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John Bendix

SWITZERLAND'S 700TH ANNIVERSARY: THE POLITICS OF NEGOTIATING A CULTURAL DISPLAY*

Switzerland celebrated its 700th anniversary in 1991. Grand displays to promote national unity were put on in 1891 and 1941 (the 600th and 650th anniversaries, respectively) and there was little question that 2the next centenary would be marked by a special celebration. Yet since the mid-1970s, an intense debate has raged about the form, content, and intent of this celebration.[1] An analysis of ten years of public discussion leads to the conclusion that it is the *content* of these debates that provides the most accurate reflection of the Swiss nation, not the show slated for 1991: the social debate about the present status of the Swiss nation is more revealing than any display of the glories of the past or the promise of the future will be. This analysis departs from the practice of regarding the event itself as the text to be decoded; if anything, the actual display hides the discord prevalent in its staging and planning.[2]

The inability of the Swiss to agree on a national identity has been ascribed to the linguistic and religious cleavages that divide the country.[3] While such cleavages continue to play a role, there is a more important political factor at work: the power of élites to shape national identity and the reluctance of citizens who cling to local or regional identities to agree with the identity with which they are presented.[4] In many countries it has been an educated élite, consisting of both literary and political figures, who have defined what the nation is, using cultural elements to justify their definition. It was convenient for the rationalist nineteenth-century Prussian rulers to use the work of Johann Gottsched and Johann Gottfried Herder to justify the *idea* of the German nation, even when the usual correlates of a nation--a defined territory, a shared sense of commonality, a common language--were at best amorphous. In the case of Germany and Italy, both the emergence and the securing of the nationalist idea were the work of élites: as the nineteenth-century Italian nationalist Massimo d'Azeglio asserted, "We have made Italy: now we have to make Italians."[5] As Hans Kohn observed, the eighteenth-century efforts of the Swiss literary élites who organized the *Helvetische Gesellschaft* (Johann Jakob Bodmer, Johann Heinrich Füssli--Bodmer's successor as professor of patriotic history--and Johann Casper Lavater) resembled later German efforts. This élite planted the seeds of Swiss nationalism in the barren soil of city patrician opposition to the idea of liberty. There is some evidence that the literary figures were somewhat out of touch with the contemporary Swiss conditions.[6]

Nationalism, however, also put an end to the eighteenth-century notions that what bound people together was their common humanity.[7] The Baron Charles Montesquieu could still claim (perhaps in a bitter moment): "I am a human being before I am a Frenchman, because I am by necessity a human being, whereas I am a Frenchman only by chance"; but the deputy who on the first day of the Estates-General declared that "no motive shall rule my mind or will but that of the interest and welfare of my fellow-countrymen" more clearly indicated the parochialism of this new nationalism.[8] Nationalism underscored how *different* the nationals of one country were from those of other nations. The idea of common humanity was an argument

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for the commonalities all humans shared--a universalistic notion--but a nationalism that argued for the distinctiveness of specific groups of humans organized in nation-states--a particularist notion --altered the earlier idea of common humanity by creating boundaries. But if the emergence of nationalism was detrimental to previous ideas of universal humanity, then it was also true that the creation of the modern nation (as one consequence of the French Revolution) meant that nationalism contained a political element that went far beyond the emotive connotations of the idea of commonality. Members of the new nation were to be equal with respect to their citizenship; in this light, previous notions of universality began to look like apologies for maintaining vestigial feudal traditions of systems of patrician rule.[9]

Yet the very abstraction, the "condition of mind, feeling, or sentiment of a group of people" which nationalism is, must also be made *visible*.[10] The old order had overtly displayed many of the abstract public distinctions between individuals --the clothing and bewigging of aristocrats is but one example--and the French revolutionaries clearly felt a necessity to have new public emblems. Visible markers were not meant to display rank but rather to aid in the creation of national sentiment and to display solidarity with what the nation represented. The flag, the cockade, and the national anthem in France were examples of such displays, symbols that each individual citizen could make, wear, or sing. It is easy to forget that such symbols must always be invented and legitimized as being appropriate.[11] The process of negotiating such symbols, the focal point of the following analysis, is rarely discussed: the mass nature of nationalism has in the last century also elevated the importance of mass cultural and nationalistic displays.

Nineteenth-century Swiss displays, as was true in other countries undergoing rapid industrialization, took the form of domestic and international industrial exhibits. The national competition at international fairs led to a perceived need to present something unique that would cause visitors to remember Swiss industrial products. That meant the use of emblems. The paradox of demonstrating technological advancement by framing its products within a reconstructed farmhouse or an entire rural village (as was the case in a Geneva exhibit) resulted in an ambivalent message that could be interpreted either as an indication of how far the country had progressed (from village to factory), how mired in the past it was (tradition was slowing modernization), or how the country was successfully moving into the future without forgetting the past (presumably the desired message).[12]

If nineteenth-century world trade exhibitions had an international audience, twentieth-century domestic expositions became much more clearly identified with a nationalist message directed at the Swiss themselves. While nineteenth-century displays tended to show industrial products against a backdrop of Swiss culture, the expositions of this century have made patriotic elements central: cantonal pavilions and displays and parades with natives in cantonal costume required participation of many groups not involved in industry otherwise. Yet it was these non-industrial displays that stuck in the minds of commentators and audiences.[13] The 25-year cycle of the Swiss national expositions meant that the first two coincided with the outbreak of the World Wars. They took on added significance as elements of "the spiritual defense of the country" (*geistige Landesverteidigung*), an important means for Swiss to distance themselves from Germans, particularly in the pre-World War II era. The 1964 exposition was much more technologically and progress oriented than its predecessors. Already then there was talk of combining the next exposition (due in 1989) with the 700-year anniversary of the country in 1991.[14]

The nineteenth century also saw the emergence of Swiss historical anniversary celebrations, marked with elaborate festive spectacles. Although Swiss *claim* a lengthy history of democracy beginning in 1291, constitutional democracy was introduced only during the Napoleonic occupation in the early nineteenth century. Its imposition created considerable disagreement between Catholics and Protestants and among the élites, the emerging bourgeoisie, and the growing numbers of industrial workers. Celebrations of common history (such as the commemorations of medieval battles) were in part intended as means to alleviate some of the social tensions in this period. The scripts of some of these events requested mass participation, and in a few cases truly worked as a kind of liturgy for a budding Swiss nationalism.[15]

Yet historical displays had a competitive element as well. After centuries of a largely autonomous, side-by-side existence, the individual Swiss cantons had an easier time celebrating their *individual* contributions to remote (or recent) history than to engage in forging a common nationality. This is perhaps one reason why twentieth-century expositions have featured so many cantonal displays. The historical "festival plays" of important literary figures such as Gottfried Keller had been hailed as tools to make Swiss nationals out of those who identified more with their cantons. By the end of the nineteenth century, festival plays commemorating the anniversaries of the founding of individual cities (such as Bern or Basel) began to outnumber the commemorations of events that "unified" the nation (such as the battles near Sempach or

Morgarten). The intent to foster a Swiss nationalism degenerated into a "cantonal nationalism,"[16] and the festival play movement intended by Swiss for Swiss became subverted into a kind of local chauvinism, one that still persists. Given this history, it was not surprising therefore that the plan for a combined exposition and a 700-year anniversary celebration in 1991--while ideally conceived as a further visualization of the nation, the anniversary looking to the past and the exposition providing a picture of the present and a glimpse of the future-- provided fuel for a vigorous debate.

The debate over 1991 may be conceptually divided into three issue areas that roughly correspond to successive chronological phases. The first issue was thematic, an attempt to address the question: "what will we be doing in 1991?" It was clear that the anniversary would focus on the past; the more complicated issue was how the exposition that was to occur in that same year would focus on the present and future. The second issue was one of justification, an attempt to answer: "why will we be doing what we have chosen to do in 1991?" The last issue was a political one: "who will be doing what and where will the resources come from?"

The planned 1991 exposition had been the major issue during the 1980s. There was virtually no discussion that the planned 1989 exposition be delayed and held in conjunction with the 700th birthday celebration in 1991: this had even been suggested in the final report on the 1964 exposition. Cost savings and complementary themes favored the combination; the difference between a "spiritual trade fair," as one critic bitingly called the exposition, and a birthday celebration spoke against the combination.[17] Consensus on how to celebrate the past was apparently relatively easy to achieve: there would be large processions with representatives from all the cantons, readings of the first documents of the country, patriotic speeches, visits to sites important to the nation (the Rütli meadow, the town of Schwyz) and perhaps the presentation of patriotic plays, such as the *Festspiele* popular in the late nineteenth century.[18] Such a celebration would not be marred by debates about whether the ancient heroes Wilhelm Tell or Arnold Winkelried had really existed, nor would the critical voices of an Otto Marchi or a Max Frisch be heard.[19] The reinterpretation of the past is a continual process, but for the purpose of this centenary celebration such reinterpretations were suspended. The nineteenth-century conceptualization of the glories of the past was to be resuscitated, as a distillation of the thousands of patriotic speeches held on 1 August, the national holiday. For 1991, then, the past proved far less of an issue than how to represent the present or project the future of the Swiss nation.

A "small is beautiful" consciousness pervaded the planning discussion concerning the 1991 exposition. In the post-Oil Shock, post-1973 "limits to growth" atmosphere this influence was not entirely surprising. There had been a genuine change in Swiss consciousness since the 1964 exposition; the optimism of unlimited economic growth that had been on display then had been replaced by an awareness of the problems associated with technology, the use of information, and the physical limits in the resources the world faced.[20] A less obvious reason was that the exposition, for once, would not be held in a major urban centre but rather in the rural, Catholic geographical core of Switzerland. The choice of location meant that many of the resources (such as available land or transportation facilities) would be relatively limited. This situation necessitated thinking along smaller infrastructural lines.

Such practical considerations matched a desire among planners to reflect the change in consciousness since 1964, to reflect the Switzerland of today accurately. Suggestions were therefore made to present the existing dissent in the society, or to focus on creating "a better and more humane society" and to "integrate new residents into communities." Suggestions such as these had at best been only on the margins of the previous exposition.[21] After much discussion, various planning groups emerged with a number of rather colourless "Common Features" of contemporary Switzerland:[22]

1. Swiss do not all think and feel alike;
2. Swiss have achieved much but have not coped with everything;
3. Switzerland is a part of the world;
4. The reality of Switzerland is the result of a lengthy development;
5. Watches "run faster" today; and
6. Different spheres of life overlap.

These statements were meant to imply that in a display of the national self, observers should relinquish the image, held by some Swiss and many foreigners, of a unified, successful, isolated yet untroubled Swiss nation (*Heile Welt*).

One of the most radical suggestions was to organize the exposition thematically around the responses humans have made to their sufferings and needs.[23] Thus, humans were lonely, hungry, weak, cold, poor, mute, ignorant, dependent, and bored; that was the reason why they needed and wanted (respectively) love

and community, nourishment and agriculture, health and strength, houses and home, work and exchange, communication and imagery, curiosity and research, freedom and order, high spirits and games. Each participating canton in the exposition was assigned (rather arbitrarily) a particular theme; the canton of Schwyz, for example, was made responsible for displays with thematic orientations expressing love and community and nourishment and agriculture.

The intention of the planners was to view Switzerland in the context of human issues all societies faced. This was an unconscious return to Montesquieu's universalistic ideals. Past expositions had displayed industrialized Switzerland's accomplishments, but the focus on technology had obscured whether the exposition was meant as a message to be sent to the world, a means for Swiss to see unfamiliar technical advances occurring both inside and outside Switzerland, or a nationalist/patriotic display--or perhaps all three jointly. The social component, and in particular the social changes brought about by technology, had been almost entirely absent from previous twentieth-century expositions. At the same time, technology had been increasingly displayed at these expositions within its non-industrial context--the village milieu from which an industry had grown, for example--with the curious result that twentieth-century technology was being displayed within nineteenth-century social images. The logical solution for 1991, some planners seemed to believe, was first to display the society and only then the technology.[24] It was a novel idea for an advanced industrial society to organize a national exposition around the issues of hunger, illness, ignorance, and poverty. It was an attempt to highlight what was not functioning properly or what remained problematic, rather than to bask in the smug satisfaction of accomplishment.

A few Swiss Protestants might have taken perverse satisfaction in displaying all that was wrong with their country, but the majority opined that "a renewal of national solidarity" was really what expositions were all about, and that pessimism ill-fitted such an objective.[25] Discussions revolved about how "national solidarity" was to be exhibited, as there was some sense that the use of nineteenth-century symbols (the female figure of Helvetia or William Tell) was no longer appropriate. Those on the political left worried about how to bridge the gap between the educated élite and the rest of society.[26] Suggestions arose concerning alternative means of renewing national solidarity without using old symbols: one idea was to have people display whatever they thought was worth exhibiting where they lived. Train fares would be free, so that foreigners and Swiss could all go visit one another in a kind of national popular culture event. Another suggestion, in keeping with the militia character of much of Swiss public life, would have simply provided land, material, and tools, and exclaimed: "Visitors, build your own exhibit!"

Both were ingenious suggestions on how to overcome the lack of contact with distant fellow citizens, one of the vexing problems of nationalism (a national, militia-based army only partly solves this contact problem today). Yet the rationale used in the nineteenth century for organizing national song fests or marksmen's festivals and shifting the locale of these festivals every year was to overcome the social and physical distance separating citizens. Suggestions of how to achieve solidarity in a fragmented population by increasing opportunities for personal contact have not changed in a century.[27]

At heart, the difficulty lay in how to present the problems of modern Switzerland in an exhibition framework historically designed to illustrate the progress and unity of the Swiss nation. If there was to be a choice whether to focus on internal problems or on national unity, the likely outcome in the conservative political culture of Switzerland would be to emphasize national unity. But the presentation of that solidarity readily led to distortion: "the danger (inherent in the next celebration) is obvious: pathos, the mystification of alpine benedictions (a folkloric manifestation) and the conjuring up of (quaint) natives hard at work" would be all that one would get.[28] Switzerland would be presented as though the promotional pictures produced by the Swiss National Tourist Bureau were the sum total of the country.

The well-developed Swiss desire for consensus--unity must come despite diversity--meant that, remarkably enough, aspects of pessimistic, innovative, and solidaristic suggestions all filtered through to the main planning groups. 1991, they decided, would be small and decentralized, organized thematically into broad "spheres" (*Bereiche*)work, culture, nature, sports and games, the state and "living with one another." These spheres were to be filled by thirty-five "core events" (*Kernereignisse*), so that within the culture sphere, for example, one would find "core events" dealing with art, film/video/photography, folklore, literature, music, theater and folk art. The "core events" were comprised of so-called "side events" (*Seitenereignisse*). The practical resolution how to have both overarching themes and a decentralized exposition lay in a division of labour among the different cantons in central Switzerland noted above.[29] By the end of 1984, three overarching thematic foci had been agreed upon: the patriotic celebrations (700th anniversary), the "core events" (the exposition) and the "Path of Switzerland," a hiking path around the Uri portion of Lake Lucerne.

Decentralization extended even to the level of the actual events that would make up the exposition. Individuals, associations, communities, and cantons were to propose what they wanted to do, with the tacit understanding that suggestions from the six central cantons would be related in some manner to the "spheres" and "themes." The suggestions ranged from holding seminars to building bicycle paths, from sponsoring participatory theatre to restoring monuments, from building a model dairy farm in the Alps to sinking a 10-meter shaft into Lake Zug to view the lake bottom close-up.[30]

Planners, politicians, and members of the educated élite had placed high hopes in what the people would suggest--a recapitulation of what literary figures of the Romantic era had hoped to find in the creative genius of the *Volk*. Yet many of the suggestions merely reiterated a desire for the displays and activities of previous expositions, so that even the head of the "theme commission" began having second thoughts: "Does this dozing creative potential that the commission has assumed really exist (among the people)? There would be nothing more embarrassing than to have a model of participation without any participants..."[31]

Some planning reports were quite self-critical. They warned that the participatory model planners were using could be undermined by the nature and quality of the input from the masses as well as by the lack of participation.[32] "Small is beautiful" thinking was combined with a vague, militia-inspired "do it yourself" exposition model that was to converge and fit into overarching but ill-defined "themes." The final words of one report read: "A bouquet of celebration and a bundle of events will move the whole country--and the center of the country will coalesce into a 'Narrative in the Landscape.'" When the president of the organizing committee responsible for this report, a man never at a loss for words, was asked just what he meant by "narrative," he replied, "Narrative? That's the opposite of preaching."[33]

The discussion that began in the mid-1970s focussed rapidly on the content of the exposition and centenary celebration. Indeed, perhaps too rapidly: there was virtually no disagreement that some kind of celebration would occur in 1991 and that a national exposition should be held around that time. The bland sentiment expressed by the president of the 1964 exposition organizing committee that the basic goals of *all* Swiss expositions were to "inform the country of its economic, social, cultural or political situation, to demonstrate the true nature of the country as well as make it aware of the demands of the future," made 1991 planners and politicians assume that their plans were uncontroversial.[34]

But such a superficial formulation hid the extent to which expositions openly fostered other purposes, such as the belief in the value of technology or the desire to "awaken respect for compatriots," or fostered the spiritual defense of the country. National expositions also emit less explicit messages about the values of thrift and hard work or about community. Twentieth-century Swiss expositions carried messages meant both for those outside the country and for fellow-nationals. As a Swiss one could take pride in the country's technological achievements relative to other countries; as the citizen of a canton one was not supposed to notice how much better some cantons were performing than others. As a Swiss, one could take pride in how the country had developed, but the heirs of John Calvin and Ulrich Zwingli were not to construe such displays as an occasion for self-admiration.[35] It is difficult to show off and not be self-congratulatory at the same time, although a precedent had been established by those Swiss Protestants who demonstrated how to be both wealthy and pious simultaneously.

The Protestantism of successful achievement as well as the shame or guilt at its display and the ritualistic elements in national anniversaries (and festival plays of the nineteenth century) point to the quasi-religious character of national display events.[36] To the extent that both religious and nationalist beliefs are "conditions of mind, feeling or sentiment," they may have their similarities; to the extent that nationalism is a creed that transcends any individual or organized religious belief, the two are quite different. In historical and social terms, the secularization of much that had been once religious was counterbalanced by the sacralization of much that was worldly, including both the deification of nature in the eighteenth century and the sacralization of the nation in the nineteenth.[37]

The first national festivals, held in France in the 1790-1794 period, had an explicit desire to make "all into participants in the great, patriotic-sacred and therefore liturgy-like proceedings." Later Swiss exhibits followed this pattern. The 1857 Bern exhibit led commentators to remark on its "churchly-religious" atmosphere, the 1891 celebrations contained numerous religious allusions, whereas the 1941 anniversary play was intended as a "worldly liturgy."[38] With this background, it was not surprising that planners in 1964 urged Swiss to make a "national pilgrimage" to the exhibits, or that in 1978 one planner wanted visitors to visit the "holy waters" of Lake Lucerne.[39]

Many of the planning documents regarded the 1991 anniversary and exposition as an opportunity for Swiss to engage in a reflection (*Besinnung*) on the nation. Contemplation suggested as a justification for an

exposition, a mode of reaction more usually associated with a monastic parting from the world, points to an attempt to sacralize nationalism and perhaps even to claim that a lost religious commonality needed to be recaptured. 1991 plans (from April of 1988) envisioned a "national liturgy," one that invoked historical myths with the justification that "myths are important because they help us better find our own identities."[40] As a consequence, what was intended in earlier centuries to be secular, the nation, today becomes saturated with the terminology of the sacred. Conversely, what was intended in earlier centuries to be sacred, namely religious liturgy, becomes saturated with the terminology of the secular when it is treated as text or as historical myth. To return to an earlier point, narration is therefore not the opposite of preaching, but is connected to it, because national sentiment apparently needs to be preached and reinforced to citizens who persist in ignoring and forgetting it.[41]

Local and regional culture is the defining characteristic of Swiss politics, asserted all the more as the centralization of the state proceeds. Powerful local political élites not only have a deep-seated distrust of centralized national solutions (which usually means anything emanating from Bern) but an equally deep-seated distrust of the designs of neighbouring communities and cantons. An unflattering Swiss term for this attitude, *Kantönligeist*, expresses the spirit of the small-minded canton, a spirit which has characterized Swiss cantons in various ways from the time they first joined the Swiss Confederation. Cantonal residents themselves suspect their own politicians and subjectively place more trust in the institutions of direct democracy, even when they personally may make little use of them.

The canton of Schwyz demonstrated this well-developed "going it alone" tendency already in 1891. At its instigation, the 600th anniversary celebration was held. Perhaps with this in mind, the Schwyz town council began planning for 1991 already in 1977. Almost as soon as its intentions became known, Lucerne, the neighbouring canton and the nearest large urban centre, also began making plans for hosting the event. In the best Swiss tradition, a tug-of-war over 1991 started between the two cantons, the continuation of a dispute about which canton would host the national yodeling festival.

At issue were finances, infrastructure, and who had sufficient land. The city of Lucerne argued that it could better afford to host an exposition than its poorer, rural, neighbouring cantons Schwyz or Uri. The neighbouring cantons were "where the roots of our state and the historic sites lie," one Lucerne committee wrote magnanimously, "here too is where the traditions are strongly maintained."[42] It therefore made sense, the report continued, to have most of the exposition in Lucerne, the centenary celebrations in the three cantons where Switzerland began as a nation (Uri, Nidwalden, and Schwyz), and an agricultural show in Schwyz.

The idea of fobbing off the rural part of the exposition onto them was not greeted with joy in Schwyz. As one folklorist from Schwyz involved with the planning colourfully put it, "Once again we are being treated like village twits, branded as some kind of folkloric shepherd boys with violets stuck in our lapels."[43] The recriminations between Lucerne and Schwyz flew back and forth for several years. Finally, the Federal Council declared that they had heard enough: either an intercantonal agreement would be reached or the Federal government would stage its own celebrations.[44] Delegating a regional political body with representatives from all the cantons in the area to mediate between Schwyz and Lucerne was a clever move. A binding decision from one's own (and neighbouring) politicians, however distrusted, was easier to accept and infinitely preferable to national-level interference.

The Solomonic, politico-geographic decision to give Schwyz the anniversary celebration and Lucerne the exposition that this regional political body reached resolved very little.[45] Two sites rather than one, many argued, used up twice as much land, doubled the cost, increased the infrastructure problems and could result in halving the number of visitors. Just as many adopted the exact opposite position, namely, that there should be as many sites as possible so that all cantons would profit and be politically satisfied. Some planners envisioned as many as five separate, simultaneous locations for the exposition. The result was that both Schwyz and Lucerne ignored the decision reached by the regional political body and for reasons of local pride and national prestige promoted their own plans, as before.

While the politicians were squabbling, local opposition groups (particularly in Lucerne) began to make themselves heard. The "small is beautiful" planners suddenly found themselves outflanked by groups nominally espousing a similar ideology but objecting to the amount of land that was to be used and the waste involved. One slogan was "no disposable expositions!" Several of these groups also began to wonder how the exposition and anniversary were to be financed.[46]

It was unclear who would pay how much, or even whether some of the expense would be privately financed. In order to resolve the sponsorship questions, a foundation, called CH91, was started at the end

of 1984. At its inception, the foundation boasted assets of about 2 million Francs. It had a membership composed of delegates chosen by the Federal government as well as delegates from most of the central Swiss cantons. As cantons decided to join in the venture, they would contribute a certain amount of money. In 1986, for example, Zurich contributed 1 million Francs.

Eventually, every canton in the country except Lucerne joined the foundation. This was ironic because Lucerne had tried so hard to ensure that the events would take place on its territory. Continued local criticism and the interpretation of the cantonal constitution made a vote on the fundamental question (do you want the CH91 program?) legally and politically impossible. Yet in early 1985, the Lucerne cantonal parliament felt it was nevertheless politically necessary to put at least the money question (do you want to pay 1.5 million Francs to participate in CH91?) to a popular vote. It represented the first time the public would have a chance to express its opinion on the proposed 1991 events.[47] Despite the favourable recommendation of the cantonal council, the cantonal parliament, and nearly all of the major parties, in May 1985 the 30% or so of the Lucerners who bothered to go to the polls rejected the proposition.[48]

Throughout the country journalistic commentary placed the blame on planners and politicians for having created a nebulous concept of the exposition and having ignored what citizens wanted. The planners and politicians in the region where the events were to take place did not take the hint.[49] In early 1987, all the central Swiss cantonal governments (except Lucerne) approved the specific projects the CH91 foundation had planned for their cantons. In the spring of 1987, the voters in *every* participating canton rejected the projects.[50]

The anniversary celebrations remained unaffected by the defeat of the exposition projects. The almost immediate consequence was the termination of the foundation and a declaration by the Federal government that after a decade of thematic planning it would be impossible to stage both an anniversary celebration and an exposition at the same time in central Switzerland. An academic "Reflective Group" (*Groupe de Reflexion*) now emerged with a "dignified 700th anniversary" plan. It included an exposition to usher in the next century, to be held in 1998 in the Ticino, a "Festival of the Four Cultures" to build bridges to connect the citizens of the language areas, to be held in the French part of the country, a "Festival of International Solidarity" to focus on cultural interchange, to be held in the Romansch part of the country; and last but not least, the Festival of the Confederation, the anniversary proper.[51] The first Federal Charter (*Bundesbrief*) and texts of writers from the four language regions would be read at the Rütli meadow in Uri, about 3,000 school children (one from each community) would attend and take these messages back to their communities to be read out. Schwyz would stage a procession "followed by a festive, colorful and light-hearted program of events including traditional and modern musical and theatrical happenings...followed by a big public festival in Brunnen."[52] In short, an anniversary celebration very much like the one held in 1891 would once again take place.

Protracted negotiations held among various élites (planners, journalists, and cantonal and national politicians) in Switzerland during the last decade disputed over what an appropriate anniversary and exposition should contain and how and where it should be organized. Few countries engage in a soul-searching of this depth when planning celebrations. Such a state-sponsored display serves legitimating and symbolic functions for the nation. Yet these plans sidestepped all the controversies over themes, intentions, prestige, and money that normally characterize the planning process. Those controversies reflected a far more accurate picture of contemporary Switzerland. As now conceived, Switzerland would present a pleasant picture of internal cultural exchange, solidarity among the Swiss and the non-Swiss, and demonstrate the unity that had emerged from 700 years of nationhood. Unlike nineteenth-century expositions, the attempt in 1991 would provide a reflection of all aspects of the Swiss itself, not be an international industrial and promotional tool. The updating of shows designed to promote Swiss industry apparently meant publicizing Switzerland as a peaceful, prosperous nation. The show itself would not inform anyone very much about the internal state of the Swiss nation, because the reversal was not complete: if Switzerland promoted its image to the outside world successfully, the promotion of the image to the Swiss themselves remained unsatisfactory.

The course of the debate suggests that élites in Switzerland no longer have the power--or perhaps even the desire--to define the nation. An indication of the decline of élite power lies in the rejection of the exposition plans by the voters: the Reflective Group plans suggest that a unified conception of the nation's past remains possible (very much along nineteenth-century lines), but that the nation's present can only be represented by fragmented displays. The compartmentalization of modern life, the particularistic needs of individuals, decentralization, local pride and local identification, the lack of external enemies are all factors that undermine nationalist sentiment and perhaps the desire to promote it. The very usefulness of institutions

may make the Swiss state "so functional, self-evident, ready to use that one no longer needs to bring to it any particular emotions."[53] This statement appears to attest that the Swiss state and the Swiss nation have been sundered. It is an extraordinary suggestion in a world riven by nationalist conflicts in which many nations now demand to have their own state.

It is tempting to argue that people want to consume positive and reinforcing images of the wider context in which they live, packaged in a good show. In this light, the planning attempts to make a virtue out of "the dozing creative potential" in the population--while a noble attempt to do something different with the national cultural display --were misguided: for many, the creative potential was for personal use and the nation could go on dozing.[54]

The irony of continuing with public displays as in the past is that the tradition being continued was invented only in the nineteenth century. The attempts to steer the celebration in a new, more contemporary direction indicated by the thematic suggestions means that the tradition is being negotiated. While the innovative suggestions have not been incorporated, the tradition of large-scale display events will be continued. In short, it is the *process* that has mattered. Future expositions will not be able to avoid the lessons of this process.

One can also interpret the last decade as another indication of the brittleness of Swiss social consensus, making 1991, as Susan Slyomovics has noted, less of a Bakhtinian "carnivalesque" event than a "funeralesque" one. The realistic pessimism of the thematic suggestions which focus on dissent, needs, and wants point to the frictions and divisions in the society that politicians go to such lengths to resolve. Georg Kreis has observed that for all the integrative function that national expositions have had, they also create political, aesthetic, and regional controversy and thus have a disintegrative effect as well.[55] The call for contemplation and community in a society with little time for the first, and little use for the second, provides a further indication of the imagined loss of community.

Benedict Anderson has suggested recently that all nations are "imagined communities," and that "all communities larger than primordial villages of face-to-face contact are imagined." To be sure, nationalism is extraordinarily emotive, demanding an attachment to an abstraction that transcends all other social ties. Nationalism cannot be anything but a transcendent artificial abstraction, an imagined linkage among strangers who share common citizenship and inhabit a defined territory (and may share other characteristics, such as a common language or religion). Yet whether this can still be called a true community is doubtful. The rationally organized, market-oriented European nation of the nineteenth century was much more closely coterminous with Tönnies's *Gesellschaft* (society), even though attempts to foster nationalism clearly tried to promote the "community of feeling" associated with *Gemeinschaft*. Anderson would prefer to interpret nations as an abstracted and expanded imagery of communion even when nations are clearly formally closer to state and societal structures. For him, Switzerland is in any case a "late" nationalizer which did not need linguistic uniformity.[56]

Regardless of the interpretation, if the nation is to remain viable, it must also continue to be sold to its people. Familiar visual symbols and rituals, even if only a hundred years old, are apparently preferred by "the people" to vague attempts to use a "small is beautiful" approach to plan decentralized events in a centralized manner. By the same token, a hiking "Path of Switzerland" that anyone can walk during the summer brings an immediacy that an event meant to display "freedom and order" cannot. This path has subsequently proven to be by far the most popular result of the entire planning effort. The élite desire for the abstractions of solidarity, community, and contemplation remain, as they did in the nineteenth century, both very far from and quite close to the desire of ordinary citizens to see grand spectacles and feel good about themselves.

The voters' distrust of planners and politicians has led the Swiss central government, interestingly enough, to ask a group of academics--themselves sources of skepticism--to find a suitable solution. Perhaps wisely, this Reflective Group (composed of previously uninvolved members of yet another élite group in the society) abandoned the attempt to use the exposition as a means to express national consensus, opted instead to delay the exposition for another ten years, and proposed more limited "Festivals" of culture in the linguistic regions. At least until the end of this century, Swiss national identity will therefore remain an uneasy amalgam of regional cultural identification and nineteenth-century ritualized and symbolic displays of national unity.

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Résumé - Les négociations qui ont précédé les célébrations du 700e anniversaire et l'exposition nationale en Suisse en 1991 ont été beaucoup plus instructives sur la situation nationale que les événements eux-mêmes. Dans cet article, on constate que les élites, si importantes pour le nationalisme du XIXe siècle, n'ont ni le pouvoir, ni l'envie de continuer leurs efforts pour définir la nation. L'État suisse est aussi tellement fonctionnel et efficace qu'il n'est pas nécessaire de susciter des sentiments nationaux pour justifier son existence. Le peuple lui-même semble préférer les images symboliques de l'unité nationale qui datent du XIXe siècle, mais en réalité, il s'accroche aux identifications régionales ou cantonales.

[1]This soul-searching also preceded the last two major anniversaries. See the comment by Georg Kreis, in François de Capitani and Georg Germann, eds., *Auf dem Weg zu einer schweizerischen Identität* (On the Path to a Swiss Identity) (Freiburg: Universitätsverlag, 1987), p. 243.

[2]Alessandro Falassi, ed., *Time Out of Time* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 1987).

[3]Carol Schmid, *Conflict and Consensus in Switzerland* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1981).

[4]I take "nation" to mean the collective designation of an emotive bond people share (perhaps based on language or a shared interpretation of history) which can correspond to a territory or administrative entity. "Nationalism" is the expression of the ideology affiliated with the sense of belonging to the nation.

[5]In Boyd Shafer, *Faces of Nationalism* (New York, NY: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1972), p. 12.

[6]Hans Kohn, *The Idea of Nationalism* (New York, NY: Collier, 1944), Chapter 7. Ulrich Im Hof and François de Capitani, *Die Helvetische Gesellschaft* (The Helvetic Society) (Frauenfeld: Verlag Huber, 1983).

[7]There is something to recommend Benedict Anderson's view that "nationalism" should be placed with terms such as "kinship" or "religion," with which it has greater affinity than with the "-isms." See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 1983), p. 5.

[8]Montesquieu cited in Kohn, *The Idea of Nationalism*, p. 228; the deputy is cited in Shafer, *Faces of Nationalism*, p. 90.

[9]Mulford Sibley, *Political Ideas and Ideologies* (New York, NY: Harper and Row, 1970), p. 556. This argument is made in a different manner by Hans Kohn. He asserted that Switzerland first experienced constitutional liberty and only later approached national unity: the liberty of the individual also meant internal distinctiveness between Swiss citizens. Swiss liberty was freedom from oligarchic control maintained within the context of communal and cantonal structure. Even in Kohn's account it is quite clear that the attempts to instill a sense of Swiss nationalism were undertaken by intellectuals such as Heinrich Zschokke and Gottfried Keller. See Hans Kohn, *Nationalism and Liberty: The Swiss Example* (New York, NY: Macmillan, 1956). For a treatment of similar themes focussed less on abstract liberty and the role of intellectuals and more on specific cantonal experience, see Benjamin Barber, *The Death of Communal Liberty* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1974).

[10]Louis L. Snyder's definition of nationalism, based on Carlton Hayes's 1926 formula: "a condition of mind, feeling or sentiment of a group of people living in a well-defined geographical area, speaking a common language, possessing a literature in which the aspirations of the nation have been expressed, attached to common traditions, possessing traditional heroes, and, in some cases, having a common religion." Michael Palumbo and William Shanahan, eds., *Nationalism: Essays in Honor of Louis Snyder* (Denver, CO: Greenwood Press, 1988), p. 34. This definition should be recognized as ideal-typical; many nationalisms lack one or more of these elements.

[11]Eric Hobsbawm and Terrence Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1983). New nations in Africa and elsewhere have provided vivid recent examples of the invention of flags, anthems, and other symbols of nationhood. Legitimation of national symbols requires education and socialization, invariably under the tutelage of the state.

[12]See Franz Bächtiger, "Konturen schweizerischer Selbstdarstellung im Ausstellungswesen des 19. Jahrhunderts" (Contours of Swiss Self-Portrayal in the Expositions of the Nineteenth Century), in de Capitani and Germann, *Auf dem Weg*, pp. 207-243.

[13]See Julius Wagner, *Festliche Landi* (Festive Expo) (Zürich: Verkehrsverlag, 1939), or *Goldenes Buch der Schweizerischen Landesausstellung Lausanne 1964* (Golden Book of the Swiss National Exposition in Lausanne 1964) (Lausanne: Librairie Marguerat, 1964), for examples.

[14]While no "hot" wars were looming in 1964, the Cuban missile crisis and John F. Kennedy's assassination led to a widespread fear that war would break out soon after the exposition.

[15]See Martin Stern, "Das Historische Festspiel (The Historical Pageant) in de Capitani and German, *Auf dem Weg*, pp. 309-333. For more specific information, see Regina Bendix, *Backstage Domains: Playing "William Tell" in Two Swiss Communities* (Bern: Peter Lang, 1989), Chapter 1.

[16]de Capitani and Germann, *Auf dem Weg*, p. 334. "Degeneration" should perhaps be replaced by "reassertion," for already during the 1798 attempts to create the Helvetic Republic under Napoleonic auspices, parliamentary commissions were complaining that "nothing can become more dangerous to our new Constitution than this exclusive attachment to canton and home community." See Hans Kohn, *Nationalism and Liberty*, p. 46.

[17]Markus Kutter, "1991 - Welche Schweiz für welche Landesausstellung?" (1991 - Which Switzerland for which National Exposition?) *Tages-Anzeiger Magazin*, 2 May 1981.

[18]The 1891 Festival Play in Schwyz had 960 lay actors, 400 singers, and 120 musicians, and depicted battles and other patriotic scenes. The 1941 events included lighting warning fires (a reference to 1291 events) and bringing the fire to all the cantons, patriotic speeches by cantonal and national politicians, religious services, a reading out of the early foundational documents, a visit to the Rütli meadow accompanied by various symbolic acts, the performance of a play written for the occasion, as well as the performance of scenes from Schiller's *William Tell*. Balz Engler and Georg Kreis, *Das Festspiel: Formen, Funktionen, Perspektiven* (The Festival Play: Forms, Functions, Perspectives) (Willisau: Theaterkultur-Verlag, 1988), pp. 99 and 179-181.

[19]Otto Marchi, a trained historian, journalist, and novelist, created considerable controversy with his critical analysis of the beginnings of Switzerland in *Schweizer Geschichte für Ketzer oder die wundersame Entstehung der Eidgenossenschaft* (Swiss History for Heretics or the Wondrous Genesis of the Confederation) (Zurich: Praeger Verlag, 1971; reissued in 1981 by the rotpunktverlag in Zurich). His argument prefigured aspects of Hobsbawm and Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition*, by a decade. Max Frisch's reexamination of history in *Wilhem Tell für die Schule* (William Tell for the School) (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1971), is in this vein as well. Max Frisch maintained a critical stance towards his native country's weaknesses for virtually his entire career; for representative samples, see his *Forderung des Tages* (Challenges of the Day) (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1983), which contains portraits, sketches, and talks given since 1943.

[20]*Rapport 1979*, Konsultativkommission, Ausschuss Zentenarfeier, Innerschweizer Regierungskonferenz.

[21]"'Landi 91' – warum, für wen und wie?" (Expo 91 - Why, for Whom and How?) *Luzerner Neuste Nachrichten*, 20 June 1980; *Schweiz Suisse Svizzera Svizra 1991* (Luzern: Die Luzerner Regierungskonferenz, 1981); *Konzept CH700* (Concept CH700) (Schwyz: Initiativkomitee CH-700, 1981). That this last report was published on 1 August, the national holiday, was not accidental.

[22]*Schlussbericht der Kommission CH91* (Final Report of the Comission CH91) (Zug: CH91, 1983), pp. 28-29.

[23]The suggestion originated with Prof. Peter von Matt, a member of the CH91 Commission. Dieter Bachmann, "Keine Ausgewogenheit, keine Ideologie, keine Architektur" (No Balance, No Ideology, No Architecture), *Tages-Anzeiger Magazin* (Zurich), 19 November 1983, 20.

[24]Nineteenth-century festival plays also did not depict contemporary social realities. See de Capitani and Germann, *Auf dem Weg*, p. 326, and more generally Engler and Kreis, *Das Festspiel*.

[25]*Goldenes Buch*, p. 16.

[26]Dieter Bachmann, "Keine Ausgewogenheit," 22.

[27]These were Markus Kutter's suggestions. For nineteenth-century evidence, see Eduard Osenbrügger, *Die Schweizer daheim und in der Fremde* (The Swiss at Home and Abroad) (Berlin: Hoffmann & Co., 1874).

[28]This was Max Gmür's reaction to the "Landi 1991. Brennpunkt 2000" (Expo 1991. Focus 2000) report of the Lucerne Initiativkomitee Landi 91, *Luzerner Neuste Nachrichten* (editorial), 18 May 1978.

[29]"1991 - dezentralisierte Aktivitäten mit Schwergewicht in der Innerschweiz," (1991 - Decentralized Activities with an Emphasis on Central Switzerland) *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 31 May 1983, 35. The canton of Uri was to be given the themes of freedom and order, Obwalden would display houses and home,

Nidwalden would have the themes of health and strength, Zug got work and exchange and curiosity and research, while Schwyz was to have exhibits devoted to love and community and nourishment and agriculture, and Lucerne was to have had communication and imagery. All of the cantons were to emphasize high spirits and games. The dividing up of themes for which each canton was responsible was the perfect reflection of the necessity not to tread on anyone's toes. See Rolf Wespe, "Antworten auf die Resignation oder Kommt eine Jekami-Landi?" (Responses to Resignation, or Will there be an "Everyone-Can-Participate" Expo?) *Tages-Anzeiger* (Zurich - overseas edition), 23 April 1985.

[30]*Konzept CH700*; *Schweiz Suisse Svizzera Svizra 1991*. See also Rolf Wespe, "Antworten auf die Resignation."

[31]Rudolf Schilling, head of the CH91 Thematic Commission, cited in Volkhard Scheunpflug "CH 91 - Das Bemühen, von der 'Landi' wegzukommen," (CH91 - The Attempt to Get Away from the "Expo" Idea) *St. Galler Tagblatt*, 4 May 1985. One of the most popular parts of the 1964 Expo had been a submarine in which one could examine the bottom of the lake of Geneva, and the "model alp" had already been displayed in nineteenth-century exhibits.

[32]"Zwischenbericht über den Stand der Vorarbeiten für die Feiern zum 700-jährigen Geburtstag der Eidgenossenschaft," (Interim Report on the Status of the Preparations for the Celebration of the 700th Birthday of the Confederation) (CH91: Die Kommission), 22 April 1983, 5-9.

[33]Alois Hürlimann, quoted in Dieter Bachmann, "Keine Ausgewogenheit," 23.

[34]*Goldenes Buch*, p. 9.

[35]Bundesrat von Moos in *Goldenes Buch*, p. 7. An influential national newspaper noted, with uncharacteristic asperity, that "German-Swiss have a difficult time enjoying themselves without the legitimization of morose rituals." See "Vom Scherbenhaufen zum Fest" (From Shards to Festival), *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 16 January 1988.

[36]See Barbara Myerhoff and Sally Moore, *Secular Ritual* (Amsterdam: Van Gorcum, 1977), p. 6. They note in passing that Durkheim implied the quasi-religious character of collective beliefs such as patriotism.

[37]Comment by Martin Stern in de Capitani and Germann, *Auf dem Weg*, p. 93.

[38]de Capitani und Germann, *Auf dem Weg*, pp. 316 and 218; Engler und Kreis, *Das Festspiel*, p. 176.

[39]*Goldenes Buch*, p. 14. Antonio Planzer's words are revealing: "The Lake of Lucerne is the cradle of our home (*Heimat*). Freedom came from these holy waters. This water is the source of independence and the basis for the founding of the Swiss Confederation." See "Idee einer Landesausstellung mit Zentenarfeier 1991" (The Idea of an Exposition with a Centenary) (Zug: Eigendruck, 1978), p. 1.

[40]Interview with Prof. Urs Altermatt, *Tages-Anzeiger* (Zurich - overseas edition), 26 April 1988.

[41]Local and regional identification has if anything been strengthened, if the upsurge in the use of dialect in national and regional radio as well as in literature (at least in the Swiss-German areas) is any indication. "We have enormous problems trying to define our national culture," Markus Kutter noted. See his articles in the *Luzerner Neuste Nachrichten*, 9 December 1980; and the *Tages-Anzeiger Magazin* (Zurich), 2 May 1981. On the need to reinforce nationalism, see Palumbo and Shanahan, eds., *Nationalism: Essays in Honor of Louis Snyder*, p. 69.

[42]*Landi 1991. Brennpunkt 2000* (Luzern: Initiativkommite Landi 91, 1978), p. 3.

[43]Werner Röllin, quoted in Rolf Wespe, "Kabarettreifer Streit um Landi 91" (A Squabble Fit for a Cabaret Over Expo 91), *Tages-Anzeiger* (Zurich - overseas edition), 22 November 1979. Even the mayor of Schwyz commented that "around here people think - to put it mildly - that Lucerne is being pretty presumptuous to think of itself as the center of this area."

[44]Dieter Bachmann, "Keine Ausgewogenheit."

[45]All the regional body did was to crib from Schiller's *William Tell*. In a tense scene in which conflict over the leadership of the cantons is about to break out, the priest(!) steps in and says: "Schwyz shall lead in the council, Uri on the battlefield." See Regina Bendix, *Backstage Domains*, 1989.

[46]*Der Bund*, 26 April 1980; *Luzerner Neuste Nachrichten*, 1 March 1980, 28 March 1980 and 1 April 1980; *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 22 February 1980; and *Vaterland*, 6 March 1980.

[47]That "the people" would not be able to make the crucial decision was known already in 1981 and made the vote on money a *de facto* referendum on the plans. See *Schweiz Suisse Svizzera Svizra* 1991, p. 6 and "CH 91: Worüber stimmen die Luzerner eigentlich ab?" (CH 91: What Are the Lucerners Actually Voting About?) *Luzerner Neuste Nachrichten*, 13 April 1985.

[48]"Luzern schickt Ch91-Pläne bachab" (Lucerne Votes Down the CH91 Plans); and "Ein Nein aus Misstrauen" (A No Out of Distrust), *Luzerner Neuste Nachrichten*, 6 May 1985; "Kein Beitritt Luzerns zur

Stiftung CH 91" (No Participation by Lucerne in the CH91 Foundation), *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 6 May 1985; "Luzerner CH-91-Freunde suchen jetzt private Wege" (Lucerne Friends of CH91 Are Now Seeking Private Means), *Berner Zeitung*, 7 May 1985; "Die CH 91-Stiftung muss nun über die Bücher gehen" (The CH91 Foundation Must Now Go Over Its Books), *Luzerner Neuste Nachrichten*, 7 May 1985.

[49]The amount of money involved was not large by cantonal standards, although money issues are often used as pretext for policy opposition, as happened in the national referendum not to join the UN. Even as a non-UN member, the country was already paying about 20 million Francs to various UN agencies. There was another precedent as well: voters in the Aargau had twice turned down the cantonal government's desire to participate in the 1964 exposition. See "CH 91 ohne den Kanton Aargau?" (CH91 Without the Canton of Aargau?) *Tages-Anzeiger* (Zurich - overseas edition), 21 November 1985.

[50]"Innerschweizer Parlamente für CH-91-Kredite" (Central Swiss Parliaments in Favour of CH91 Credits), *Tages-Anzeiger* (Zurich - overseas edition), 24 February 1987; Rolf Wespe, "Patrioten hoffen auf Imagegewinn - Oekologen warnen vor den Folgen" (Patriots Hope for an Improved Image - Ecologists Warn of the Consequences), *Tages-Anzeiger* (Zurich - overseas edition), 21 April 1987; "CH91-Stiftung geht über die Bücher" (The CH91 Foundation Goes Over Its Books), *Aargauer Tagblatt*, 27 April 1987.

[51]Rolf Wespe, "Ueberlebt CH91 das Abstimmungsdebakel?" (Can the CH91 Foundation Survive the Debâcle of the Referendum?), *Tages-Anzeiger* (Zurich - overseas edition), 5 May 1987; Ruedi Hagmann, "1991 soll ein Jahr der Begegnung werden" (1991 should be a Year of Encounter), *Vaterland*, 14 January 1988.

[52]*Swiss-American Review*, 8 June 1988.

[53]Markus Kutter, "1991 - Welche Schweiz."

[54]The argument that Switzerland as a nation has a "phantom-identity" because Swiss do not "have the privilege to constitute an identity," due to an anonymous, bureaucratized world seems entirely too psychological and sociological an interpretation. Rather, the "national" identity is a contrived, intellectualized entity from an earlier era which citizens are now beginning to find onerous. The received identity is not so much illusory as *inappropriate*. The perception of an inappropriate match may be an important reason for the lengthy negotiation over Switzerland's 700th annivesary. For stimulating contributions to this debate, see Marc-Olivier Gonseth, *Images de la Suisse/Schauplatz Schweiz* (Images of Switzerland/Swiss Scene) (Berne: Société Suisse d'Ethnologie, 1989/1990), in particular the article by Susanne Knecht.

[55]De Capitani and Germann, *Auf dem Weg*, p. 243.

[56]Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, pp. 15 and 127; Horace Miner, "Community-Society Continua," in the *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* (New York, NY: Macmillan and Free Press, 1968), III, 174-180.