attempts to revolt against Berne. This attitude to Berne is important even today. With all the circumlocutions for Berne which French rhetoric can devise, little distinction is made between the city from which Vaud at last broke loose in 1798 with the help of revolutionary France, and the federal capital of the modern Swiss state to which Vaud owes its liberty: the animosities which belong to one are transferred to the other.(23)

Not all of the French importations, however, were popular with the Vaudois or the Swiss. Certainly, the establishment of legal equality and the abolition of the last vestiges of serfdom and feudal rights, partial as they were, could be considered generally welcome, but the Vaudois revolutionaries' struggle for self-rule was somewhat

thwarted by the creation of the Helvetic Republic, "one and indivisible". The idea of an artificial unity under a single government was completely foreign to Switzerland where much of the population "still clung to the idea of cantonal sovereignty as the key to freedom and independence."(24) Yet, the unitarian concept was not lacking in support, especially among the revolutionary elite. In 1803, the Act of Mediation officially created the canton of Vaud. Vaud was for the first time free of "foreign" domination, be it Bernese or French. In many ways the Bernese occupation was preferable to the French, since the latter showed little understanding of the Swiss way of life. Again, to quote Christopher Hughes:

> At base there is a healthy instinct that things go very well in Switzerland, and the reason why life is so sweet is that the cold- blooded Bernese are in charge. Eloquence, not action, is the fruit of eloquence, and here Vaud is different from France...The substantive of a Vaudois is Swiss, even though the adjective is French.(25)

The threat to the autonomy and particular identity of the Vaudois was not so much from the stigma created by an historical subjugation, but from the very real process of economic and political centralisation which gained considerable pace during the Depression of the 1930s. According to William Rappard, centralisation occurred in two ways: by the extension of federal powers into areas where cantonal ones had weakened and through the extension of these powers into areas where no cantonal control had existed before.(26) In many cases, the cantons more or less voluntarily gave up certain responsibilities because of lack of financial resources or because of the greater efficiency

of a centralised programme. Thus were created the federal railway network, the postal service and the unified national army which, until 1907 had consisted of autonomous cantonal contingents. The added burden of the economic crisis of the 1930s called for full-scale federal interventionism or "étatisme" to assure economic and political security. The 1930s, therefore, brought government control into areas of Swiss life which had theretofore known little or no control of any kind.

The extent of these greater federal responsibilities can be seen by the change in the relative distribution of taxes between 1920 and 1930. Whereas in 1920 taxes paid to the Confederation amounted to 37.5 percent of the total collected, they rose to as high as 49.9 percent in 1930. The increase came mainly at the expense of communal taxes which shrank from 33.2 percent in 1920 to 24.7 percent of the total in 1930. By 1949, the process of centralisation was unmistakable.(27) The diminished resources of the cantons as a partial consequence of the changing tax structure further underscored their dependence on the federal government so that centralisation became an accelerated and irreversible trend with the cantons almost automatically committing their most expensive tasks to Berne.

Political and economic centralisation in Switzerland were slow to affect regional, religious and linguistic loyalties which were rooted in centuries of tradition and self-rule. The attachment to federalism was especially strong among the religious and linguistic minorities which together constitute the majority of the Swiss people.(28)

The word "federalism" in the Swiss context always demands a certain clarification, for its conotations differ for every portion of Swiss society. It has served and continues to serve the interests of entirely opposed political groups and radically different communities in Switzerland. A study undertaken in the 1970s determined three factors of social cleavage in Switzerland: cantonal loyalty, language and religion. For example, Swiss-Germans were found to possess an higher sense of cantonal loyalty than the Romand-Swiss, regardless of class origin. On the other hand, the latter showed a keener attachment to their linguistic background.(29) The principle of political federalism was then no more dear to the Romand-Swiss than to the Swiss-Germans. It was, however, a formidable tool in the protection of a particular linguistic identity and the expression of an acutely different culture, both political and intellectual.

Convinced of their separate identity in Swiss society, the Vaudois and the Romand-Swiss have tended to search for their specific identity in foreign cultures. The greatest inspiration has come from France with which they share a common border and language, and to which the Vaudois owe their cantonal independence. This influence is particularly evident in the Romandie's absorption of French literature. As expressed by Arnold Kohler in 1937:

> ici en Suisse romande, la nourriture quotidienne en périodique vient de Paris. Et quelle nourriture? Sait-on que le plus grand quotidien romand est Paris Soir (100,000 exemplaires vendus)? Toute la presse proprement romande ne songe jamais à juger l'événement en fonction d'une situation suisse, elle ne sait le faire qu'en fonction soit de Paris, soit de Rome, soit de Berlin.(30)

The observation is echoed by other Swiss historians. According to Roland Ruffieux, it was especially true during the period of the economic crisis of the 1930s which had a considerable intellectual impact on the Romandie and much of its press:

> C'est à dire qu'en Suisse romande les effets les plus visibles de la grande dépression sont d'ordre surtout idéologique et qu'ils ne reflètent pas immédiatement les mutations sociales en cours depuis les années 1920. En effet, c'est dans les événements étrangers - conquête de l'Ethiopie, guerre civile espagnole, Front populaire en France - que les courants de pensées favorables à une réaction de type nationaliste vinrent chercher leurs consignes d'action.(31)

The influence of French events and French opinion on the Romand press was quite overwhelming. In 1924, Aldo Dami found reason to complain: "Nous sommes mieux informés de ce qui se passe à Brest que de ce qui se passe à Turin ou à Fribourg-en- Brisgau, beaucoup plus proches de nous, soit dit pour ceux qui ignorent la géographie."(32) Moreover, the correspondent in Paris was almost always French and not Swiss unlike the one in Rome or Berlin so that reports from France were always seen from French perspectives.(33)

For certain intellectuals, the Romand-Swiss' indulgence in foreign and particularly French cultures represented a lack of native culture. The Vaudois possessed neither the administrative efficiency of the Bernese nor the literary and political energy of the French. In emerging from the domination of these two somewhat opposed cultures, the Vaudois had succeeded, not altogether deliberately, in rejecting both.

Coincé entre la France (qui l'ignore) et la Suisse

> allemande (dont le sépare le fossé linguistic) le Romand vit en vase clos, sans autre horizon que les contours étroits de sa province natale. De loin lui parviennent les échos assourdis de la comédie parisienne, perpétuant son rituel invariable...Mais le Romand reste le plus souvent spectateur. Il participe mais par procuration.(34)

The result was that Romand and particularly Vaudois opinion receded into a conservatism which expressed itself politically in terms of a resistance to change and modernism, as well as an adamant faith in federalism.

NOTES

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13) Christopher Hughes, Switzerland (London: Ernest Benn, 1975), p. 115.

14) Ibid., p. 117.

15) Claire & François Masnata-Rubattel, Le pouvoir suisse: séduction démocratique et répression suave (Paris: Christian Bourgeois, 1978), p. 242.

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25) Hughes, p. 236.

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29) Henry H. Kerr, Switzerland: Social Cleavages and Partisan Conflict (London: Sage Publications, 1974), pp. 23-4.

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32) Aldo Dami, Examen de conscience: la presse romande (Lausanne, 1924), p. 20.

33) Ibid., p. 21.

34) Jan Marejka & Eric Werner, De la misere intellectuelle et morale en Suisse romande (Montreux: Editions l'Age d'Homme, 1981), p. 17.

CHAPTER THREE - PRESS ANALYSES: UNITY OF ACTION IN FRANCE, REACTIONS TO POLITICAL EXTREMISM IN SWITZERLAND

At the end of 1933, France was only just beginning to feel the tension created by the fascist influence in Europe which had already overridden two of her neighbours, Italy and Germany. In March 1933, an attempt had been made, under the leadership of Gaston Bergery, to unite the existing leftist, syndicalist and revolutionary organisations into a "Front commun contre le fascism." This plan however was unacceptable to the leaders of the Communist Party (PCF) and the Socialist Party (SFIO) as well as the chief syndical organisation, the Confédération générale du travail (CGT). At that time, the government seemed to be safe from rightist domination owing to the vast majority of Radicals, Radical-Socialists and Socialists in the Chamber. The main concern of the nation was the economic crisis which was beginning to affect it.

In the midst of this situation, the Stavisky scandal erupted, erasing the credibility of the Radical government. In the eyes of both the left and the right, the French state represented little more than corruption and ineptitude. Moreover, the riots which ensued on the sixth of February 1934, confirmed for many the presence of a veritable fascist threat in France. Whether the riots were a spontaneous expression of frustration with the state of the Republic or a premeditated attempt at establishing an authoritarian regime is subject to much debate.(1) The fact that many Communists participated in the demonstrations only serves to

make matters more complicated. On the morrow of those events, Communists and Socialists appeared to be as divided as ever, as demonstrated in this declaration in the PCF's mouthpiece, l'Humanité:

> Contre les fascistes, contre la démocratie qui se fascise, Paris ouvrier a riposté; tandis que les balles des gardes mobiles couchaient 12 morts et près de 200 blessés sur le pavé, le Parti socialiste donne sa confiance au gouvernement.(2)

The political significance of these events appeared to be completely lost on most of the Vaudois press. For example, no attempt was made by the Radical newspaper, La Revue, to indicate who the demonstrators of the sixth of February had been or what they had aimed to achieve. The general unrest was merely attributed to the activities, unspecified as they were, of the Socialists and the syndicalists. Comparing France to pre-Mussolinian Italy, La Revue observed that the political unrest reflected by the riots, and particularly the CGT strike of the twelfth, was an invitation to fascist takeover.(3) "Est-ce notre faute," it asked, "si, partout où il se trouve au pouvoir, le socialisme fait le lit du fascisme?"(4)

La Feuille d'avis de Lausanne chose to ignore the political implications of the riots in favour of sentimental descriptions of the agitators being brutalised by the police and the Mobile Guard. The bourgeois press in Vaud did not merely "miss" the significance of the events of the sixth of February - the commentaries of the Parisian press alone made that impossible - they intentionally obscured it. In the eyes of the Socialist organ, Le Droit du peuple, this attitude betrayed a marked preference on the part of these

newspapers, for authoritarian regimes in both France and Switzerland. It recalled the press commentaries on the occasion of the 9 November 1932 "massacre" in Geneva when an unarmed crowd protesting a meeting of the Union nationale were harshly supressed leaving thirteen dead and sixty-five wounded. At that time, the bourgeois newspapers had justified the Swiss Army's action by evoking the need for social order. Le Droit du peuple concluded, "Nous réprouvons toute fusillade, nous considérons comme criminelle la répression au fusil mais, pour ceux qui l'admettent, elle était cent fois plus justifiée à Paris qu'à Genève."(5)

In response to the consternation over the spread of fascism which the February riots generated and the questionable intentions of the Doumergue government, Le Droit du peuple immediately declared its support for a common front which could eventually lead to the "organic unity" of the French proletariat, that is a fusion of the Socialist and Communist Parties.(6) Although the role of the PCF in this movement was seen as all-important, the mouthpiece of the Vaudois Socialist Party accorded the responsibility of leadership to the SFIO. The Socialist Party of France was, in its eyes, destined to be the focal point of the anti-fascist alliance: "Désormais c'est au socialisme de prendre l'offensive et à grouper autour de son drapeau tous ceux qui ne se résignent pas au fascisme."(7) This position was altered somewhat in the face of the policies of the future Blum government, especially with regard to the Spanish Civil War and the moratorium on social reforms in 1937.

While Le Grutli denied the very existence of a fascist threat in France and called for a return to the principles of 1789, "la famille...et la morale chretienne,"(8) La Feuille d'avis and La Revue adopted the theme of the blameless French worker being manipulated and misled by Communists and syndicalists if not directly by Moscow. "L'ouvrier français est, en somme, un bourgeois!" pretended La Feuille d'avis. "L'émeute n'est pas son fort! Et s'il n'était pas conduit par le Parti et par les Syndicats, il se tiendrait tranquil."(9) Certainly, in the weeks following the 12 February strike, the stated tactic of the PCF was to encourage Socialist workers to support the common front against the wishes of the Party leadership. Yet, the bourgeois press' polemic did not spare the Socialist Party's leadership. The common front was rejected as a blatant effort by the entire French left to overthrow the existing social order and establish the proletarian dictatorship "dont rêve plus que jamais M. Léon Blum."(10)

The PCF's strategy of appealing to the SFIO party base, coupled with the positive influence of militant Socialists such as Marceau Pivert and Jean Zyromski, bore fruit in July of 1934 when the unity of action pact was signed by the two formerly opposed parties of the left. The pact contained several conditions pertaining to the activities of the PCF and SFIO, the most important being that "l'action spécifique de chacun des deux partis exclue l'injure et l'outrage", that the common front aim at defending all democratic liberties without systematic recourse to violence and that a special committee be established to coordinate the

activities of the parties.(11)

Similar movements for unity of action emerged in Switzerland at roughly the same time. In all cases the offers came from the Communist Party and the motivation was identical to that of the PCF: a concerted resistance to fascism. In 1933, at the time of an ill-fated attempt to form a common front in France, the PSS rejected an early offer of unity of action from the Communists and pledged to continue to do so "aussi longtemps que le Parti communiste suisse dépend de la volonté dictatoriale des chefs de la IIIe Internationale et ne possède aucune éxistence propre indépendante."(12) Besides the evident anti-communism of the PSS leadership and most of its sections, two factors can be said to have influenced this attitude. First, the Swiss Communists enjoyed little electoral support and hence their alliance could have been detrimental to the popularity of the PSS; second, they could not mobilise a mass movement against fascism through syndical connexions as could the Communists in France. In many cases, the Swiss Communists were seen, by Socialists and members of bourgeois parties, as an equal if not greater threat to democracy as the fascists. The federal and cantonal legislation carried against them throughout this period bore witness to this attitude.(13)

The social unrest which the economic crisis fomented in Switzerland, coupled with the threatening international situation, provoked the Federal Council to take extraordinary measures to prevent public discontent from manifesting itself in violence. The impetus for these

measures was three-fold: first, the emergence of anti-democratic movements in Switzerland; second, the need for Switzerland to maintain friendly relations with Germany, its greatest trading partner, by containing public hostility toward Hitler's regime; third, the Federal government's increasing inclination to extend its influence on the cantons. On one hand, the Swiss state feared the consequences of the fascist sentiments in the country and, on the other, the violent anti-fascism of the left which could have compromised Switzerland's good relations with some of its neighbours. The law "on public order", which was reproposed in the Spring of 1934, would have applied to all extremist movements in Switzerland, be they of the right or the left. It was rejected, for the second time, on 11 March 1934, by referendum.

While Le Droit du peuple applauded the rejection of the law, La Feuille d'avis regarded this as yet another instance of popular resistance to a federal project, observing that the majority of the population "se sont simplement joints à ce que l'on a appelé la 'coalition déstructive' qui se forme presque toujours en Suisse lorsqu'il s'agit de se prononcer sur un projet fédéral."(14) The fact that both the extreme left and the extreme right were opposed to it sufficed to convince this newspaper that the law had represented "la raison et le juste milieu."(15)

Le Grutli, too, showed strong support for the law, despite its own federalist leanings. It claimed that no meritorious democracy can tolerate social disorder - "Et voila précisément quel est le but de la loi: l'ordre dans la

démocratie."(16) This insistence on order within a democratic framework was scarcely different from La Revue's position. In many instances, the Radical philosophy and that of the right-wing Socialists appeared to coincide, although the latter's mouthpiece provided a less predictable approach to the issues which it covered than did La Revue.

The only consolation in the outcome of the referendum for Le Grutli was that the Romandie and Ticino (the Italian canton in Switzerland) had accepted the law whereas German-speaking Switzerland had generally rejected it. Here, the Vaudois nationalism of the newspaper and its concern for the linguistic minorities of the country are evident. However, the fact that these minorities (invariably the most federalist elements) had accepted the law cast considerable doubt on the legitimacy of La Feuille d'avis' claim that it had been the federalist instinct which had ultimately defeated it.

The most plausible explanation for the result of the 11 March referendum was provided by Le Pays vaudois. Having supported the law throughout the campaign, the Agrarian newspaper attributed its rejection to the incompetence of the state in dealing with the economic crisis and to its inability to keep the promises that it had made regarding the welfare of the population. Le Pays vaudois rejected the opinion that the law was absolutely essential to the maintenance of social order, preferring to believe "qu'un gouvernement digne de la tâche qu'il doit accomplir, peut faire regner l'ordre et la tranquilité sans le secours de cette loi."(17)

Hence, the vast majority of the Vaudois press supported the public-order law to some extent. Certainly in the canton of Vaud the law was accepted, although by a small margin. However, in Lausanne, where most of the newspapers studied were distibuted, the "No" side won by 11,408 votes to 9423.(18) Moreover, it is safe to assume that most of the bourgeois newspapers in Switzerland followed the positions of the Radical, Liberal and Conservative Parties (to these should be added the Agrarian and Independent Parties) by supporting the Federal Council. The fact that a majority of voters chose not to follow the opinion of these newspapers testifies to the lack of loyalty felt by most Swiss to the newspaper of their choice, given the low circulations of the leftist and extreme-rightist publications.

The laws concerning the press were inspired principally by the fear of German economic or political retaliation on Switzerland. On 27 September 1933, Federal Councillor Motta had declared to the National Council:

> MM. von Neurath et Goebbels m'ont déclaré que leur gouvernement était disposé à accepter la critique des journaux suisses, comme de la press étrangère en général, à la condition toutefois que cette critique n'aille pas jusqu'à la malveillance caractérisée. Notre presse ne subira pas ou ne subira plus d'entrave {a reference to the banning of several Swiss newspapers in Germany} si elle sait se contenir dans les limites de l'information objective et de la critique raisonnable et équitable.(19)

This statement dèmonstrates the direct pressure which the German government was prepared to exert on the Swiss government in order to suppress the press' criticism. Furthermore, the Swiss government's response to two notable political events indicates an effort not to humiliate the

Nazi régime - these were the Jacob and Gustloff affairs. The first was the kidnapping of the anti-Nazi German journalist Berthold Jacob Solomon by the Gestapo in Basel on 9 March 1935; the second, the assassination of Wilhelm Gustloff, leader of the Swiss section of the Nazi Party, by a Jewish Yugoslav student on 4 February 1936 in Davos. In both cases the Swiss authorities used the utmost discretion in settling the affair without embarrassing the German government.(20) Harsher limitations on the freedom of the press were called for repeatedly by the German authorities in the context of both events. Moreover, the hostile attitude of the Swiss press toward the Reich was indicated to be a deciding factor in the Reich Chancellory's continued refusal to issue an official statement recognising Switzerland's independence and neutrality.

In the face of this situation, a series of decrees reducing the liberty of the press were passed by the Federal Council. The first was the decree of 26 March 1934. It stated that newspapers and publications which, "en outrepassant d'une manière particulièrement grave les limites de la critique," affected the good foreign relations of Switzerland would first be issued a warning and, upon further excesses, be banned entirely. The decree included a list of terms which were not to be used by the press in reference to persons of high standing in foreign countries. The Federal Council and the Press and Radio Division took great care to point out that the decree consisted not so much of outright press control or censorship as an invitation to the media to put the interests of the nation

above their own. It was specifically stated that the goal of a liberal press was to inform the public objectively on matters of general interest.(21) This decree was entirely valid under the stipulations of article 102, paragraphs eight and nine, of the Federal Constitution.

On 31 May 1935, the PSS filed an initiative toward inserting the following clause into the Constitution that would complement the articles protecting measures aimed at limiting the freedom of the press:

> Il est...défendu d'interdire, de soumettre à la censure ou à d'autres mesures analogues des produits de presse du pays.
>
> Des ordonnances ou décrets qui portent atteinte a la liberté de la presse peuvent faire en tout temps l'objet d'un recours de droit public auprès du Tribunal Fédéral. Cette règle s'applique également aux ordonnances et décrets promulgués par le Conseil Fédéral ou d'autres autorités fédérales ou votés par l'Assemblée fédérale en les soustrayant au référendum populaire.(22)

This initiative which aimed at supressing censorship or the banning of publications and allowing for the appeal of federal regulations before a Federal Court was never brought before Parliament. Further decrees followed that of 26 March 1934 going beyond mere limitations on the contents of the press to include "anti-democratic" activities of all kinds (particularly the decree of 5 December 1938) and culminating in the outlawing of the Communist Party altogether during the War.(23)

These restrictions were met with greatest favour by La Revue, which felt that Switzerland would thus be protected from excessive Socialist commentaries that could upset its relations with foreign states. It concluded that "la liberté de la presse a certaines limites qu'il est bon de ne pas

pouvoir outrepasser."(24) It stood alone in this view. La Feuille d'avis de Lausanne was somewhat disconcerted by the new laws, and Le Droit du peuple understandably considered them a public outrage and "Une muselière à la presse socialiste!" It deplored the fact that any criticism of Nazi Germany came under the immediate scrutiny of the authorities whilst the "feuilles bien pensantes" of Geneva and Lausanne were allowed to insult, on a daily basis, the government of the USSR and its delegates to the League of Nations.(25)

Many of the biases of the Vaudois press concerning foreign cultures or political doctrines in the 1930s were embodied in their attitude toward the Soviet Union. Here, there existed a double barrier - one was that the Soviet Union represented a culture entirely different from the Western Christian heritage of Switzerland, and the evident divergence of the political and economic systems of the two countries served to cast a dim and disfavourable light upon the Soviet Union from the point of view of the Federal Council and most of the Swiss and Vaudois press. An analysis of the press' view of the USSR is important for a clear understanding of their opinion of the political and social conflicts of the 1930s - anti-fascism, anti- communism - which were of utmost relevance to the formation of the Popular Front in France and similar attempts in Switzerland. It also provides a clearer picture of how the press viewed the general political situation in Europe and Switzerland's role therein during the period studied. Jacques Meurant elucidated the prevailing Swiss perception of the USSR in his study of the Romand press and the Second World War:

> L'opinion romande cède facilement en politique extérieure à des considérations morales, elle juge davantage un personnage, une politique, un état à travers le prisme, parfois déformant, des valeurs occidentales chrétiennes et elle a tendance à diviser le monde entre ceux qui incarnent ou défendent ces valeurs et ceux qui les ignorent ou qui les menacent...Ce qui explique le préjugé favorable dont beneficie l'Italie, mère de la civilisation chrétienne...
>
> Les excès de la politique hitlérienne sont certes condamnées avec la même énérgie mais pour la grande part de l'opinion, l'Allemagne n'est tout de même pas livrée comme la Russie aux masses incultes, aux "Sans Dieux" et quelles que soient ses erreurs, elle appartient à l'Europe, elle est impreignée de sa culture tandis que la Russie appartient au monde asiatique que la Suisse connaît mal et qu'elle se refuse à placer sur le même plan que l'Europe.(26)

In the analysis of the Vaudois press' attitude toward the Soviet Union between 1934 and 1937, two events are crucial: the signing of the Franco-Soviet Pact in May of 1935 and the debate over Swiss diplomatic relations with the USSR in June of 1936.

The attitude toward the Franco-Soviet Pact was negative along the entire political spectrum of the Vaudois press. La Feuille d'avis de Lausanne, for example, applauded the devious and elusive approach of Pierre Laval in his negotiations with the Soviets. The newspaper expressed great satisfaction in the fact that the original purpose of the treaty - mutual assistance in the event of military conflict - was rendered almost entirely void by the considerable number of controls and limitations in the final version of the agreement. For La Feuille d'avis then, the dangers of a rapprochement between France and the Soviet Union were countered by the ineffectiveness of the pact.(27) Le Droit du peuple was only too keenly aware of this ineffectiveness. Under the heading, "Méfiez-vous des pactes!", it warned the

Soviets against any attempts to conclude a treaty with a capitalist state, illustrating the danger of such alliances by pointing to Italy's abandonment of the Triple Alliance during the First World War.(28)

As is often the case in Swiss "foreign policy", the interest in the Soviet Union was first and formost economic. In the Vaudois press however, any discussion of diplomatic relations with the USSR invariably took on an ideological tinge. The case of La Feuille d'avis is typical. Dismissing all arguments for the economic benefits involved, it noted:

> Par contre, les raisons d'ordre politique qui commandent à notre pays de s'abstenir de tout rapprochement avec Moscou sont plus impérieuses que jamais, surtout après les expériences faites en Amérique du Sud, en Espagne et, dernièrement en France.(29)

The quote is valuable in that it comes from a Swiss observer in Switzerland. It illustrates dramatically a widespread fear that the Popular Front movements, be they in France, Spain or Switzerland, amounted to little more than the direct interference of Moscow in the countries' home affairs.

Le Droit du peuple rejected all arguments that diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union could be politically or economically harmful to Switzerland. This stance was not unique to the Socialist Party. For example, Le Droit du peuple chose to quote National Councillor Stäubli, "qui est un bourgeois," in pointing out that the Soviet Union was the country that paid its debts better than any other. Moreover, this Member of Parliament was disappointed that, of all the countries in the League of Nations, Switzerland should be alone in not recognising the

Soviet state as a legitimate form of government. Hence, he provided an argument both economically and politically favourable to Swiss relations with the USSR.(30)

Le Droit du peuple itself refrained from invoking arguments of an ideological or moral character in support of the Soviet system. This indicated a certain caution or reserve - possibly due to the recent Stalinist "purges" - on the part of the Socialist newspaper which one year earlier had openly supported the USSR against the French Republic on the subject of the Franco-Soviet Pact. An article by Paul Golay, National Councillor, President of the Vaudois Socialist Party and member of the editorial board of Le Droit du peuple stated:

> Moi je reconnais le Soviets. Cela ne signifie pas que je les aime. Mais ils sont là, dans ce temple de la terre où se décompose le corps même d'une civilisation infidèle à sa mission. Ils sont là: manifestation et défense en vue de fins qui dépassent celles tracées par les sociologues, quelles que soient leurs doctrines.(31)

Le Pays vaudois leaned toward Golay's position. It chose to agree with National Councillor Schwar who declared: "J'aurais désiré tout d'abord que l'on interdise toute propagande communiste en Suisse et que l'on reprenne ensuite les relations avec cet important pays." Pointing out that Switzerland entertained the best of relations with other states of whose politics it did not approve, even with dictatorships such as in Germany and Italy, he concluded: "Il ne peut y avoir deux politiques! L'hypocrisie a assez duré."(32)

Whether they supported the idea of diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union or not, most of the press put Stalin's

regime on a par with Hitler's and Mussolini's. When they supported the notion, they considered Swiss-Soviet relations as a necessary economic measure. Most bourgeois papers in Vaud felt that communism was as great an evil as fascism. For the Swiss state, resistance to the Soviet Union meant better relations with Germany which was for Switzerland a greater military and economic force with which to reckon. The growing agressiveness of Nazi Germany toward its neighbours not only caused the Swiss government to suppress the hostile reaction of the press but to propose a programme of military preparation for an eventual conflict. With France unwilling to guarantee military support to Switzerland, it became increasingly clear that a simple policy of "neutrality" might no longer assure the country's independence in the event of war. This new concern was observed by the German ambassador in Berne, Ernst von Weizsäcker who, on 24 April 1934, reported:

> La Suisse est au nombre de ces pays européens neutres qui considèrent la paix de Versailles comme injuste, ou du moins comme peu sage, mais qui de loin préfèrent encore cette paix à une nouvelle guerre. Or la Suisse, comme la France de Briand, a oeuvré pendant nombre d'années dans l'illusion que l'Allemagne s'était reconciliée avec sa défaite. C'est pourquoi la prise de conscience que le contraire était vrai causa un malaise considérable ici. Soudain ils crurent l'Allemagne capable de tout - de traverser la Suisse (afin de tomber sur les Français depuis l'arrière-pays de Genève) aussi bien que d'avoir l'intention d'anéantir l'Autriche et d'annéxer une partie de la Suisse allemande.(33)

For much of the Vaudois press, the national debate over Swiss rearmament was a drama which was played out as much in the PSS as in the National and States' Councils. The gradual revision of the Socialist position on national defense marked the beginning of a new understanding between left and

right in Swiss federal and cantonal politics. Whereas most of the bourgeois and conservative elements wholeheartedly espoused the cause of national defense, the Socialists remained in the unenviable position of attempting a respectable compromise between their traditional anti-militarism and the military defense of Swiss democracy and resistance to fascism.

As early as February of 1934, the PSS decided to revise its position. However, the Congress insisted that the creation of an "emergency" army be coupled with the replacement of the existing state with a socialist one. Almost one year later, on 27 January 1935, the PSS Congress, meeting in Lucerne, put the issue to a vote. The result was that the Socialists decided by 365 votes to 294 to accept Swiss national defense and Swiss democracy, and this principle was incorporated for the first time into the Party programme. Gone were the ideas of proletarian dictatorship, class struggle and historical determinism. The emphasis in 1935 fell largely on the necessity of fighting unemployment and fascism and of uniting "en une communauté de lutte anti-capitaliste toutes les couches sociales victimes de l'exploitation" in the face of these challenges.(34) Paradoxically, the PSS position was much closer to that of the PCF than the SFIO during those years, in that they found the fascist threat important enough to abandon some basic principles of their party. Yet, the Swiss Socialists made no effort to unite with Swiss Communists in their anti-fascist campaign.

For La Revue, the outcome of the Lucerne Congress was

an undeniable step in the right direction. The PSS' support of national defense was seen as "le retour à une conception moins théorique de la vie"(35) even though that support remained conditional on an "economic defense" programme. The 235-million-franc defense loan proposed by the Federal Council and demanded by the army would meet much stiffer resistance from the PSS.

The National Council debates over the defense loan began in May of 1936. The Socialist group in Parliament proposed the PSS-USS plan for a 500-million-franc loan. According to this plan, a sum of 260 million francs would be spent on rearmament while a further 240 million would be spent on measures aimed at creating employment and improving Switzerland's economy. The conditions that the PSS imposed on the adoption of this plan were that the interest rate on the loan not surpass 2.5 percent, that no profit be made on military contracts, that all industries engaged exclusively or chiefly in the production of armaments be controlled by the state, that a special tax be imposed on large fortunes and that state economic policy involve special provisions for maintaining prices and wages at acceptable levels. The Socialists then demanded the dissolution of all "fascist" organisations in Switzerland. It is evident that in accepting national defense, the PSS was not yet prepared to abandon its demands for social and economic reform.

The Socialist proposal was immediately rejected by a vote in the National Council. Le Droit du peuple feigned outrage in the face of what was, in the final analysis, an expected outcome: "Hélas! Ces messieurs (du Conseil

national} crièrent quasiment au scandale. Comment? Vous entendez mettre sur un pied d'égalité des mesures indispensables à la vie des citoyens dans le malheur et celles ayant pour but de défendre le territoire?"(36) The leader of the Vaudois Socialists, Paul Golay, thus remained sceptical of the PSS' support of national defense: "Alors que les grands pays comme la France, conscients de l'état de précarité de la paix, proclament que le seul salut est dans la securité collective, nous, petit pays, nous l'entrevoyons dans une résistance militaire."(37) La Revue, on the other hand, considered with some justification that the Socialist proposal and the conditions which accompanied it were an attempt to achieve, "par des moyens détournés," the principal social and economic aims of their party.(38)

The military credits were accepted by the PSS "Comité central" on 15 May. However, this decision was scarcely a reflexion of the general opinion of the Party. It is also noteworthy that all the members of the "Comité central" representing Romand Switzerland, including the Jura, voted against the military credits. It was an indication of events to come. The organ of the Vaudois Socialist Party never wavered in its condemnation of the Swiss military. In October of 1934, on the occasion of the previous "Comité central" vote in favour of national defense, it had declared its conviction that fascism for Switzerland was an internal danger which resided chiefly in the officer corps.(39) When, on the sixth and seventh of June, the PSS Congress, in extraordinary session in Zurich, rejected the military credits by 263 votes to 255, Le Droit du peuple declared:

> Sans exagération aucune, le prestige du socialisme est sauvé depuis dimanche dernier, du moins en Suisse romande et dans les régions fortement frappées par la crise. Les crédits militaires ont été repoussés à une faible majorité, il est vrai, mais ces huits voix auront contribué à sauver l'avenir du socialisme en Suisse...(40)

The final vote on the military credits in the National Council only served to underscore the division both within the structure and in the composition of the PSS. Of the fifty Socialist National Councillors, twenty-one voted in favour of the military credits, eight voted against, twelve abstained and nine were absent. Seven of the eight who voted against the motion were Romand while all of those who voted in favour were non-Romand. Notwithstanding the fact that the PSS was the only Swiss political party to be founded on a national level, it was unable to suppress its cantonal and linguistic divisions at a crucial point both in the evolution of its policy and in Swiss history. Moreover, the habitual reluctance of the Socialist representation in the National Council to obey party directives had surfaced once again. In the words of La Feuille d'avis de Lausanne, "L'attitude du groupe socialiste du Conseil national n'a certes rien de glorieux."(41)

On the whole, La Revue and Le Droit du peuple, in their open hostility toward each other, provided the greatest coverage of the national defense issue. La Feuille d'avis, while providing less coverage, remained strongly supportive of national defense throughout. Le Pays vaudois' coverage was scarce, although it declared its full approval of the military credits and expressed concerned astonishment at the division within the ranks of the Socialists on the

issue.(42) As was its habit, Le Pays vaudois refrained from attacking the Socialist anti-militarists directly. Instead, in a first-page article, it attempted to clarify the positions of both camps in the PSS.(43) In the final analysis, the Vaudois Agrarians had little to lose or gain from the military credits. Yet, by supporting the Federal Council's programme of national defense, they demonstrated their strong Swiss nationalism and ability to overcome their federalist leanings when this nationalism was called into question.

Le Grutli maintained an even greater distance from the daily preoccupation with national defense than Le Pays vaudois. Its coverage of the issue amounted to two articles which exposed its deep distrust of Swiss business circles. The first article appeared on 26 October 1934 under the heading of "La folie des armements," wherein the author expressed profound horror at the anachronism of warfare for civilised society:

> Nous sommes fiers de nos progrès scientifiques, techniques, etc., mais les vrais progrès, ceux qui seuls sont un preuve d'une humanité en marche vers le sommet, c'est en vain que nous en cherchons les traces dans une société qui ne trouve pas de remède contre ce fléau terrible qu'est la folie des armements.(44)

In the second article, "Les causes des guerres," the same author placed the entire responsibility for modern warfare on the thirst for profit amongst arms manufacturers.(45)

NOTES

1) See: Georges Lefranc, Histoire du Front populaire (Paris: Payot, 1965), pp. 18-19.

2) Cited in: Ibid., p. 26.

3) R: 13 ii 34: 1-2.

4) R: 14 ii 34: 3. Ironically, the phrase was borrowed from l'Humanité which on 8 February accused French Radicals and Socialists of "preparing the bed for fascism." Cited in: Joel Colton, Léon Blum, Humanist in Politics (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1966), p. 114.

5) LDP: 13 ii 34: 1.

6) LDP: 16 ii 34: 1.

7) LDP: 12 ii 34: 6 / 24 ii 34: 1.

8) G: 20 vi 34: 1.

9) FAL: 21 ii 34: 2.

10) R: 20 ii 34: 6.

11) Lefranc, p. 53.

12) Cited in: Masnata, p. 117.

13) See: Chapter I.

14) FAL: 12 iii 34: 12.

15) FAL: 12 iii 34: 18.

16) G: 2 ii 34: 1.

17) PV 16 iii 34: 1.

18) LDP: 12 iii 34: 4.

19) Cited in: Daniel Bourgeois, Le Troisieme Reich et la Suisse (Neuchatel: La Baconnière, 1974), p. 50.

20) Ibid., pp. 54-65.

21) Pierre-Jean Pointet, La neutralité de la Suisse et la liberté de la presse, Thesis (Zurich: Ed. polygraphiques, 1945), pp. 116 & 141.

22) Cited in: Charly R. Ochsner, Public Opinion and the Press in Neutral Switzerland, Thesis (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 1947), p. 51.

23) Pointet, p. 121.

24) R: 27 iii 34: 1 (underlines added).

25) LDP: 27 iii 34: 2.

26) Meurant, pp. 130-1.

27) FAL: 3 v 35: 32 / 4 v 35: 24.

28) LDP: 2 v 35: 1.

29) FAL: 19 v 36: 10.

30) LDP: 11 vi 36: 3.

31) LDP: 15 vi 36: 1.

32) PV: 19 vi 36: 1.

33) Cited in: Bourgeois, p. 12.

34) Cited in: Masnata, p. 111.

35) R: 28 i 35: 6.

36) LDP: 20 v 36: 1.

37) Ibid.

38) R: 15 v 36: 1.

39) LDP: 19 x 34: 8.

40) LDP: 15 vi 36: 1.

41) FAL: 10 vi 36: 12.

42) PV: 5 vi 36: 2.

43) PV: 26 vi 36: 1.

44) G: 26 x 34: 1.

45) G: 30 xi 34: 1.

CHAPTER FOUR - PRESS ANALYSES: VICTORY OF THE POPULAR FRONT

The term "Popular Front" came into common parlance in October of 1934 when Maurice Thorez, leader of the PCF, officially invited French Radicals to join the Communists and Socialists in their struggle against the right-wing leagues and the financial oligarchy. The overriding concern then was to establish the unity of the left firmly in the public eye as well as to gauge the public's support for the Popular Front. For this purpose, a vast demonstration was in order and the Bastille-Day celebrations of 1935 seemed the perfect occasion. Communists, Socialists and Radicals, along with splinter parties of the left and workers' and intellectuals' movements, united in a common gesture of solidarity by taking the following oath before flooding the streets in thousands:

> Nous faisons le serment de rester unis pour défendre la démocratie, pour désarmer et dissoudre les ligues facticieuses, pour mettre nos libertés hors de l'atteinte du fascisme. Nous jurons, en cette journée qui fait revivre la première victoire de la République, de défendre les libertés démocratiques conquises par le peuple de France, de donner du pain aux travailleurs, du travail à la jeunesse et, au monde, la grande paix humaine.(1)

The Popular Front parade proved successful beyond all expectations. Léon Blum himself, who had remained sceptical of the leftist alliance, could not help but declare his wholehearted allegiance: "Vive la Nation et vive la Révolution."(2)

The demonstrations did not leave the Vaudois newspapers unimpressed. Quoting a French correspondent, La Revue

reported:

> une vague énorme, de deux ou trois cent mille manifestants a déferlé de la Bastille à la Porte de Vincennes, le poing droit (sic) levé, le bonnet phrygien sur la tête, tandis que des musiques beuglaient sans fin - et faux! - la triste Internationale; mais quel calme que ce cortège, quelle cafouillade, quel manque d'allure.

Indeed, it was the Croix-de-Feu parade, led by Colonel de La Rocque, "la vedette de la journée," which inspired the reporter to conclude: "La France est encore debout, malgré les désirs de ceux qui voudraient la voir une nouvelle République des Soviets."(3)

La Feuille d'avis de Lausanne was not as optimistic. It was convinced that the political crisis in France "se dénouera, un jour ou l'autre dans la rue...L'idée d'une révolution est entrée dans les moeurs."(4) On the other hand, Le Droit du peuple could not hide its enthusiasm for the new unity in the French left: "Aujourd'hui, les deux tronçons {de la classe ouvrière} se trouvent réunis, le front unique réalisé et, comme le dit, justement, une pancarte des syndicats: 'Rien ne le brisera!' Non! Rien!" The Socialist newspaper emphasised the "classless" quality and the universal appeal of the Popular Front. Contrary to the expectations of the bourgeois press which could only warn of revolution and social anarchy, Le Droit du peuple insisted that the action of the Popular Front could only take place within established legal and parliamentary spheres, that its very aim was to defend "la France républicaine et démocratique contre la France des spéculateurs, des financiers, des cliques fascistes et réactionnaires."(5) Yet, in the same way that La Revue

tended to exaggerate the revolutionary aims of the Popular Front, Le Droit du peuple overestimated the fascist threat in France. For example, an article of 5 July placed the Croix-de-Feu membership at three-hundred thousand - well above the generally accepted figure of fifty thousand. According to Le Droit du peuple, France was clearly divided into Republican and anti-Republican camps.

The Popular Front programme was promulgated on 12 January 1936. It was an intentionally loose programme with only general aims. The concern of the PCF not to alienate the Radical Party was particularly evident in that all references to the economic or political transformation of society were omitted. Even the SFIO's demands for the nationalisation of key industries met Communist resistance. What remained were plans for the reform of the Bank of France, the dissolution of "fascist" leagues, ending the deflationary practices of the existing government, raising wages and nationalising certain sectors of the arms industry. These coincided almost entirely with the wishes of the Radicals. Most important, the programme of the Popular Front committed the workers' parties to upholding the democratic system and the Third Republic.

It was with this programme that the parties of the Popular Front faced the legislative elections of the end of April and beginning of May of 1936. It was agreed that in the first round, each party would present its candidates independently. In this way, fears that the Popular Front was an effort by the PCF to augment only its own electoral chances were dissipated. In the second round, only the

Popular Front candidate with the greatest gain in the first round would compete.

The closeness of the electoral race is evident in the fact that only 174 of the 424 disputed seats were decided in the first round. Despite fifty-nine cases of indiscipline (6) on the part of the Popular Front parties, their tactic succeeded in capturing them 376 seats against the opposition's 214. The number of seats obtained by the three main parties of the Popular Front were as follows:

	1936	1932
PCF	72	11
SFIO	147	131
Radical	106	157

By far the greatest gains were made by the Communists, who managed to capture sixty-one more seats than they had occupied in the previous Chamber. The SFIO made moderate gains while the Radical representation was somewhat diminished. Hence, the elections of April-May of 1936 bore witness to a slight but notable shift toward the extreme left in the attitude of those who generally voted more to the right. On the whole, there is little evidence of any major reversals in voting practices. The Popular Front's victory was decided by a small minority (three percent) of voters who voted for the left rather than for the right.

The importance of the results of the elections lay in the fact that for the first time, and against most expectations, the SFIO enjoyed a clear majority in the Chamber over the Radical Party and that it could legitimately present its leader as head of the new government.

In Switzerland, the idea of a Socialist-bourgeois front had gained ground after the failure of the Communists to form alliances with cantonal Socialist Parties throughout 1934 and 1935. At the Lucerne Congress of the PSS on 26 and 27 January 1935, the presiding E. Reinhard spoke of brushing aside the ideological barriers to a political reconciliation with the bourgeois block:

> Plutôt que de parler encore de la dictature du prolétariat, remplaçons-la plutôt par la solidarité des victimes. Aujourd'hui la voie qui conduit à la solidarité est barrée par un programme de parti. Il s'agit de créer un front populaire de toutes les classes laborieuses menacées par le fascisme.(7)

The Swiss Socialists then chose to turn their backs on the extreme left. Their hostility to the Communists was evident once again at the Zurich Congress of the PSS in June of 1936 where the National Councillor Robert Grimm voiced his opinion of the French Socialists' rapprochement with the PCF: "les socialistes français seront les victimes demain de la tactique de leurs alliés communistes." He was supported by 326 votes to 130.(8) In the same month, the USS published a document entitled, "La vérité sur la tactique des communistes" wherein the Communist Party was accused of intending to sabotage Swiss Socialism and syndicalism.

The extent of anti-Communist sentiment in the PSS Congresses and in the USS is evidence that the solidarity of French Socialists and Communists had not permeated the long-standing biases of Swiss Socialists. This was also true for the Vaudois Socialists who, in May of 1936, rejected collaboration with the Communist Party, all the while admitting the possibility of an anti-capitalist Popular Front "s'étendant au-delà des rangs de la classe ouvrière,"

in other words consisting of bourgeois as well as proletarian elements.(9) Hence, a general tendency toward collaboration with the moderate right existed in official Socialist policy on both the cantonal and national levels.

In his study of La Gazette de Lausanne and the French Popular Front,(10) Michel Steiner concluded that the elections of April-May of 1936 marked a clear point of transition in the opinion of the Liberal newspaper toward events in France. Most notable was La Gazette's change of attitude toward the PCF and the SFIO. It is argued that before the French legislative elections, communism was seen as a threat which came chiefly from the USSR. This attitude has been observed in the newspapers studied in this thesis, as well as in the Swiss government as concerns the Franco-Soviet Pact and diplomatic relations with the USSR. In the opinion of Mr. Steiner, after the elections La Gazette transferred the communist threat to France itself and to the PCF in particular.(11)

Whereas before the elections La Gazette considered the PCF and the SFIO identically menacing to French society, after the elections, the latter was seen as "partisan d'une évolution plutôt que d'une révolution."(12)

A similar trend can be observed in the coverage of the French elections by La Feuille d'avis de Lausanne and La Revue. Both newspapers voiced dismay over the enormous electoral gains of the PCF, accusing the Communists of having misled the public with false demonstrations of patriotism and peaceful political intentions.(13) They compared this situation to that of Germany before Hitler's

rise to power, yet the theme of socialism forming the bed of fascism, one so dear to the bourgeois press before the success of the Popular Front, was to diminish rapidly once the government were in power. On the eve of the elections, La Feuille d'avis predicted a violent takeover by the French Communists as a result of their anticipated electoral victories.(14) Two weeks later, the newspaper could observe: "Espérons que le nouveau régime, et il semble évoluer dans ce sens, sera assez sage, assez modéré, pour ne point transformer de fond en comble la structure politique et économique de la France."(15) Even the hostility of La Revue was somewhat appeased as it began to refer to the Popular Front government as a "necessary experiment" replacing a corrupt and "malpropre" government.(16)

The only newspaper to voice full satisfaction with the results of the elections was Le Droit du peuple. After the completion of the second round of votes, the Socialist Party mouthpiece called upon the Popular Front government to act quickly in carrying out their programme. "Il ne faut pas surtout... que le peuple...soit trahi une quatrième fois," it declared, in reference to the three legislatures of the "Cartel des gauches" (1924, 1928, 1932).(17)

As the character of the future government took shape in the first half of May, it became increasingly evident that the Communists would not participate in the government. This was confirmed on 14 May by Maurice Thorez in a letter to Léon Blum:

> Nous sommes convaincus que les communistes serviront mieux la cause du peuple en soutenant

> loyalement, sans réserves et sans éclipses, le gouvernement à direction socialiste, plutôt qu'en offrant, par leur présence dans le cabinet, le prétexte aux campagnes de panique et d'affolement des ennemis du peuple.(18)

The dissociation of the PCF from the Blum cabinet and Léon Blum's insistence that his government should reflect, as sincerely as possible, the various elements of the Popular Front were important reasons for the more tolerant view of the government adopted by the bourgeois press in Vaud shortly after the elections. "Le ministère Blum n'est banal ni par sa composition et sa structure, ni par les circonstances dans lesquelles il a assumé le pouvoir," stated La Revue with a note of approval: "l'élément radical le plus avancé y est largement représenté."(19)

The outbreak of nationwide strikes in the month of May served to nourish the contempt in which the bourgeois press held the "tactics" of the PCF. The Radical newspaper saw the strikes as an attempt by French Communists and, by extension, of Moscow to "terrorise" the Blum ministry into accepting their future demands.(20) Simultaneously, the strikes made the Popular Front government appear as a stabilising rather than revolutionary force. For example, upon Roger Salengro's call on the PCF and the CGT to help halt the strike movement, La Revue was content to observe that "Entre l'anarchie et l'ordre le ministre futur de l'intérieur choisit l'ordre."(21) It was the PCF which, in the eyes of the Radical newspaper, would hinder the activities of the Blum government. The Communists represented as great a threat to society when acting from outside the government as they would have if acting from

within. This opinion was shared by La Feuille d'avis and Le Grutli. The latter acknowledged the need for some social reform but considered the action of the French strikers an illegal and flagrant violation of private property.(22) As far as the Blum cabinet itself was concerned, Le Grutli predicted that it was destined for failure and a short existence due to its great size and the presence therein of three female ministers. "Or, on sait que dans un ménage où il y a une femme, l'ouvrage se fait facilement, où il y en a deux c'est déjà plus difficile, et où il y en a trois cela ne va plus du tout."(23)

On the fourth of June, the mandate of the 1932 government expired. On the fifth, Léon Blum laid out the major aims of his government in a speech which was radio-broadcast thrice during that day. Claiming that the programme of the government would be the programme of the Popular Front, Blum announced his intention to legislate, immediately, the following reforms: the forty-hour week, collective contracts and paid vacations; three reforms which were not specifically mentioned in the Popular Front programme but which were "les principales réformes réclamées par le monde ouvrier."(24) These reforms would underscore, by force of law, the economic concessions made by the Confédération générale de la Production française to the workers on strike that very same day at the Hôtel Matignon. More important, they gained their real force from the political pressure exerted by the strikers. Hence, the government, on the first day of their mandate, were faced with no other choice but to act as a mouthpiece for the

workers on strike. The impact of the strike movement was not lost on Le Droit du peuple, the only newspaper studied which attempted a distinction between the strikers and the PCF. "{Le gouvernement} peut faire ce qu'il veut," it declared, "...à condition, encore une fois, DE LE FAIRE TOUT DE SUITE. Là est la condition, la seule, mais l'indispensable, de son succès, de sa réussite."(25)

Within the next three months, several social laws were passed by Parliament with considerable ease: the forty-hour week, paid vacations, collective contracts, the revision of decree-laws, the reform of the Bank of France, the raising of the compulsory age of schooling to fourteen years, general amnesty, nationalisation of arms industries, the creation of a Wheat Office and a public works plan among others. These reforms were reported with little comment by the Vaudois press. Where commentary did exist, it usually revolved round the moral implications of the reforms. Hence, the forty-hour week was seen by Le Droit du peuple as an act of justice rather than a means of reducing unemployment. It observed that "en ramenant la semaine de quarante-huit heures on ne ferait que rendre à la classe ouvrière les huit heures qu'on lui a prises seconde par seconde au cours de la décade écoulée" through mechanisation and an increasingly efficient manipulation of human labour.(26) Other newspapers, such as La Feuille d'avis, could only regard with astonishment the passing of a reform, "qui boulverse la structure de la production française," in a single session of the legislative assembly.(27)

The social policies of the Blum government served to

erode the slight optimism inspired in the bourgeois press at the time of its formation. Once it became evident that the government would not be deterred from putting the programme of the Popular Front into effect and that they were willing to use the strike movement to carry out further reforms, such as paid vacations and the forty-hour week, the hostility of the non-Socialist press in Vaud was renewed.

Official state reactions in Switzerland to the forty-hour week were even more unfavourable than those of the bourgeois press. On 16 June, Léon Jouhaux's scheduled speech in Geneva on that subject was forbidden. According to Le Droit du peuple, the pretext for this measure was that the law had been obtained in France under the pressure of "illegal means".(28) La Revue confirmed the motives of the Swiss federal authorities who "tiennent en effet pour inadmissible que des délégués étrangers abusent de l'hospitalité que nous leur accordons pour prêcher chez nous la subversion sociale, les atteintes à la propriété privée et la résistance à l'ordre légal."(29) Any footage of the French strikes were to be omitted from cinema newsreels. Meanwhile, in the National Council, it was decided, by seventy-two votes to forty-one, to await the results of the French experiment before instituting the forty-hour week in Switzerland. It was also at this time that the country's attention was turned to the thorny issue of diplomatic relations with the USSR.(30)

The outbreak of a nationalist rebellion against the Spanish government in July of 1936 only served to accentuate the hostility of the non-Socialist press in Vaud toward the

Popular Front experiment. By the month of August, La Revue had found reason to note:

> Une évolution se dessine dans certains milieux qui votèrent pour le Front populaire {français}. Beaucoup d'électeurs qui avaient cru au danger fasciste en sont revenus et comprennent maintenant que le communisme est un péril bien plus redoutable, à en juger par le vandalisme des extrémistes du Front populaire espagnol.(31)

Le Droit du peuple was not far off the mark in observing:

> La grande presse dite d'information de la France républicaine et de la "Romandie démocratique" n'aime pas - ô paradoxe! - la République espagnole, surtout depuis que le Front populaire est au pouvoir.
>
> Elle profite du coup d'Etat militaro-fasciste pour brosser un tableau sinistre de la situation en Espagne et rendre responsable le Gouvernement du Front populaire des désordres sanglants qui ont éclaté dans la péninsule ibérique.(32)

The situation in Spain seemed to confirm, for the bourgeois press, the theory of "socialism forming the bed of fascism," yet neither this press nor the government seemed displeased by the advances made by the Spanish Nationalists. In fact, long before the end of the conflict, the Swiss government officially recognised Franco as head of state in Spain.(33)

Shortly after the request by the Spanish government for arms deliveries from France, it became clear that the Blum government could not offer the Republicans material support without bringing about a ministerial crisis and perhaps even the resignation of his government. Moreover, the Spanish Civil War seemed to carry the seeds of a future European conflict which the Popular Front had pledged to do its utmost to avoid. On the fifth of August, the Quai d'Orsay proposed an international project of non-intervention in Spain to the principal European powers. If France found itself incapable of openly supporting the Spanish Republic,

its next course of action would be to ensure that Germany and Italy would not lend material aid to the rebels.

The position of the Vaudois press on the non-intervention policy was quite clear. All of the newspapers studied supported non-intervention at the outset - the Socialist mouthpiece out of fear of an escalation of the conflict, the others out of hostility to the Spanish Popular Front. However, when it became evident that very few powers were prepared to respect the agreement, Le Droit du peuple abandoned its former position and called for an end to "l'équivoque de mensonge" which was non-intervention.(34)

The Spanish question, despite its dramatic aspect and the cloud of disillusionment that it cast over the Blum government, was not the main preoccupation of the French public during the summer of 1936. Between April and September, industrial production, which had gradually risen during the previous months, declined considerably and unemployment increased. A six percent rise in retail prices robbed the workers of a portion of the benefits gained from wage increases. Between the months of August and September alone, the loss of gold in the Bank of France rose from 4637 to 7442 million francs. The Blum government's economic policy contained a major flaw. To quote Alfred Sauvy:

> The cardinal plank in their platform was to surmount the crisis by raising wages in order to increase consumer spending. From the outset, therefore, the programme contained an internal contradiction, in that it ignored foreign trade and the foreign exchanges.(35)

On 25 September, the Blum government signed a tripartite monetary agreement with the United States and the United Kingdom which led to a devaluation of the French

franc on the order of twenty-five to thirty-four percent. Hence, the oft-repeated assurance that the Blum government would not resort to devaluation was rendered meaningless. To the Chamber of Deputies, Blum declared:

> Je crois donc, pour ma part, qu'il y a là un événement politique de première importance et que cette initiative, prise par trois grandes puissances, initiative à laquelle ces puissances désirent rallier l'ensemble des Etats, peut et doit éxercer, sur les rapports internationaux, une influence considérable.(36)

The PCF found no other choice but to support the government's decision, despite their outspoken hostility to the devaluation. Meanwhile, the government's majority was reduced in the Chamber due to the defection of a number of Radical deputies. Despite its inevitability and the beneficial consequences which it could have on the economy, the devaluation marked the beginning of the Popular Front's decline. The great reforms with which it had celebrated its first months in power could no longer be continued. The government was now concerned with redressing the ailing economy and winning the confidence of the country's financial circles while ensuring the proper application of their most daring reform, the forty-hour week.

NOTES

1) Cited in: Lefranc, p. 82.

2) Cited in: Jean Lacouture, Léon Blum (Paris: Ed. du Seuil, 1977) p. 247.

3) R: 15 vii 35: 6.

4) FAL: 3 vii 35: 2.

5) LDP: 1 vii 35: 6.

6) Lefranc, p. 129.

7) FAL: 28 i 35: 4.

8) LDP: 8 vi 36: 2.

9) LDP: 4 v 36: 4.

10) Michel Steiner, Le Front populaire, les éléctions législatives françaises et l'opinion de la "Gazette de Lausanne" selon la méthode quantitative, Mém. de lic. (Lausanne, 1970).

11) Ibid., p. 29.

12) Ibid., p. 31.

13) FAL: 28 iv 36: 22 / R: 28 iv 36: 1.

14) FAL: 28 iv 36: 2.

15) FAL: 13 v 36: 2 (underlines added).

16) R: 5 v 36: 6.

17) LDP: 7 v 36: 1.

18) Lacouture, p. 275.

19) R: 9 vi 36: 1.

20) R: 6 vi 36: 1.

21) R: 4 vi 36: 2. This was a paraphrase of Salengro's own speech.

22) G: 12 vi 36: 1.

23) G: 12 vi 36: 1-2.

24) Cited in: Jacques Delperrié de Bayac, Histoire du Front Populaire (Paris: Fayard, 1972), pp. 236-7.

25) LDP: 4 vi 36: 1.

26) LDP: 10 vii 35: 1.

27) FAL: 13 vi 36: 22.

28) LDP: 17 vi 36: 2.

29) R: 17 vi 36: 1.

30) Discussed in Chapter Three.

31) R: 18 viii 36: 1.

32) LDP: 26 vi 36: 4.

33) See: Jaeggi.

34) LDP: 24 vi 37: 1.

35) Alfred Sauvy, "The Economic Crisis of the 1930s in France," Journal of Contemporary History 50 (1979): 27.

36) Cited in: Bayac, p. 312.

CHAPTER FIVE - PRESS ANALYSES: DEPRESSION POLITICS IN FRANCE AND SWITZERLAND; DECLINE OF THE POPULAR FRONT

The economic policy of the Swiss Federal Council during the years 1933-1936 can be said to have had two major objectives: keeping public finances at an equilibrium and maintaining the gold standard. These rather narrow objectives proved disastrously insufficient and even counterproductive in the face of the economic crisis. At best, the state's policy regarding the Depression can be summed up as an "interventionnisme spontané, réalisé de mauvais gré."(1) Understandably, the state's lack of initiative in launching a clear programme aimed at fighting the effects of the economic crisis raised considerable opposition from both right and left. On one hand, the Catholic-Conservatives proposed a plan which would adapt the principles of Italian fascism to Swiss realities, and on the other, the Socialists proposed a policy of heavy state intervention in economic affairs as well as relief programmes for the poor and unemployed. Both parties, however, were firmly opposed to a devaluation of the franc as a means of stimulating industrial production and relieving the country's crippled tourist industry.

In the summer of 1934, the PSS and USS jointly put forward an "initiative de crise" consisting primarily of measures aimed at creating employment and which entailed

massive state spending in the public sector. It favoured strict state control of prices and salaries as well as the establishment of a minimum wage. The bourgeois press in Vaud feared that such state expenditures would lead to bankruptcy and economic collapse. In fact, this attempt to introduce a planned economy to Switzerland caused a panic which led to a thirty-five percent diminuation of the National Bank reserves within six months in 1935.(2) More often than not, the public debate over the PSS-USS initiative was described by this press as an ideological battle, one which put at stake the survival of social order and the democratic system in Switzerland. Instead of offering solid alternatives to the "initiative de crise", newspapers such as La Revue were content to appeal to the conscience and morals of the population as a means of resolving economic problems and rescuing the country from impending "Bolshevism" at the same time.(3)

La Feuille d'avis de Lausanne, "journal d'information" as it were, was even further inclined to view the matter through a purely ideological lens. Not only did it despise the "caractère démogagique et fallacieux" of the initiative but, under the omnipresent banner of federalism, it warned against the concentration of such vast economic powers in the hands of the Federal Parliament.(4)

Le Pays vaudois found itself in a somewhat difficult position, owing to the recent (1919) alliance of the Parti national paysan with the Vaudois Socialist Party in favour of proportional representation. In almost all circumstances studied, the Agrarians of Le Pays vaudois were as eager to

dissociate themselves from the Socialists as from the Radicals. However, at the federal level, they shared with the Socialists the disadvantage of non-representation in the Federal Council and, at the cantonal level, non-representation in the Grand Council which made them ready allies on issues of common interest. In this case, Le Pays vaudois argued that the Socialist Party had followed the PNP in the struggle for proportional representation and not the reverse. "Nous n'avons pas à les suivre {les Socialistes} à notre tour aujourd'hui, car la R.P. était une affaire de justice pour tous, tandis que l'initiative syndicale paraît à nos yeux un bloc enfariné de pure politique."(5) Despite its hostility to the "initiative de crise", Le Pays vaudois spoke loudly against the simplistic and deceiving portrayal of the left, or any group with a programme of social reform, in the bourgeois press:

> En apposant l'estampille de Moscou à un texte soumis aux représentants de tous les partis et les principaux groupements professionels, la plupart des journaux adressent une injure aux masses besogneuses qui défendent leurs foyers contre la misère et la detresse envahissantes. L'on a reproché si souvent - et bien à tort - au parti national paysan d'attiser la lutte des classes. Que dire alors de la presse bourgeoise, s'acharnant à décerner aux partisans de l'initiative la marque rouge des révolutionnaires?(6)

Le Grutli did not hesitate to echo the opinion of La Revue and La Feuille d'avis in its coverage. In the eyes of this newspaper, acceptance of the initiative would lead to the loss of individual and cantonal liberties, to "la dictature des Chambres fédérales", and to the suppression of private property as part of the "atrocités du bolchévisme" which it embodied.(7)

Hence, a majority of the Vaudois press persisted in condemning the principles of the proposed reforms. Invariably, this press saw in the initiative the sinister hand of Moscow and a conspiracy to upset the entire social, economic and political order of Switzerland. Only rarely did they provide practical appraisals of the consequences of the proposed reforms, and even then the bourgeois newspapers were content merely to warn of state bankruptcy or the unravelling of federalism. With such overwhelming and near-hysterical resistance from the parties of the right and centre as well as from the major business corporations, it is hardly surprising that the initiative was rejected by a rather large margin in June of 1935. Nevertheless, Le Droit du peuple could still appreciate that the "No" side in Vaud had won by "only" 32,072 votes. "Nous constatons avec plaisir," it declared, "que les temps sont heureusement révolus des majorités de 40 et 50,000 voix."(8) It can be said, to the Socialists' credit, that the 29,920 votes cast in Vaud in favour of the initiative were considerably superior to the 19,500 votes which the Vaudois Socialist Party had received in the previous cantonal elections, an indication that discontent with the existing state policy was relativley widespread and that the initiative was not purely a political manoeuver on the part of the Socialists as claimed by much of the opposing press.

The devaluation of the Swiss franc in September of 1936 was the most dramatic and important gesture in adapting state policy to a steadily deteriorating international economy. It was all the more shocking to the press and

public because it came only hours after an official assurance by the Federal Council that the measure was not being considered. However, after a secret meeting which followed the French devaluation, it was decided that Switzerland could no longer continue to maintain the gold standard. This did not indicate a turnabout in the attitude of the Federal Council; "ce ne fut qu'une mesure d'adaption aux événements et nullement un moyen de lancer une nouvelle politique économique."(9)

The general unpreparedness of the Vaudois press for such an event was evident in all of the newspapers studied. La Revue's commentaries were clearly of the opinion that the French government were solely to blame for the devaluation of the Swiss franc. Under the title, "Le franc français entraîne le franc suisse," La Revue sharply criticised the Blum government for the imprudent "aventure économique et politique" in which they were engaged. The strongest attacks were reserved for those in Switzerland which La Revue associated with the Popular Front ethic, that is the extreme left and the Socialists:

> On prévoit déjà que l'extrême-gauche attaquera vigoureusement le Conseil fédéral qui a fait campagne contre l'initiative de crise en invoquant la nécessité de maintenir le franc. Sur ce point le gouvernement pourra répondre que c'est précisément une politique analogue à celle que voulait instaurer l'initiative de crise qui a amené le gouvernement français à abandonner l'étalon-or.(10)

In addition, La Revue was violently critical of the PSS and the USS for suggesting ways of reducing such undesirable effects of the devaluation as inflation and profiteering, accusing the left once again of political manoeuvering. It even charged them with maintaining foreign political

connexions, a serious accusation given the existing laws in Switzerland. In effect, La Revue saw nothing less in the actions of the PSS, USS and the Communist Party than an attempt to overthrow the Swiss government and replace them with a Popular Front government, or at least to see the inclusion of two representatives of "l'extrême-gauche" in the Federal Council - hardly equal alternatives.(11)

In its continued criticism of the Socialists, La Revue demonstrated its unwillingness to comprehend or recognise the changes which had taken place in PSS policy between 1934 and 1936. It refused to accept Swiss socialism as an established and powerful force which had long renounced its original revolutionary stance vis-à-vis Swiss democratic institutions. The newspaper's insistence that the Blum government were directly and solely responsible for Switzerland's monetary difficulties clashed absurdly with the post-devaluation speech of the President of the Confederation, fully reproduced in its very own pages. Here, the President acknowledged that the Swiss devaluation had not been so much a consequence of the French devaluation than an inevitable measure "en raison de la situation internationale et des conditions résultant en Suisse de la politique de déflation."(12) The very same conclusion was voiced at the PSS Congress in Zurich (13) and shared by the Swiss financial circles.

La Feuille d'avis de Lausanne had already criticised the French Radical Paul Reynaud's support for a devaluation of the French franc in June of 1936.(14) However, after the fact, it could only concede that Switzerland no longer could

afford to isolate itself by adamantly maintaining the gold standard: "Il est périlleux d'avoir raison contre tout le monde."(15) It praised the Swiss population for the calm resignation with which they received the disturbing news, contrasting their demonstration of dignity to the "discours aussi inutils que longs et parfois humiliants tant ils révélaient de candide ignorance ou de préoccupations électorales!" which were voiced in the National Council during the debates which followed the devaluation.(16)

Le Grutli, even though it was far from supporting the policies of the Blum government, did not turn a blind eye to the political responsibility of "le grand capitalisme international" for the devaluation of the French franc.(17) Yet, it was Le Pays vaudois which made some of the strongest protests. Under the heading: "LES PAYSANS, victimes de la dévaluation, veulent se défendre," it declared:

> Les paysans comprennent, aujourd'hui, ce qu'ils prévoyaient déjà au lendemain de la dévaluation, à savoir que cette dernière atteint surtout les petits gens...,tout en enrichissant d'autres, précisément de ceux qui contestent le droit de s'organiser, alors qu'ils admettent...le cartel des banques.(18)

As always, Le Pays vaudois' position was dictated by the interests of a particular social category whose sparse political influence bore little correlation to its economic importance in Vaud during that period.

The greatest dilemma belonged to Le Droit du peuple which had consistently attacked both deflation and the prospect of devaluation in France and Switzerland. It had vociferously supported the policies of the Blum government and applauded their refusal, up to that point, to devalue

the franc in order to overcome the effects of the massive outflow of gold from the country. Le Droit du peuple refrained, nevertheless, from criticising the French Popular Front on that score, observing that the devaluation was an effort on the part of three great powers to reestablish worldwide economic equilibrium, "donc d'une expérience faite sur une echelle assez vaste pour qu'on puisse espérer qu'elle donnera de bons résultats."(19) On the other hand, the Federal Council's devaluation of the Swiss franc was denounced, quite unrealistically, as "l'escroquerie nationale" which the government, "par la surestimation qu'il a de son intelligence {et} par la méconnaissance de l'usure des classes dirigeantes," perpetuated in order to increase their own revenues while depreciating those of the general population.(20) Here, once again, Le Droit du peuple had chosen to deviate from the official position of the PSS.

The overwhelming attention which the devaluation received from the Vaudois press was due to the immediate and dramatic, although often exaggerated, economic effect which the public and press expected it to have on the country. This attention far surpassed that which was given to the signing of the "paix du travail" in July of 1937, which was to have much greater repercussions on Swiss economic and political life than the devaluation. The "paix du travail" was primarily an outcome of the Federal Council's efforts to curb political dissent among workers and trade unions, yet most newspapers studied considered it to be a simple labour contract. It was the right more than the left which perceived the agreement as an act of some historical

significance.

La Revue welcomed the "paix du travail" with the assertion: "Une fois de plus, la Suisse montre l'exemple," in a first-page article.(21) La Feuille d'avis' coverage was comparativley sparse, being limited to a straightforward report of the signing of the pact placed on an obscure page of the newspaper.

For Le Grutli, the agreement "semblait sonner le glas de la lutte des classes." Its coverage consisted mainly of a response to the Communists' denunciation of the pact. Le Grutli used the occasion to denounce the domination of the PSS, which had opposed the agreement in principle, by the left-wing of the party:

> Qu'on nous dise...en quoi notre socialisme a changé, en quoi il a "évolué", en quoi il est devenu digne d'assumer les responsabilités nationales et de collaborer au gouvernement fédéral (22)

Le Droit du peuple was extremely taciturn on the subject of the "paix du travail". At a time when so-called emergency government decrees were relatively common, an experimental contract between employers and workers which would at least keep the state's hand out of labour relations, could have seemed a sane, if temporary, measure. On the whole, the "paix du travail" was treated with a certain degree of misunderstanding by the Vaudois press, if only because its future significance could not have been entirely forseen by even those who partook of its draughting. It is noteworthy that the Vaudois press did not, as was their inclination on most major issues of a political nature, emphasise the ideologically controversial

aspect of the "paix du travail" but chose to treat it essentially as an administrative reform which would facilitate the day-to-day government of the country.

Meanwhile in France, between September of 1936 and February of 1937, industrial production had increased at a steady rate. The devaluation had had a positive, although limited, effect on the economy. However, this state of affairs would be temporary. It was in February of 1937, that the forty-hour week was applied. Industrial production went into immediate decline while the outflow of gold reached record levels. The state treasury was almost empty. On 13 February, Léon Blum announced his decision to call for a "pause" in the passing of reforms contained in the Popular Front programme. This second series of reforms would have included the creation of a national unemployment fund, insurance against agricultural calamities, the "aménagement" of agriculturalists' debts and a pension plan for aged urban and rural workers. According to Blum, the passing of these reforms would have to await better economic times:

> L'économie privée se trouve dans un état de convalescence encore fragile parce que la coincidence de grandes réformes sociales introduites en peu de mois avec l'alignement monétaire l'a placé dans des conditions toutes nouvelles dont l'équilibre n'est pas encore consolidé.(23)

Throughout the remainder of February and the month of March, Blum attempted to appease the financial communities and the political right. The free exchange of gold, which had been restricted after the devaluation, was reestablished and a committee of experts on financial matters were created, consisting of several known opponents of the

Popular Front. In the eyes of many critics, the "pause" indicated the betrayal of the spirit and programme of the Popular Front, a selling out, as it were, to capitalism. One of these critics was Le Droit du peuple which, already disillusioned by the non-intervention pact, was even further distressed by this new turn in Blum's policy:

> Au cours de ces deux derniers mois le gouvernement Blum a montré une indulgence excessive à l'égard des ennemis de la démocratie et de la paix. Ceux-ci l'interprètent comme un signe de faiblesse. La politique de la "pause" leur laissa croire que les ministres du Front Populaire étaient fatigués de lutter. Ils se promirent d'en tirer avantage...
>
> Avec des gens de cette mentalité aucune "pause" n'est possible.
>
> Il est absolumment nécessaire de changer d'orientation et de reprendre la ligne tracée dans le programme du Front Populaire.(24)

Here, the bourgeois press joined the Socialist newspaper in considering the new orientation of the government's policy a sign of weakness and perhaps defeat of the Popular Front experiment. "Le gouvernement du Front populaire apparaît déjà fourbu avant d'avoir beaucoup progressé sur le chemin des réformes sociales," declared La Feuille d'avis: "Déjà, M. Blum essouflé demande la 'pause'."(25)

On 16 March, circumstances supplied more fuel to the critics of the Popular Front. A scheduled gathering of members of the Parti social français (PSF), which had replaced the Croix-de-Feu upon the latter's dissolution, prompted a counter-demonstration called for by the local Communist leader and the Socialist mayor of Clichy. A considerable police presence was meant to prevent any direct clash between the two mutually hostile groups. After most of the PSF members had already left the meeting, a fight broke out between the counter-demonstrators and the police,

leaving five dead and over two hundred wounded, including André Blumel, head of the Blum cabinet. The incident was sufficiently disturbing to cause Blum to consider resignation. "Il m'est impossible d'admettre," he said, "que, alors que je suis chef responsable du gouvernement, des gardes mobiles ont fait couler le sang des ouvriers."(26) He was quickly dissuaded by his friends.

For La Revue, the Blum government were the principal victims of the Clichy incident. This was obvious to most observers. Yet, the main culprits, in the view of this newspaper, remained the PCF and the CGT:

> M. Blum célébrait l'autre jour les vertus de son gouvernement, à la fois social et libéral. La question est de savoir si sa fameuse "pause" se prolongera ou si les coups de fouets socialo-communistes le ramèneront à ses précédents errements.(27)

La Feuille d'avis was in full agreement:

> Les manifestants de Clichy croyaient peut-être écraser le fascisme en tirant sur les gardes mobiles...Ils visaient le colonel de la Rocque, chef des Croix-de-feu. Ils ont atteint le ministère Blum.(28)

As for Le Grutli, it concluded: "Voila la beauté du régime sous l'égide de la faucille des bras croisés et du marteau des non-travailleurs!"(29)

Hence, the "pause" had little effect in dissociating the Popular Front from the underhanded manipulation of the PCF and the CGT in the eyes of these newspapers. Léon Blum remained as much the victim of these organisations as he had been from the first days of his government.

The Clichy incident evidently was not beneficial to the Blum government's efforts to gain the confidence of French businessmen. Moreover, by the month of May, the government

were again under pressure from different elements of the SFIO, PCF and CGT to proceed with the second phase of reforms. The difficulties which lay in the path of such a course seemed overwhelming to Léon Blum. For perhaps the first time since his accession to power, he was forced to reconsider publicly his faith in the ability of the government to carry out the programme of the Popular Front within the confines of parliamentary legality and the rules of capitalist society. On 6 June, at Luna Park, he made the following statement before the SFIO members:

> Si nous échouions, ce n'est pas, je crois, sur l'insuffisance de notre personne que l'on pourrait rejeter la responsabilité. On serait alors obligé de se demander - et c'est une réflexion bien grave - s'il n'y a pas un vice plus profond, un vice congénital, si ce que nous avons cru possible et que nous continuons à croire possible ne l'est pas, s'il n'est vraiment pas possible, à l'intérieur du cadre légal, à l'aide des institutions démocratiques, par une coalition de partis sans excéder un programme commun qui respecte les principes de la société actuelle, de procurer aux masses populaires de ce pays, les réformes de progrès et de justice qu'elles attendent.(30)

Meanwhile, the outflow of gold from the Bank reserves continued at an accelerated rate. In the month of June alone, two hundred tons of gold were lost. On 15 June, the government demanded temporary full powers from the legislative Chambers in financial matters. They announced the future implementation of the following measures: increased taxes on income, tobacco and postal and railway services, the raising of the existing ceiling on state loans from the Bank of France, finally, strict controls on foreign exchange and "speculative" activities. This was another turnabout in Blum's economic policy which had until then avoided excessive monetary controls and full powers in

financial matters.

The plans for increased taxes on tobacco and on postal and railway services aroused a certain consternation in the PCF. Nevertheless, the government were supported by 346 voices to 247 in the Chamber of Deputies. However, by 188 voices to 72, the Senate chose to refuse full powers to the government on 19 June. Blum was faced with several alternatives: to dissolve Parliament and call for new elections, to continue despite the hostility of the Senate, to force the Senate's hand with the aid of popular demonstrations (a course of action recommended by the "revolutionaries" in the SFIO and rejected categorically by Blum) or to resign and hand over the task of government to the Radicals. It was this latter course which Blum chose to follow on 22 June 1937. The Popular Front would survive but under a Radical cabinet led by Camille Chautemps.

The resignation of the Blum government raised a lively debate in the Vaudois press, one that centered on the Senate's very right to existence. It was also the occasion for a somewhat hasty evaluation of the government's performance over the past year.

The most virulent attacks on the French Senate came from Le Droit du peuple. Besides Léon Nicole's dismissal of the Senate as the defender of "des puissances d'argent qui, parfois, ont la prudence d'utiliser même la démocratie en vue du maintien de leurs privilèges," (31) appeared the following statement under the heading, "La démission du ministère n'est pas une solution":

> Le ministère Blum, se heurtant à la mauvaise foi des sénateurs, a démissioné. En vérité, ce

> n'était pas une solution. L'opposition des vieux messieurs du Luxembourg n'était pas une raison suffisante pour abandonner le mandat confié au gouvernement par la majorité de la nation...
>
> Nul ne doute qu'avant peu de temps, l'on ne soit amené, par la force même des choses, à modifier le statut du Sénat.(32)

The bourgeois newspapers could only regard with cynicism the fall of a government to which they had remained hostile. While La Revue reminded its readers of the "extreme-left's" refusal, upon the death of Gaston Doumergue, to allow for a partial limiting of the Senate's powers ("Se souviendra-t-on de ce beau scrupule chez les amis de M. Blum?") (33), La Feuille d'avis observed:

> M. Léon Blum se plaisait à répéter que "son gouvernement n'était pas un gouvernement comme les autres."
>
> Ce qui différenciait le cabinet Blum de ses prédécesseurs, c'était la dépendance où il s'était laissé confiner à l'égard des mouvements de la rue, de la C.G.T., bref, de ce que l'on résumait d'un mot "le ministère des masses".
>
> Toute action gouvernementale réclamaient deux approbations, celle de la foule et celle des Chambres.

Much of the criticism in the Vaudois newspapers was directed aginst Léon Blum himself. The anti-semetic emotions aroused in France by the accession of Blum to power spilled over into the commentaries of the non-Socialist press in Vaud. These newspapers were also apt to criticise a certain intellectualism in the attitude of Léon Blum, which they found unsuited to the task of government. Hence, La Feuille d'avis de Lausanne observed that "comme tant de ses coréligionnaires, il {Blum} se plait à dissocier les idées, à soutenir avec des trésors d'ingéniosité les thèses les plus contradictoires," (34) while his declarations on collective security and disarmament were rejected as "des

incantations destinées à créeer des miracles."(35)

Ultimately, the fall of the Blum government after only a year in power was no surprise to La Feuille d'avis, La Revue and Le Grutli. Léeon Blum's character, his political persuasions and, primarily, the Communists' role in the Popular Front especially when discluded from the cabinet were, in the view of this press, among the chief reasons for the Popular Front's "failure". "Une avalanche d'impôts," "le trésor public épuisé," these were the sole results worth mentioning, in the eyes of this press, of over a year of Popular Front government in France.

NOTES

1) Jean-Claude Favez, Beatrix Mesmer, Romano Broggini, gen. eds., Nouvelle histoire de la Suisse et des Suisses (Lausanne: Payot, 1983), 3 volumes, 3:41.

2) Ruffieux, p. 285.

3) R: 3 vi 35: 1.

4) FAL: 15 v 35: 16.

5) PV: 20 vii 34: 1.

6) PV: 7 vi 35: 1.

7) G: 7 v 35: 1.

8) LDP: 3 vi 35: 3.

9) Favez, Mesmer, Broggini, 3:142.

10) R: 28 ix 36: 2.

11) R: 30 ix 36: 6.

12) R: 28 ix 36: 2 (underlines added).

13) LDP: 28 ix 36: 6.

14) FAL: 20 vi 36: 22.

15) FAL: 28 ix 36: 18.

16) FAL: 30 ix 36: 18.

17) G: 2 x 36: 1.

18) PV: 19 iii 37: 2.

19) LDP: 1 x 36: 1.

20) LDP: 28 ix 36: 4.

21) R: vii 37: 1.

22) G: 13 viii 37: 1.

23) Cited in: Bayac, p. 361.

24) LDP: 19 vi 37: 1-2.

25) FAL: 18 iii 37: 18.

26) Cited in: Lacouture, p. 408.

27) R: 20 iii 37: 1.

28) FAL: 18 iii 37: 18.

29) G: 19 iii 37: 1.

30) Cited in: Bayac, pp. 383-4.

31) LDP: 21 vi 37: 1.

32) LDP: 24 vi 37: 1.

33) R: 22 vi 37: 1.

34) FAL: 12 v 36: 22.

35) FAL: 24 vi 36: 18.

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

A statistical analysis was made of each of the daily newspapers studied in order to define more clearly their main preoccupations. The surface area occupied by articles with specific themes was measured over a given period of time in each newspaper. In this way, the importance accorded to the French Popular Front can be defined relative to other issues of the time.

Hence, the area covered by all articles concerning France during the two months of June of 1936 and March of 1937 were determined both in proportion to the total surface area of the newspapers and in absolute values. The two months coincided with the beginning of the Blum government's mandate and with their "decline" after the "pause" and the Clichy incident. The same kind of analysis was made for articles referring to Swiss national issues and to specifically Vaudois (and Lausannois) as well as to international issues (excluding France since this was done separately) during June of 1936. For the month of March 1937, the lengths of articles concerning France were compared to those concerning Spain. The results were as follows:

SUBJECT	REVUE	FEUILLE	DROIT	
All internat'l excl. France	10.79%	3.61%	13.85%	J
France	5.42%	3.23%	7.97%	U
All Swiss excl. Vaud & Lausanne	17.55%	6.40%	17.10%	N
Vaud & Lausanne	12.40%	8.54%	20.23%	E '36
France	2.72%	1.84%	3.83%	M A R C
Spain	2.75%	1.12%	15.11%	H '37

The figures were deduced by the following formula:

$$\frac{\text{Average area occupied by articles (cm2)}}{\text{Average surface area of newspaper (cm2)}} \times 100 = \text{Percentage of surface area occupied by articles}$$

The area occupied by articles in absolute values (cm2) are given in the next table:

SUBJECT	REVUE	FEUILLE	DROIT	
All internat'l excl. France	24,262	22,133	27,036	J
France	10,531	19,793	15,567	U
All Swiss excl. Vaud & Lausanne	40,944	38,778	33,462	N
Vaud & Lausanne	26,618	55,073	40,847	E '36
France	5,065	12,133	7,022	M A R C
Spain	5,937	6,975	27,869	H '37

From these tables, it can be inferred that in the cases of all three newspapers, the average percentage of area devoted to local and Swiss issues was sensibly greater than that devoted to French and other international news combined. Yet, the importance of France in the context of international news during the month of June of 1936 cannot be ignored. In the cases of La Revue and Le Droit du peuple, articles on France occupied approximately half the area occupied by all other international coverage and in the case of La Feuille d'avis de Lausanne, the two figures were roughly equal. It is noteworthy that, in the cases of all three newspapers, French coverage was nearly halved between June of 1936 and March of 1937. The formation of the Blum government and the outbreak of strikes can be attributed to the great attention given to France in the former month. In March of 1937, the only newspaper to pay more attention to French events than to Spanish ones (at the height of the Civil War) was La Feuille d'avis. La Revue devoted equal space to both while Le Droit du peuple accorded a

significantly superior portion of its articles to Spain than to France. This can be interpreted as an additional sign of disillusionment with the Blum government's performance on the part of the Socialist newspaper.

On the whole, it can be said that, although the three dailies studied generally devoted a generous portion of their news coverage to France, this coverage fluctuated considerably between June of 1936 and March of 1937. By the latter date, stagnation in the Popular Front experiment and the escalation of the war in Spain served to reduce the immediacy of French events. Yet, a complete appreciation of the press' attitude toward the Popular Front and events in Switzerland in the period studied requires more than a quantitative approach. The interpretation of the contents of the articles is considered vital to the purpose of this thesis.

CONCLUSION

The bulk of the analyses contained in this thesis bear witness to a clear polarisation of opinion in the Vaudois press between 1934 and 1937 which dressed the Socialist newspaper, Le Droit du peuple, against all the others studied on the vast majority of issues. This polarisation is evidence against the impression of diversity gathered from a superficial appraisal of the Vaudois press. Not only was the Socialist-versus- bourgeois conflict applicable to the politically- charged question of the Popular Front but also to events and issues of a national character in Switzerland. Hence, on such subjects as the public order law of 1934, the "initiative de crise" of 1935 and national defense, the conflict of opinion between the mouthpiece of the Vaudois Socialist Party and the other newspapers was clear-cut. The political spectrum offered by the plurality of newspapers did not translate into a diversity of opinion.

Since most of these newspapers had close ties with political parties, their positions on national or cantonal issues tended to reflect the dynamics of party politics in Vaud at the time. Hence the Socialist and Radical newspapers were irreconciliable rivals, whereas the Agrarians' mouthpiece demonstrated a certain reserve in its attacks upon the Socialist Party with which the PNP was sometimes forced to ally itself for electoral or political purposes.

In their treatment of the French Popular Front and the first Blum government, the positions of the Vaudois newspapers studied were fairly consistent. Le Droit du

peuple saw the Popular Front as an effective and essential form of resistance to the spread of fascism in France as well as a vehicle for the passing of some long-overdue reforms. It was seen as an experiment made necessary and possible by existing political and economic circumstances rather than a logical step toward social revolution. The idea of an organic unity of the French left was only temporarily considered by Le Droit du peuple and abandoned once the principal aims of the leaders of the Popular Front were disclosed.

For the Socialist newspaper, the chief preoccupations of the time were the economic crisis and the rise of fascism. The Swiss government's lack of vision in launching an effective economic policy and ameliorating the conditions of the poor and unemployed encouraged the PSS and USS to propose their own economic plan in the form of an "initiative de crise". Moreover, they modified their party programme in order to minimise conflict with the parties to their right. For the first time, the PSS gave official support to Swiss democracy and suppressed its doctrine of class struggle. The fascist threat was felt strongly enough for the majority of the Socialist representatives in the National Council to vote in favour of the military credits in 1936. The parallels with the situation in France are evident: the willingness of the left to form a common front against fascism with the parties of the centre-left and centre and their espousal of parliamentary democracy. One difference stood out sharply: the PSS and the cantonal Parties rejected all collaboration with Swiss Communists,

whereas in France, the Communist alliance was indispensable to the cause of the Popular Front.

Le Droit du peuple, for its part, chose to deviate from the policies of the PSS' Central Committee on at least three points between 1934 and 1937: it remained hostile to national defense, it applauded the demonstration of solidarity between Lausannois Socialists and Communists on the eve of the first of August celebrations in 1936 and it refused to acknowledge the necessity of the devaluation of the Swiss franc in that same year. At a time when the state's policies were becoming increasingly repressive for the Swiss left, Le Droit du peuple was inclined to view the PSS' leaning toward the right as a sign of resignation in the face of circumstances. Resistance to fascism was not to be conditional on the abandonment of Socialist doctrine.

For the bourgeois newspapers, the Popular Front was essentially a revolutionary, as opposed to reformist, movement. It was considered to be the perfect formula either for social disorder and civil war or fascist takeover. The most distressing aspects of the Popular Front for the bourgeois press in Vaud were its association with the PCF and the approval which it received from Moscow. Hence, it was seen both as a revolutionary movement guided by French Communists and a badly-disguised form of Soviet interventionism.

The fear of communism being exported by Moscow was particularly evident in the bourgeois press' coverage of the Franco-Soviet Pact and the subject of Swiss diplomatic relations with the USSR. In contrast, the idea of a fascist

menace in France was reduced to little more than a piece of folklore propogated by the French left for the purpose of increasing their own electoral chances. For the non-Socialist press in Vaud, the real menace to society came not so much from the right or Nazi Germany as from the left or the USSR. Communism was without a doubt considered a greater danger to democracy than fascism.

It was this sentiment which allowed for a slight shift in opinion on the part of La Feuille d'avis de Lausanne and La Revue after the French legislative elections when it appeared that the future Blum government might be willing to resist the pressure from the workers on strike to go beyond the stated programme of the Popular Front. The passing of the first reforms served to dissolve this shortlived optimism.

On the whole, the Vaudois press' interest in the Popular Front in France was considerable, as seen in the amount of space devoted to the subject and the passion with which it was covered. The evident Vaudois nationalism of all but one of the newspapers played a large role in this particularly acute interest in events in France. It was the least nationalist of the newspapers, Le Droit du peuple which reduced its French coverage by the widest margin between June of 1936 and March of 1937 for coverage of the Spanish Civil War. One of the prominent aspects of the Vaudois press' coverage of events was that they were often seen from an ideological viewpoint, that is to say that they were transformed into questions of right and wrong. The situation in France - troubling as it was for a large

portion of the press - led these newspapers to differentiate their canton from that country rather than to draw parallels. The urgent nature of the national defense issue or the economic crisis served to bring the bourgeois press in line with the views of the Federal Council and to set aside their cantonal or cultural particularisms. Another perhaps paradoxical aspect was that French events were frequently seen from a French perspective. Commentaries by Swiss observers were certainly present but the longest and most detailed reports tended to come from French reporters. This fact alone made indispensible to a fair understanding of the biases of the Vaudois press, the analysis of their coverage of national and cantonal news.

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