Politics of Inclusion: Switzerland

Introduction by
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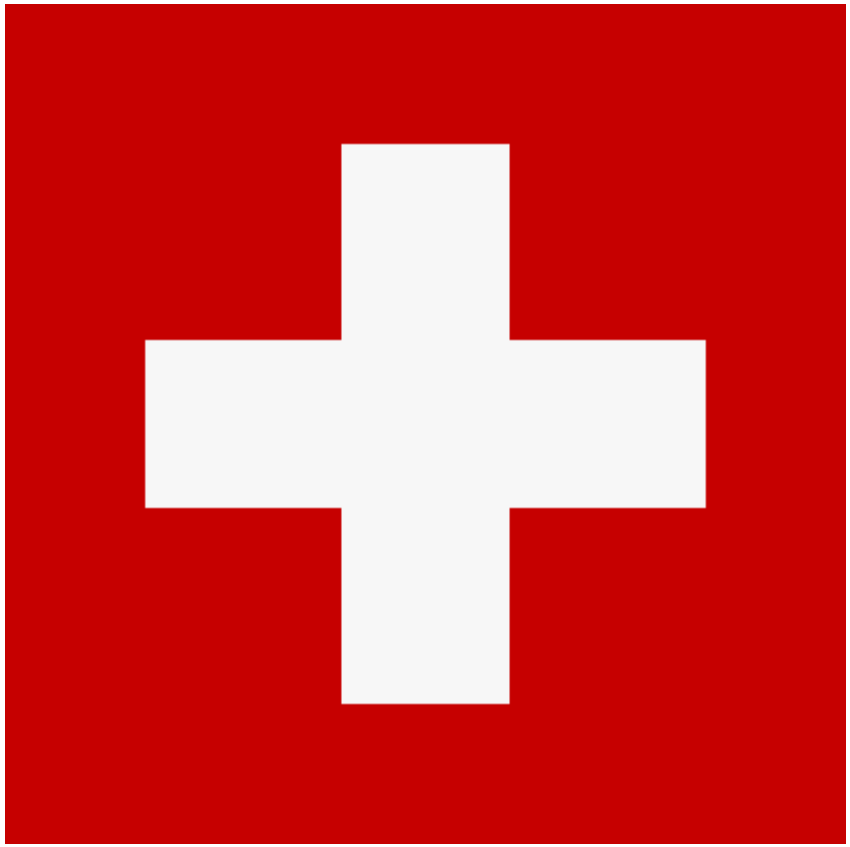
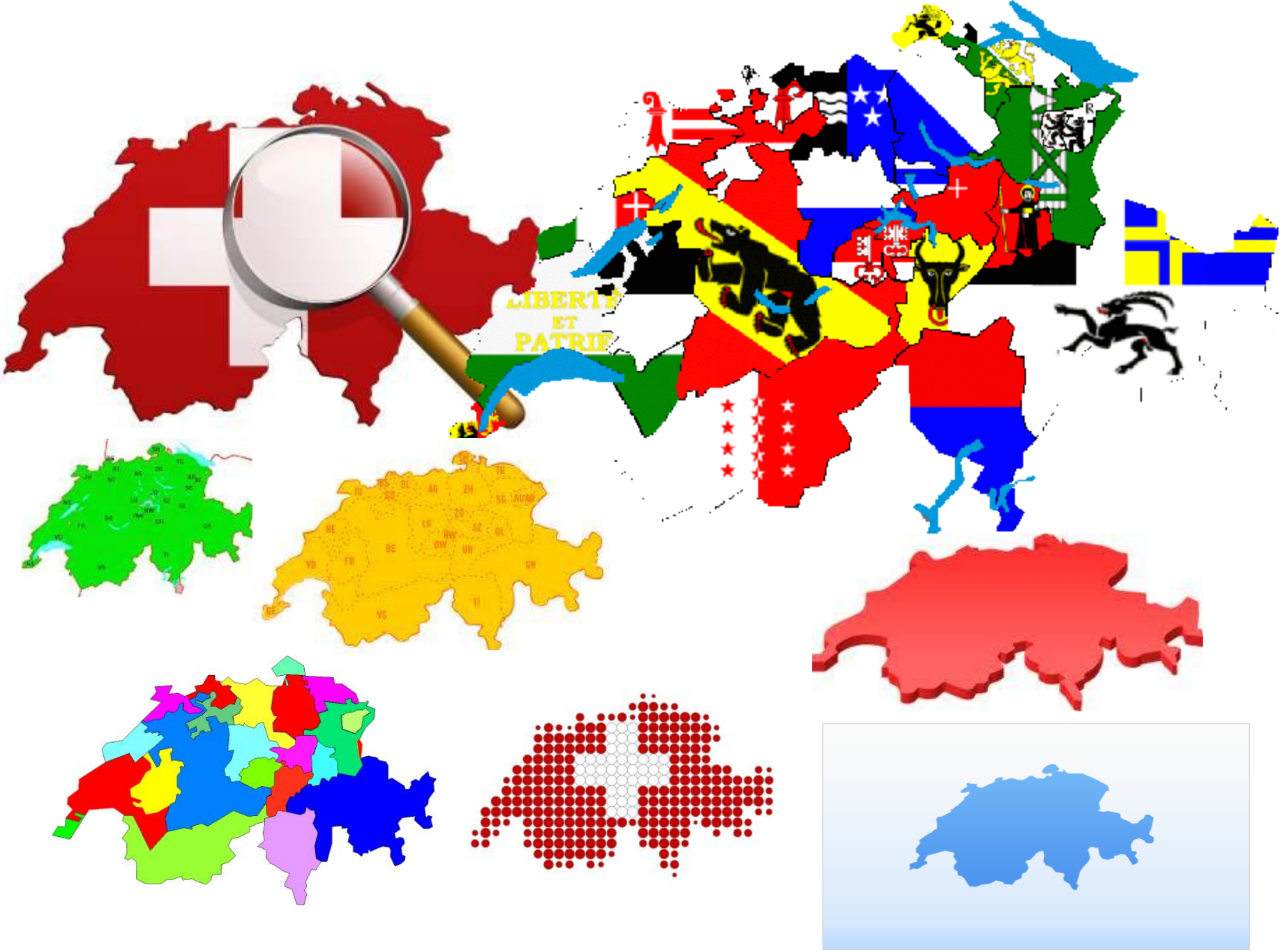
Switzerland



The Swiss Sight

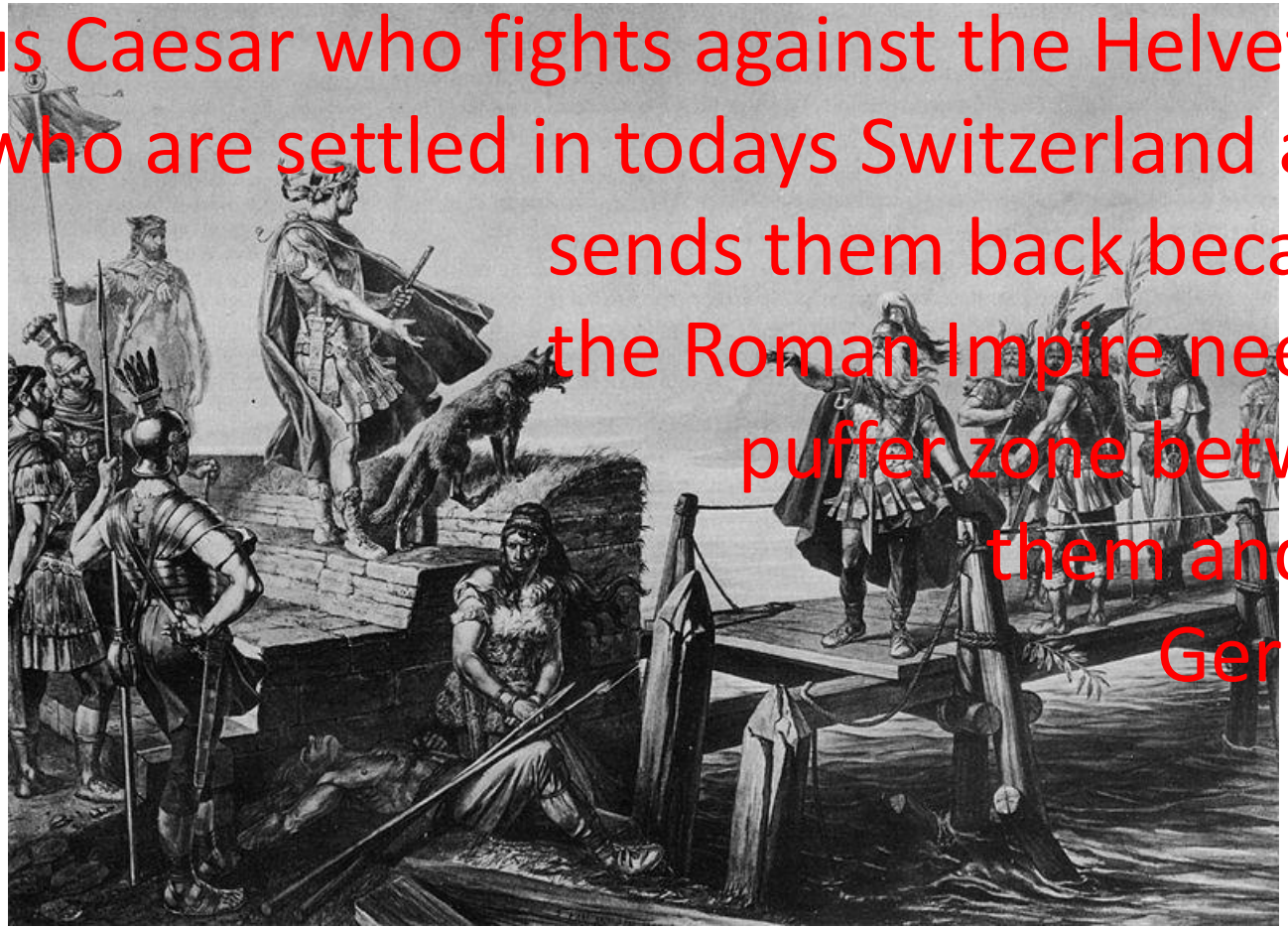
The Swiss People see the world through their very own glasses! We think that we are the best – which is of course correct, but one shouldn´t say that ☺

See also: http://history-switzerland.geschichte-schweiz.ch/index.html


LIBERTÉ
ET
PATRIE

Switzerland – a country with many cantonal boarders, different people, languages, understanding of way of life: The Swiss German, who is hard working; The Swiss French speaking, who knows how to enjoy life; The Swiss Italian, who is the best lover… and still – they are all SWISS.

Divico and Julius Caesar after the Battle of Bibracte (58 BC)



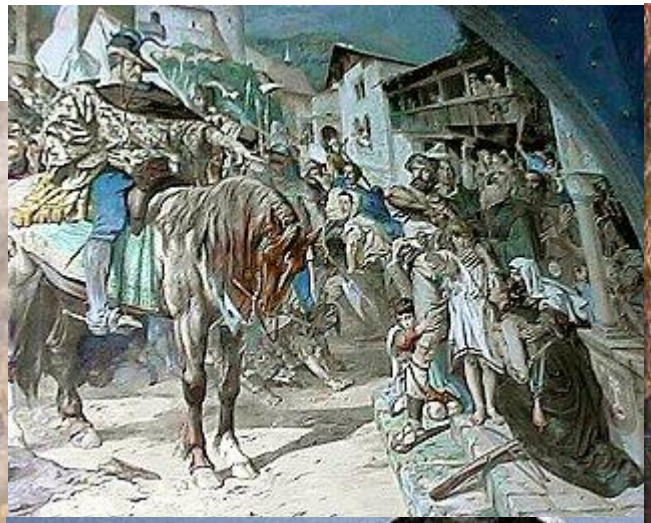
Julius Caesar who fights against the Helvetians who are settled in todays Switzerland and sends them back because the Roman Impire needs a puffer zone between them and the German.

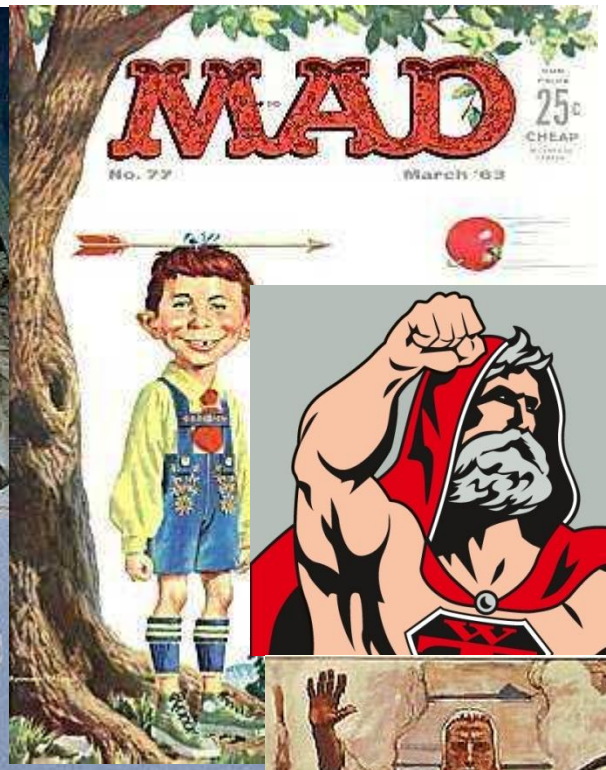
The Beginning of Switzerland 1291

Confoederatio Helvetica

The official *date of birth* of the Old Swiss Confederation is August, 1st 1291. This date can be found on a document of alliance whose age of more than 700 years has been confirmed by radionuclear (C^{14}) analysis recently. It all began with a new transalpine trading route and with three small valleys in central Switzerland that had remained outside the focus of the dukes and kings for a long time. Serious historians will always **separate the facts of history** from the **popular legends** concerning the origins of the old Swiss confederation.

Wilhelm Tell





The Legend of William Tell

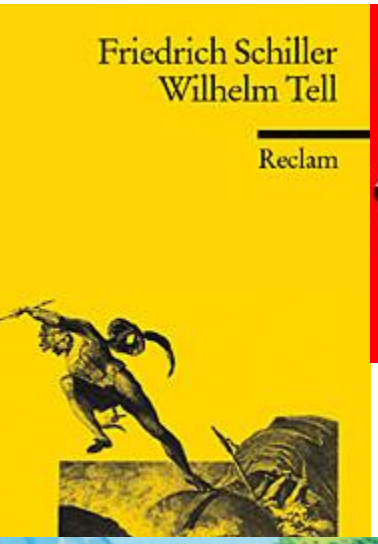
No other Swiss person is so widely known as **Wilhelm (William) Tell**, the **Swiss National Hero of Liberty** - thanks to the German poet *Friedrich von Schiller* and his drama *Wilhelm Tell*. *William Tell's* picture can be seen on the back of coins worth 5 Swiss Francs (largest coin in Switzerland) - but there is reasonable doubt whether *Wilhelm Tell* ever has lived at all. However, the very legend of *William Tell* itself did have an enormous influence on the history of Switzerland and of other countries.

http://history-switzerland.geschichte-schweiz.ch/william-tell-switzerland-hero.html

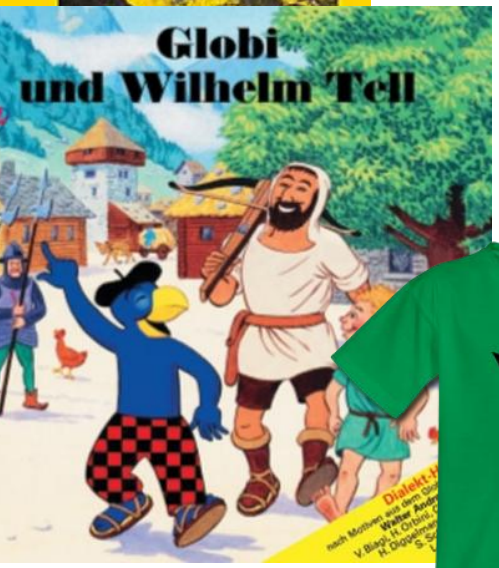
The drama "Wilhelm Tell" by Friedrich von Schiller

The classical drama *Wilhelm Tell* by the well-known German poet *Friedrich von Schiller*, put on the stage for the first time in 1804 at Weimar (home of Goethe and Schiller), is doubtless the most elaborate and at the same time most popular version of the legend of William Tell. Schiller's drama is put on stage every year in Interlaken (www.tellspiele.ch) and even in New Glarus, Wisconsin,U.S.A. (www.wilhelmtell.org). Friedrich von Schiller was always very interested in the subject of liberty. His drama played an important role for the German moral in the wars against Napoleon. http://history-switzerland.geschichte-schweiz.ch/william-tell-switzerland-hero.html

The Legend


Friedrich Schiller
Wilhelm Tell
Reclam

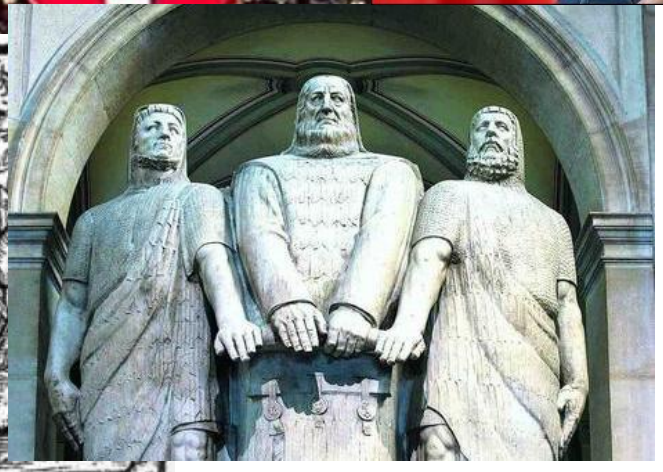
HELVETICS


Globi
und Wilhelm Tell

ALLES GEILI SIÄCHÄ

The Old Swiss Confederacy (1291-1515)

Liberation: Federal Pact and the Rütli vs Habsburg



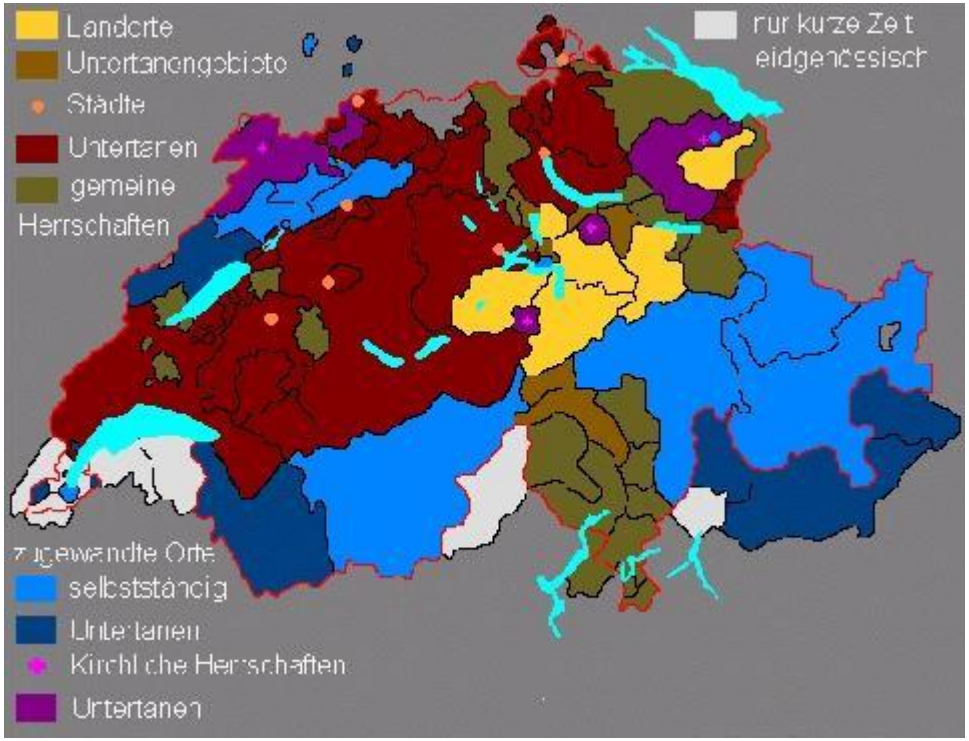
German/French/Italian/Rumantsch

1797, Switzerland was not a multilingual state. What now seems so obvious, the four-language Switzerland, is the consequence of the intervention of Napoléon, the equal entitlement of the French and Italian as official language next to German. In the beginning of the 1937 the local language Romansch was accepted as the fourth national language.

War and revolts 1650 to 1790

- The **war of the peasants** of the **Emmental** (subject territory of Berne) and **Entlebuch** (subject territory of Lucerne) against these cities in 1653
- The revolt of **Wilchingen** against Schaffhausen (1717 - 1729)
- The revolt of **Werdenberg** against Glarus (1719 - 1722)
- The revolt of major **Abraham Davel** in Lausanne (Vaud) against Berne (1723)
- The revolt of the peasants of **Jura** against the prince-bishop of Basel (1726 - 1739)
- The revolt of the **Leventina** (Ticino) against Uri (1755)
- The revolt of **Chenaux** (Fribourg) against Fribourg (1781)

1798: The ancient political system in Switzerland the Swiss revolution



The Helvetic Society

During the 18th Century, more and more persons descending from privileged families began to think about and discuss new political perspectives. Zurich became a center of German language literature with *Johann Jabob Bodmer* and *Johann Jakob Breitinger. Isaak Iselin* of Basel, *Salomon Hirzel*, *Salomon Gessner* and *Johann Heinrich Schinz* of Zurich founded the **Helvetic Society** in 1761. They met each year at *Bad Schinznach* (Aargau) to discuss together the history (and the future) of Switzerland. In 1777, **Johann Georg Stokar** of Schaffhausen pleaded in his presidential address for a united (national) state of Switzerland with equal rights for all the citizens of Switzerland (instead of a loose confederacy).

http://history-switzerland.geschichte-schweiz.ch/swiss-revolution-helvetic-republic-1798.html

Proclamation of the Helvetic Republic

121 representatives of the territories Aargau, Basel, Berne, Fribourg, Léman (Vaud), Lucerne, (bernese) Oberland, Schaffhausen, Solothurnand Zurich met in Aarau on April, 12th 1798 to proclaim the **Helvetic Republic** and confirm its new constitution.

Switzerland „made“ by Napoleon…

Age of Enlightment and Political Philosophy (1798)

Swiss mathematicians *John Bernoulli* (1667 1748);
Jean Jacques Rousseau and his "Contrat Social„;
School is a must!

Switzerland Occupied by French, Austrian and Russian Troops

French general **Napoleon Bonaparte** had conquered Italy in the first Coalition War of France against Great Britain, Austria, Spain and Germany (1792 - 1797) and formed the *Cisalpine Republic* in northern Italy in 1797 (among others, the former subject territories of Swiss canton Grisons became part of the Cisalpine Republic). In 1799, Napoleon seized power in France by a coup d'état. In the second Coalition War of France against Great Britain, Austria and Russia (1799 - 1802) southern Germany, northern Italy and in between Switzerland became theaters of war. The Austrians won a first battle near Zurich, the French the second.

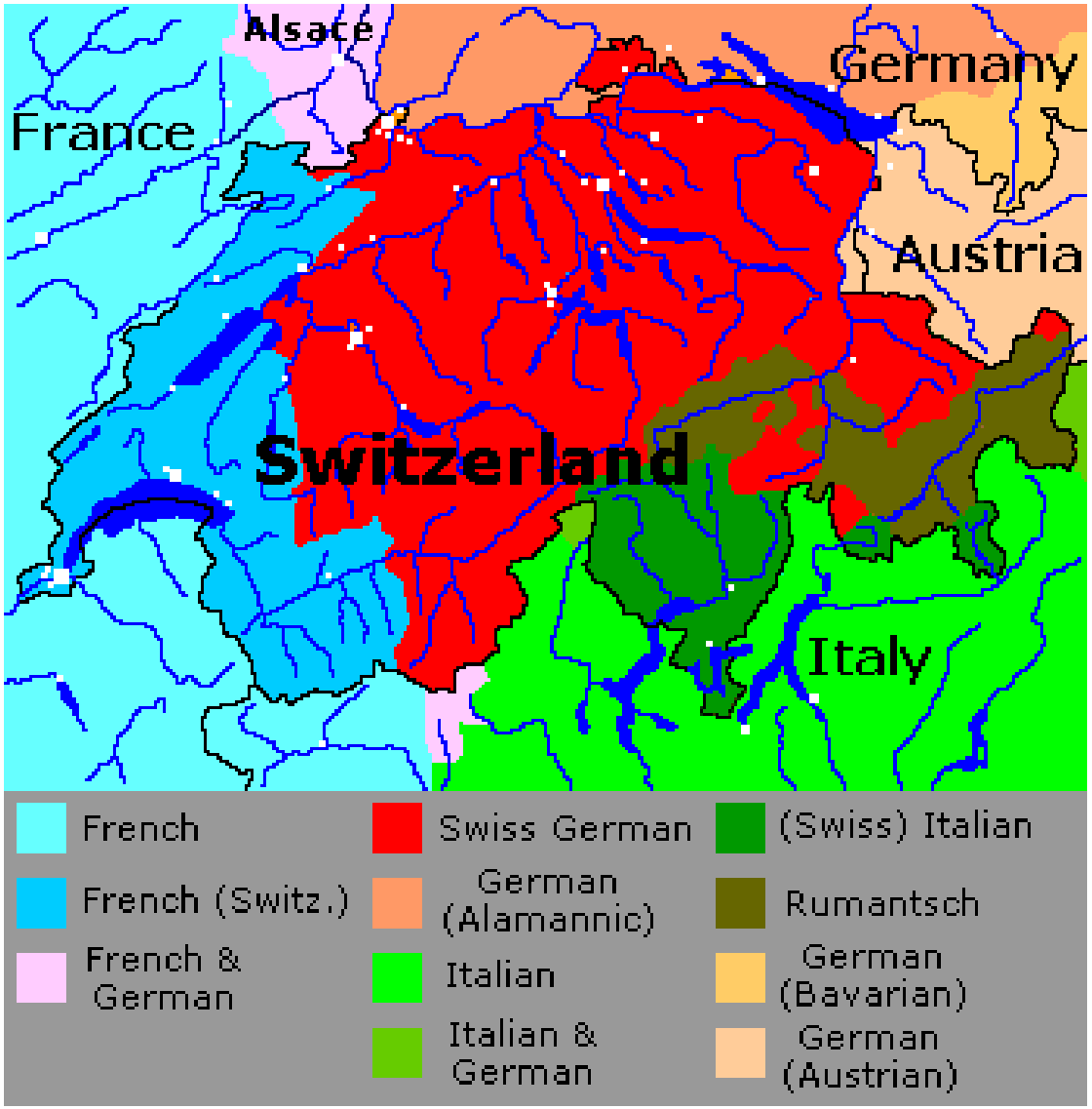
Collapse of the Helvetic Republic

The French and Helvetic Republics won the second Coalition War in 1799, but they lost peace: France became a military dictatorship under general **Napoleon Bonaparte**. The decision of Napoleon to withdraw the French troops from Switzerland in July 1802 gave the signal to the partisans of federalism. On August, 1st 1802 the citizens of Schwyz, Nidwalden, Obwalden met for the “Landsgemeinde" [political meeting] and restored cantonal political institutions.

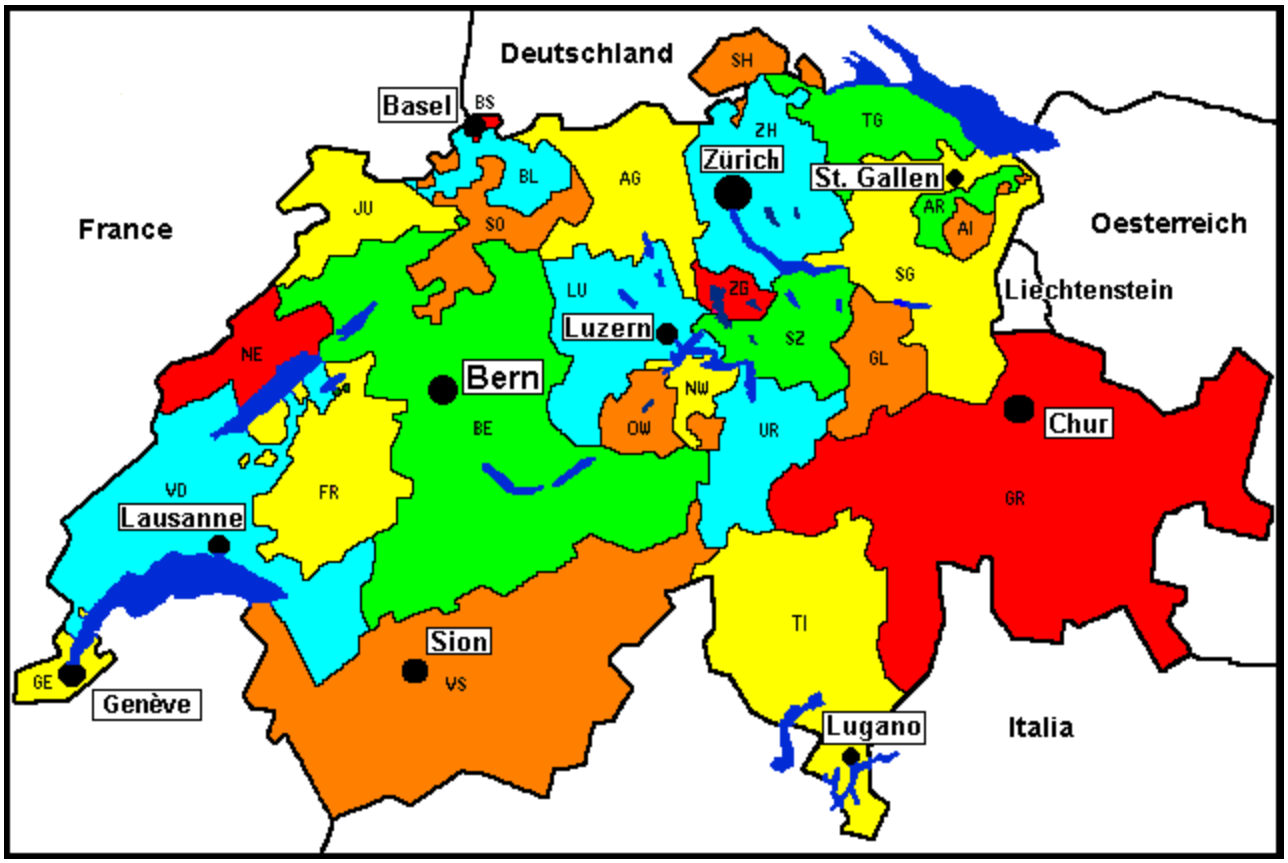
The Mediation Act by Napoleon Bonaparte

Napoleon intervened and gave orders to put an end to the civil war in Switzerland and to send delegations to a consultation in Paris. In October 1802 French troops entered Switzerland again and disarmed the rebels in central Switzerland. The constitution elaborated by his **mediation** gave most of the competences to the 19 cantons [member states] of the new Swiss federation. The *Mediation Act* preserved political equality and in front of the law for all citizens.

The languages in Switzerland



The different cantons…



Switzerland's Way towards the Federal Constitution of 1848

- **Declaration of fundamental individual rights**
- **Two chamber parliament** (200+46)
- **Federal government** "Bundesrat"
- **A federal court of justice**
- **Alliances** with foreign powers, decisions on war and peace, customs, postal services and coinage became federal responsabilities.

Direct Democracy

Switzerland's *Direct Democracy* is not the result of pure tradition and harmonic development. Much to the contrary, the very basics (*decentralisation of power*) and the unique instruments of *Direct Democracy* (*frequent referendums* and *popular initiative*) have been established through **hard political struggle**, including a violent Revolution in 1798, decades of rioting (1830's and 1840's and a short civil war in 1847.

Putsch

The term *putsch* for a violent overthrow of government is one of the few Swiss German dialect words that have been adopted in a large number of foreign languages.

Basic Features of Switzerland's Political System

In June 2012 our German parliamentarians from South Germany visited Canton Aargau. It was astonishing how little they knew about the way Switzerland runs its politics. The same was the case during our meeting in Thessaloniki.

Basic Features of Switzerland's Political System

- Switzerland is a **Confederation of 26 cantons**. The cantons [member states of the federation] do enjoy quite some autonomy.
- **Governments, parliaments and courts on 3 levels**:
  - **federal** / - **cantonal** / - **communal**
  small villages have reunions of all citizens instead of parliaments,
  local courts are common to several communities
- Two features of **Direct Democracy** grant an unusually detailed level of **participation to ordinary citizens**:

Popular Initiative

Ordinary citizens may propose changes to the constitution, if they can find a number of supporters (100,000 out of about 3,500,000 voters, smaller numbers on cantonal and communal level).

The parliament will discuss the proposals, probably set up an alternative and afterwards all citizens may decide in a referendum whether to accept the original initiative, the alternate parliamentary proposal or to leave the constitution unchanged.

The really remarkable thing about Switzerland's political system is **Direct Democracy**: the extraordinary amount of participation in the political process that is granted to ordinary citizens. It is not the mere existence of direct democratic instruments but rather the **frequent use** of them, not only as **encouraged by Constitution**, but as **practised with enthusiasm** by the citizens. Frequent referendums do have a stabilizing influence on parliament, government, economy and society:

Referendums

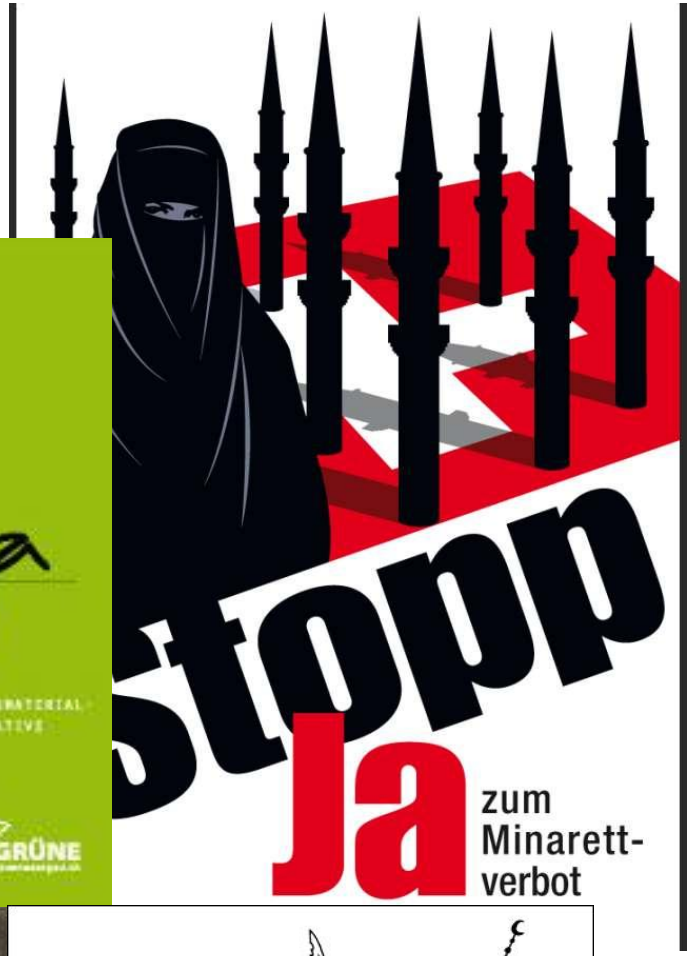
Referendums will increase the willingness to compromise (otherwise a party defeated in parliament will call for a referendum).
This effect is not so strong, however, as we see from the fact that there are several non-mandatory referendums in Switzerland every year (and even some successful ones leaving the uncompromising majority and the goverment in the rain) despite the fact that every politician should know and "fear" them ...

- **Referendums** favours big coalitions:
  Shared power motivates compromise, exclusion from power motivates obstructive referendums.
- **Referendums** increase stability:
  As extreme laws will mercilessly be blocked by the electorate in referendums, parties are less inclined to radical changes in laws and voters are less inclined to call for fundamental changes in elections. There is no need to

dismiss the government after a lost referendum, because the referendum solves the problem - preventing an extreme law - more efficiently and also more precisely: On the very same day, three new laws may be accepted and two others rejected.

http://www.democracy-building.info/switzerlands-political-system.html

The other Switzerland



Minaret controversy in Switzerland

The **minaret controversy in Switzerland** refers to construction of minarets, which has been subject to legal and political controversy in Switzerland. In **November 2009** a referendum, a constitutional amendment banning the construction of new minarets was approved by 57.5% of the participating voters. Only four of the 26 cantons mostly in the French speaking part of Switzerland, opposed the initiative. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Minaret_controversy_in_Switzerland

Minaret

Important for my opposition to this referendum was that we do have rules and regulations in the construction branch. Therefore, there is no need to make a law specially banning **only** minarets. No Muslim community would build a minaret if the building law would prohibit them in doing so! In Europe we had already this situation where only one religious group was singled out!

Anti-Burka Initiative

On May 4th 2010 the Cantonal Parliament of Aargau voted for a **Standesinitative** (an Initiative which wants to change the constitution). During my plea I told my parliamentarian colleagues that the few women with a Burka in our country can´t destroy the democratic fundament of Switzerland. Later this initiative was rejected by the national parliament in Berne.

Asylum seekers get out!

The right of Asylum

Switzerland is a country which had a very good name for its humanitarian tradition such as the Red Cross. In its history they accepted often refugees from different countries (Huguenots in the 17th century, 1968 from Czechoslovakia, Boot people from Vietnam or refugees from Tibet). But at the moment the discussion is how to cut down the rights of the refugees. Against this Green and the Socialist Party is fighting like during the last manifestation in Berne 2012…

Further contact

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