RÖSTIGRABEN – MYTH OR REALITY? CHALLENGES OF MULTICULTURALISM IN SWITZERLAND

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Abstract

Röstigraben is the linguistic frontier between the German- and the French-speaking Switzerland, but it is also a political expression in Switzerland referring to the cultural mentality difference between the German-speaking majority and the French-speaking minority and the latent conflicts between them. The thesis examines this cultural barrier and I will focus on this relatively modern phenomenon in order to explain the more and more visible growing gap between the German-speaking and the French-speaking Switzerland as well as the stereotypes these two groups have about each other. I will examine primarily the linguistic conflict, but since in Switzerland linguistic and religious cleavages crosscut each other, I will also analyze religious as well as socioeconomic differences. I will show the areas *Röstigraben* is especially marked in, such as linguistic differences and political decisions, and that this barrier is capable of endangering the unity and cohesion of Switzerland, but not to the extent that the country would fall apart. I will start with the concept of consociational democracy which implies the division of power between the segments of society connected by the common citizenship, but divided by ethnical, linguistical and religious lines. I will give specific emphasis to the historical settings out of which multilingualism emerged in Switzerland. Through the overview of Swiss history I will show the conditions which enabled the development of consociational democracy and through linguistic and religious particularities I will explain the uniqueness of the Swiss model of cultural pluralism. My research is based on qualitative methods, more precisely on content analysis. I analyzed journal articles from the daily and weekly press in order to see the contexts and the frequency of the word *Röstigraben* and its connections.

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Introduction

One key feature of Switzerland is its cultural diversity. As a multilingual state it is a living example of opposing the idea of national language which many state theoreticians use more and more in the formula *nation = language* and *language = nation.* There are as many as four different national languages in Switzerland – German, spoken by 64 % of the population, French (19 %), Italian (8 %) and Rhaeto-Romanic (less than 1 %) – which more or less define four different mentalities[1].

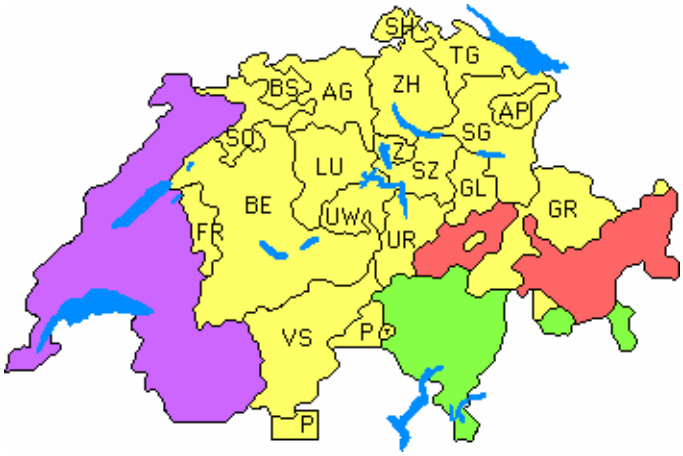

Photo 1: Diffusion of the four national languages in Switzerland *(yellow = German, violet = French, green = Italian and red = Rhaeto-Romanic)*

Switzerland has been successful at accommodating linguistic, cultural, religious and regional differences over a long history. In an age which brings along the collapse of the post-war order in Eastern Europe, bloody wars within multiethnic states as well as the extermination of certain groups, the Swiss model of the peaceful coexistence of

languages and cultures becomes even more current and interesting. However, it would be wrong to claim that different languages within the narrow borders of Switzerland have always functioned impeccably.

The cultural diversity they were once so proud of has become a big problem and the relationship between the German and the French speaking parts of the country is what the cynics would term a "hidebound marriage" between two partners who stay together because they are used to it or because of the lack of better alternatives. Some of them also claim that the Swiss model of coexistence of nations is not based on the melting pot, but on the "soft-apartheid" model (Büchi, 2000: 289).

The contemporary Swiss vocabulary contains the modern expression *Röstigraben*[2] which expresses the linguistic frontier between the German- and the French-speaking Switzerland, but it is also a political expression referring to the cultural mentality difference between the German-speaking majority and the French-speaking minority and the latent conflicts between them. The expression was coined in the seventies and since then it has spread epidemically over the whole country. *Röstigraben* divides two cultures, two languages and two different understandings of the world in modern Switzerland. Western Switzerland orientated towards Europe is in constant political and socially potential conflict with self-complacent and rich German Switzerland orientated towards itself.

[1] The remaining 8 % consist of other languages, namely those of foreign inhabitants (Serbo-Croat 1.9 %, Spanish 1.7 %, Portuguese 1.4 %, English and Turkish each 0.9 %)

[2] The word is a play on *Rösti*, a Swiss-German potato dish which originates in the Canton of Bern and *Graben* which means the rift and is referring to the rift of the Saane River which separates the language

The marked conflict started during World War I, when the German-speaking part of Switzerland sympathized with the Germans and the French-speaking part sympathized with the French, but the gap widened at the beginning of the 1990s, when several political decisions split the two major language groups. The December 1992 referendum on membership in the European Union split the population when German-speaking cantons rejected the treaty, while the French-speaking part voted for the EU entry.

However, we cannot speak of cultural pluralism in Switzerland if we do not have in mind the cultural-historical differences upon which this country was based. Historically, Switzerland was formed by linking the group of mountainous tribes into a political alliance, in order to resist the intentions of the big European forces of France, Germany and Austria to incorporate this part of Europe into their empires. The result of the long lasting life in the Franconian Empire, later under the Bourgogne dukes, the Dukes of Aosta and under Habsburgs has led to the division into German, French, Italian and Rhaeto-Romanic language areas. The German speaking part was under the direct influence of Allemanic German language (which is today spoken only on the shore of Lake Constance) and because of the fear of the cultural domination of the Germans it adopted a special characteristic, Swiss German or so called *Schwiizertüütsch*, which considerably differs from canton to canton as well as from place to place.

The traffic roads have also played an important role in the development of language and culture. The huge Alp massif which intersects Switzerland, with just a few road passes,

populations in the Canton of Fribourg. Indeed, *Röstigraben* coincides partially with the flow of the Saane, being not an actual rift, but a metaphor.

has prevented the migration and the mingling of language-cultural groups. For example, in the canton of Graubünden, the most isolated one, they still speak Rhaeto-Romanic – a mixture of Latin and some ancient dialects.

On the other hand, the reform processes which began in Zurich in 1523 and in Geneva in 1536 have led to the division into Catholics and Protestants. The first reformer in the German part of Switzerland was Ulrich Zwingli, whereas in the French part the most meritorious for the Reformation was the French reformer Guillaume Farel, who brought Calvin to Geneva. Until then Geneva was a part of the French province Savoy, and with the beginning of Reformation it got linked to Switzerland and became an international protestant metropolis. One of the consequences of the Reformation was an immense invasion of the French language and its more and more growing usage.

However, in the year 1848 the ancient religious cleavages between Protestants and Catholics were politically much more pointed than the linguistic ones. Not until 1848, as a consequence of the revolutions throughout Europe and a general expansion of national movements, had language taken over the place of religion and the country partitioned into different linguistic zones.

In the conglomerate of twenty cantons and six half-cantons[3] with the time developed the differences characterized by language, religion and social status. In addition, in the last

[3] Cantons *Aargau, Bern, Fribourg,Geneva. Glarus, Graubünden, Jura, Lucerne, Neuchâtel, St. Gall, Schaffhausen, Schwyz, Solothurn, Thurgau, Ticino, Uri, Vaud, Valais, Zug and Zurich*, as well as half-cantons *Appenzell-Ausserrhoden, Appenzell-Innerrhoden, Basel-Land, Basel-Stadt,Nidwalden* and *Obwalden*

50 years we also have to mention the cultural-social influence of about two million foreigners who live in Switzerland. The different character has been mostly prominent in the area of foreign politics, but also in the numerous questions regarding financial, social, ecological and traffic politics. The French part of Switzerland accuses the rest of the country because all the business centers are concentrated in the German part, more precisely in the so-called "golden triangle" of the metropolis Zurich. The other unbridgeable problem is the Swiss German dialect, which the rest of the Swiss population does not understand - let alone speak - but which slowly invades the state TV and radio, resulting in the communication barrier between the two language groups as well as in the exclusion of the language minorities from the debate.

What also contributed to the conflict was the awakening of the nation and regional aspirations for the autonomy, which became actualized in the 1960s throughout Europe (Northern Ireland, Basque, Corsica, Catalonia...). The strengthening of the "Romanism" as well as the establishment of *Lega dei Ticinesi* in the canton of Ticino were just some of the symptoms of the ethno-national fever which had affected the whole Europe. The catalyst was the segregation of the canton Jura in 1978, when the French-speaking majority of the canton Bern formed a separate canton.

The thesis examines this cultural barrier and in my research I will focus on this interesting modern phenomenon in order to explain the more and more visible growing gap between the German-speaking and the French-speaking part of the country. I intend to show the areas *Röstigraben* is especially marked in, such as linguistic differences and

political decisions, and that this barrier is capable of endangering the unity and cohesion of Switzerland, but not to the extent that the country would fall apart.

My research questions are following:

1) How do members of the Swiss language groups view themselves and what are the stereotypes the two groups have about each other? (historical, social, political, linguistic…). To which degree are values and attitudes shared among language groups?
2) Which differences are being perceived as a threat? (German dominance, German conservatism, disparities in power, emergence of English language which might upset the language balance…?)
3) What are the most prominent conflict fields in the Swiss society?
4) In which areas is the ditch between the German and the French Switzerland particularly strongly marked?
5) How did historical development look like and what are the basic elements of the concept of the Swiss language peace?
6) To determine whether the cohesion of Switzerland is in danger because of the existence of *Röstigraben*?

I will focus primarily on the linguistic conflict, but since in Switzerland linguistic and religious cleavages crosscut each other, I will also analyze religious as well as socioeconomic differences.

Based on the analysis of 15 newspapers and journals, my thesis is that the *Röstigraben* is not just an invented phenomenon or a trendy word; it really exists, it is visible in everyday life as well as in many political decisions, but due to the strong feeling of national cohesion it does *not* threaten the Swiss unity to the extent that the country would break apart.

So far very little research on this topic has been done, especially in the English speaking scholarship. There is a book *Röstigraben* written by Swiss journalist Christophe Büchi in 2000, which stands as the only work which covers directly this issue. Therefore, I think that there is the need for more investigation and the aim of my research is to contribute to this field and to demonstrate where my thesis stands in relation to the previously published work.

The area of my research fits within the frames of political sociology and sociology of culture with a specific emphasis on the sociology of language. I will start with the concept of consociational democracy. In distinction from the system of government and the opposition, which is present in most of today's Western democracies, the Swiss political system is based upon collaboration between the parties, and the form of democracy which exists there is called *consociational democracy*. This term was first used by Arend Lijphart and it implies the division of power between the segments of society which are connected by the common citizenship, but are divided by ethnical, linguistical and religious cleavages. I will give specific emphasis to the historical settings out of which multilingualism emerged in Switzerland. Through the overview of Swiss

history I will show the conditions which enabled the development of consociational democracy and through linguistic and religious particularities I will explain the uniqueness of the Swiss model of cultural pluralism.

My research is based on qualitative methods, more precisely on content analysis. More specifically, I analyzed journal articles from the 15 German-speaking and the French-speaking newspapers and journals *(see Table 5)* ranging from 1997 to 2008 in order to see the contexts and the frequency of the word *Röstigraben* and how its connections.

My thesis is constructed as follows: in the next two chapters I will review the existing literature, introduce a theoretical framework and historical context and provide a definition of phenomenon around which my work is based. My focus in the third chapter will be on the linguistic history of Switzerland and language conflicts. In the fourth chapter I will announce the methods I used in the empirical part of my research and in the fifth chapter I will explain the reasons for the Swiss linguistic peace. In chapter 6 I will give specific emphasis to the historical settings out of which multilingualism emerged in Switzerland. In the following two chapters I will point out to the most interesting and relevant findings. My final remarks will be summarized in the conclusion.

Chapter 1: Literature review

The Swiss political system is highly differentiated and therefore very complex. It functions as a direct democracy on three different levels: the confederation, the regions (twenty cantons and six half-cantons) and the local communities. This system is the result of Switzerland's socio-cultural and socio-political diversity and creates not only various opportunities for political articulation but also a variety of tensions among interest groups on those three levels.

In distinction from the system of government and the opposition, present in most of today's Western democracies, the Swiss political system is based upon collaboration between the parties, and the form of democracy which exists there is called *consociational democracy*. This term was first used by Dutch scholar Arend Lijphart in order to explain the democratic development in his native Netherlands, and it implies the division of power between the segments of society connected by common citizenship, but divided by ethnical, linguistic and religious lines. Consociational democracies emerge when elite groups try to overcome intensive conflicts which endanger the stability of the system, with the help of compromise and autonomy techniques. Up to one exception, Switzerland approximates the pure model perfectly and serves as the prototypical model for consociational scholars.

This type of democracy is marked by four major characteristics: grand coalition, autonomy of the segments (i.e. pillars), the rule of proportionality and veto rights of the minorities. According to Lijphart, the presumptions for the good functioning of

consociational democracy are: similar sizes of segments, overlapping cleavages, the balance of power (multiparty system with relatively few parties – three or four – is the most suit one), a small population of the country, the endangering of the country from outside and finally the loyalty toward the state as a whole and the tradition of consensus (Lijphart, 1977: 59).

In Switzerland there are four large parties – Christian Democrats (CVP[4]), Social Democrats (SP[5]), Radical Democrats (FDP[6]) and Swiss People's party (SVP[7]), which share the seven executive positions proportionately according to the so-called magic formula of 2:2:2:1, established in 1959. The three major parties are almost wholly a product of cleavages based on religion and social class, while the fourth party, The Swiss People's Party, can be seen as political expression of rural-urban cleavage (Lijphart, 1999: 37).

It is important to mention that once the smallest of the four main parties of the consociational establishment, the Swiss People's Party doubled its share of the vote under the demagogic leader Christoph Blocher to 23 % in 1999, which made it largest of all the Swiss parties. Blocher's populist strategy of resentment proved highly successful and in the most recent national election, the Swiss People's Party emerged as the most popular political party in Switzerland (Merkl, 2003: 78).

[4] *Christlichdemokratische Volkspartei*
[5] *Sozialdemokratische Partei der Schweiz*
[6] *Freisinnig-demokratische Partei*
[7] *Schweizerische Volkspartei*

Moreover, each of the three major parties has had a continuous and stable base in each of the three main language regions. Only the Swiss People's Party has the majority of representatives from German-Swiss cantons. Similarly, among the smaller parties, the Democratic, Evangelical, Independent and the anti-foreigner National Action groups have had much more success in German Switzerland, while the Liberal party has been mainly successful in French Switzerland. The small Communist party has been successful at federal level only in Geneva and Vaud since 1959.

The existence of the pre-democratic tendencies towards modesty and compromise throughout history can significantly strengthen the chances for consociational democracy. This is the case with Switzerland, which never went through a longer period of absolutism so that the traditions of dispersed power relations could have been maintained. Historically, Switzerland was formed by linking the group of mountainous tribes into a political alliance, in order to resist the intentions of big European forces to incorporate this part of Europe into their empires. Therefore, there is a very expressive and emphasized aspiration in the constitutional organization of Swiss political institutions to preserve local and regional independence, autonomy as well as certain forms of direct democracy.

According to Gerhard Lehmbruch, another major proponent of consociational theory, consociationalism serves as a strategy for the settlement of international conflict (and may be imposed from outside) or for the preservation of national integrity in a situation of international conflict. For the "take-off" of this process, in certain historical situations (for instance a political crisis) specific conditions must be present which induce the rival

elites in the political system to choose a consociational strategy. Lehmbruch distinguishes between *internal* and *external* conditions. In case of the internal conditions some basic national symbols are accepted by all elite groups in the system, past violence among the subcultures is perceived as a traumatic experience (for example religious war of the 16th century and the War of Secession of 1847 in Switzerland) and no compact majority group exists which is able to govern by a zero-sum strategy (Lehmbruch, 1975: 381).

External conditions, on the other hand, presume that all consociational democracies are relatively small states and also present is the perception of an external threat (1975: 382). What I would like to stress at this point is not simply the choice of consociational strategies in the face of external threats, because this phenomenon can be observed in culturally more homogeneous countries too, but the fact that the cooperative strategies *are not abandoned* after the end of an acute crisis but become internalized as a routine pattern of conflict regulation.

One of the very important features of consociational democracy is federalism. Switzerland is a federal state in which power is divided between the central government and the governments of twenty cantons and six half-cantons and it is one of the world's most decentralized states.

Another feature is the frequent use of referendum either as an absolute requirement or as an optional alternative. The strongest form of referendums is in combination with the popular initiative. Amendments require the approval in a referendum of not just

majorities of the voters, but also majorities in a majority of the cantons (*Ständemehr*), which enables even the smallest of the cantons to block constitutional changes (1999: 222). This is so-called "tyranny of the minority" - under this rule, theoretically 9 % of the population (the majorities in the smallest cantons) can veto a positive decision of the remaining 91 %. Empirically this has not occurred yet, but there have been cases when 20 % of the Swiss voters vetoed the affirmative decision of the other 80 % (Linder, 1994: 180-1).

The advantage of the Swiss referendum democracy is that it limits the power of political parties and its shortcoming is the relatively low turnout of the voters. The percentage of the voters who turn out on the referenda averages 55 % and in some referenda this percentage did not exceed 40 %.

The explanations for the decline of consociational democracy mostly argue that the reasons for its rise have ceased to exist. According to Hans Keman, this can be explained by institutional inertia, non-conflictual political culture of elites, which persists although its historic basis has ceased to exist, and the replacement of old cleavages (e.g. religion) by new or stronger cleavages (e.g. the regional-linguistic conflicts in Switzerland) (2002: 159). However, while consociational democracies take much longer to reach a decision, they appear to be much better in policy implementation. This is by and large due to the inclusion of the relevant groups in the process of policy formulation (Keman, 2002: 163).

As a conclusion, I will stress that consociational theory suggests that power-sharing institutions have many important consequences, not least that they are most likely to facilitate accommodation and cooperation among leadership elites, making them most suitable for states struggling to achieve stable democracy and good governance in divided societies. In the case of Switzerland it can be said that its political system is relatively unique in the world, and although as a very undynamic system it can be acceptable only for the countries with stable economy and relatively high life standard, it presents one of the greatest democratic achievements in today's world.

Chapter 2: Historical background

In the 13th century, when the Habsburg Counts tried to spread their rule towards the South and to occupy the important Alp passes, the three cantons Uri, Schwyz[8] and Unterwalden united and in 1291 they contracted a so-called "eternal alliance" (*Sonderbund*) against the surrounding aggressors. In 1798 the Old Confederation was replaced by the Helvetic Republic, imposed by Napoleon Bonaparte and after the collapse of his empire in 1814, the cantons signed a new federal pact in 1815. In 1848, the Swiss Federation changed from a union of states to a confederation.

According to the archaeological data, the life in these areas emerged already in the 16th century BC. The western parts of today's Switzerland were inhabited by the Celts and eastern ones by the Rhaets. The middle areas as well as those north from the Rhine were inhabited by the Celtic tribe Helvetians, after which the whole area was named *Helvetia*. In 58 BC Helvetians conduct the war against the Romans because they want to break into Gaul in order to settle down there. However, they do not succeed because Caesar's troops defeat them near Bibracte, they come under the Roman rule and Helvetia becomes a Roman province. The predominantly Celtic population was partially Latinized through the Roman colonization. Thus, beside Celtic customs and habits, the Roman way of life and the Roman cult developed there and Latin became the official language.

[8] Because of the ferocity of the Schwyz soldiers, their enemies used the name of this canton to designate all the confederated cantons, and later it became the name of the whole country

Around 400, pressed down by the West Goths, the Romans retreat their troops from Helvetia. In the first half of the 5th century this area becomes inhabited by the Bourgognes in the West and by the Allemanics in the North-East. The Bourgognes were of the Roman origin and the Allemanics were Germanics. All those people and language groups have been living in these areas for centuries and they influenced the character of the future inhabitants of Switzerland. The area in which the Roman way of life and the Roman customs stayed longest was so called *Rhaetia Prima*, respectively the area of the bishopric Chur. One of the consequences of that was that today's Rhaeto-Roman language originates from the language of that people - it was actually a Latin dialect derived from the elements of the language of the Rhaets, which was spoken in the whole eastern Alps area, from Gotthard to Friuli.

In the 5th century the Allemanics started to cross the Rhine and since 700 the whole area of today's Baden-Württemberg, Alsace and North Switzerland came under the rule of the Allemanic duke. The German language also penetrated in this area, namely in the form of Allemanic dialect, although for the long time the area between Aare and Reuss remained bilingual. The frontier between the Bourgogne and the Allemanic area shapes the linguistic frontier between the German- and the French-speaking part at the present days (*Birstal – Jura – Lake Biel – Lake Neuchâtel – Lake Murten – the Saane – middle Valais – Matterhorn*).

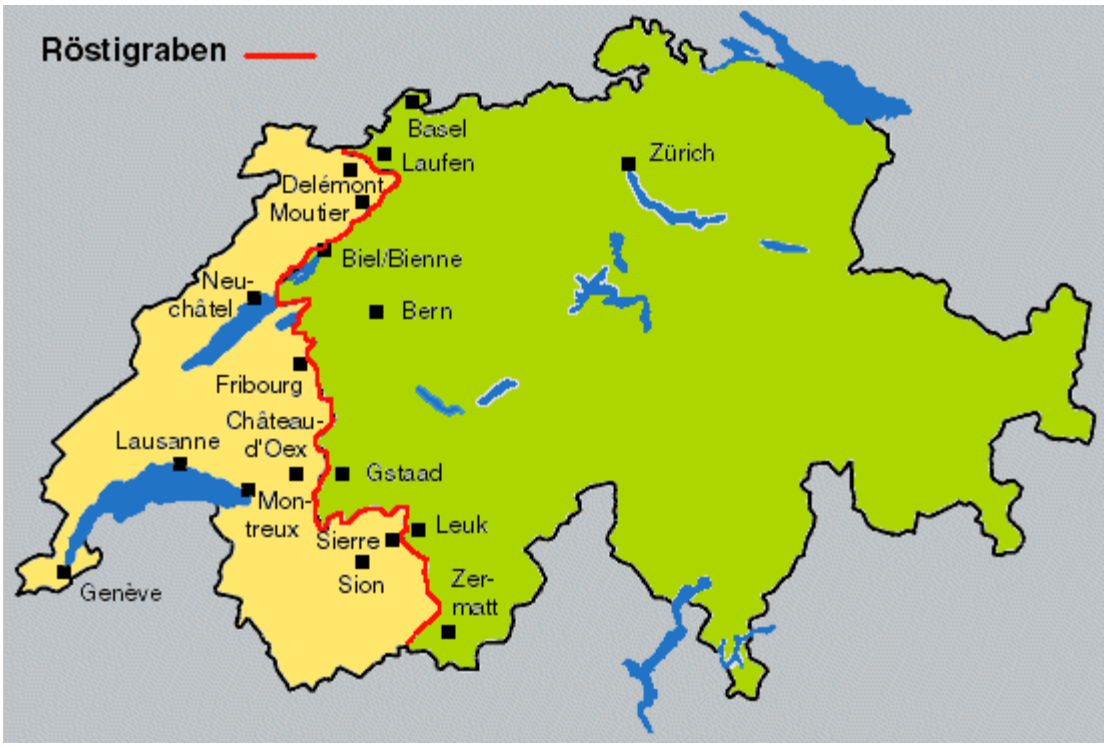

Photo 2: Linguistic frontier between the German- and the French-speaking Switzerland

Chapter 3: Linguistic history of Switzerland

For the linguistic history of Switzerland it is important to mention that since 400 BC the area of today's Northern Italy was constantly inhabited by the Celts; the Romans used to call this area *Gallia cisalpina*. The most important feature of the Celtic tribes was the Celtic language, which belongs to the Indo-European language group, and it left traces in today's languages of Switzerland. The whole area of today's Switzerland was more than 400 years under the Roman rule, and therefore under the influence of the Latin language and culture.

The West Switzerland, on the other hand, was very early and very radically Romanized, which was due to important traffic roads, the proximity of Provence and the headquarters of the provincial administration in Aventicum. However, in spite of the differences the Romans did not succeed in making Switzerland a monolingual country, owing to Germanic penetrations in this area, which brought completely different language patterns.

The Romans tried to resist the Germanic invasion with strong borders, so-called *limes* which were built by the tsar Domitian in 83 BC, and they connected the Danube east from Ulm with the Rhine by Bonn. In 260 the Romans gave up the *limes* and the land between the *limes* and the new border on Rhine came into possession of the German settlers. From many smaller groups which inhabited this area a new tribe was formed which called itself the Allemanics. In the 7th century their number grew rapidly and the Romans – as once their Celtic ancestors – gave up their language in behalf of the language of the subordinate barbarians. The Allemanic invasion of the country, the

consequence of which is today's German part of Switzerland, was going on for centuries and Allemanic was at the same time the first Germanic dialect which became German dialect.

Until 1798, when the French Revolution made all the citizens equal, in this state community the only language which was spoken was exclusively German (the only exception was Fribourg which was already then bilingual). The equality of the citizens asked for the equality of languages. The new state – The Helvetic Republic – was highly decentralized, and everything was done in three languages – German, French and Italian. However, with the fall of the Helvetic Republic the majority of its democratic achievements were gone, too – although French- and Italian-speaking Swiss were not oppressed any more, the multilingualism became questionable.

1830, the year of revolutions, brought up again the democratization and with it the actualization of the question of language. In 1848 the foundations for the federal republic were shaped and three official languages, German, French and Italian, got their place in the Constitution. With that act the rule of the German language was removed, and Switzerland became a legally multilingual state.

However, the relationship between the language groups is further complicated by the fact that in German Switzerland the colloquial language is Swiss German, which consists of a large number of dialects differing considerably from High German. During the 14th and 15th century a special version of written language was developed – *Hochdeutsch* or

Schriftdeutsch which, in the beginning, was exclusively the written language, the language of literature and education. In the middle of the 18th century the Swiss German or *Schwiizertüütsch* was mentioned for the first time. During the World War I and then again at the time of National Socialism in Germany, the distancing of Switzerland from its north neighbor became more and more signified, which was also visible on the linguistic plan. The standard German got rejected and Swiss German became a national symbol, through which one tried to distance itself linguistically from Germany.

On the other hand, less than two million people in Switzerland speak French. The dialect in French is called *patois* and one of the traditional ways of preserving the dialect is its usage by the diverse theatre groups and it can also be heard in modern music (example: Laurence Revey). However, we cannot speak of the same meaning of dialects as in the German Switzerland, in the first place because the original speakers of those dialects are very few today.

Rhaeto-Romanic means Romanic which is spoken in the area of ancient tribe of Rhaets, and it includes *Romanic* spoken in Graubünden, *Ladino* spoken in the Dolomiti and *Friulan*. As well as Italian, French, Spanish and other Roman languages, Rhaeto-Romanic was also the result of the meting between Latin and languages which were once spoken in the area occupied by Romans and, as a consequence of it, Latinized.

Beside the influence of those languages, the Rhaeto-Romanic was also under strong and intensive language contact with German, especially Swiss German and Tyrol German. It

is interesting to mention that almost every inhabitant of Graubünden is bilingual, meaning that beside Rhaeto-Romanic, he or she also speaks Swiss German; the exceptions are only the older generations who spent their entire life in the Rhaeto-Romanic language areas and very rarely or never got in touch with Swiss German. The development of tourism (ski resorts!) in Graubünden is also one of the reasons why in this canton German is more and more taking a role of the leading language and it also happens that even the Rhaeto-Romans themselves within their families and in friends circles prefer to talk Swiss German which is considered to be the language of the progress, success and social ascent.

3.1 The case of canton Jura

There is an important case in modern Swiss history, however, the exception that makes a rule, where integration and linguistic cooperation failed – the case of canton Jura. The secession of canton Jura was the result of about 40 years of pressure from separatists in the French-speaking area of Canton Bern. To explain this, it is important to know that in Switzerland, many people feel a greater solidarity with the church they belong rather that the language they speak. According to Wolf Linder, in Jura case we find the rare example of overlapping socio-economic, language and religious differences within Swiss state. However, this overlap was not equal throughout the region, because the southern part was better off and had a Protestant majority; thus, the population was divided into pro and anti-separatist movements (Linder, 1994: 67).

Let me just briefly explain the history of Jura region. Much of the land that today makes up Canton Jura once, more precisely in 999, belonged to the Bishopric of Basel. This area was a sovereign state within the Holy Roman Empire for more than 800 years. In the Congress of Vienna in 1815 the Jura was annexed to the Canton Bern. The Jura was French-speaking and Roman Catholic, whereas the canton of Bern was mostly German-speaking and Protestant. An autonomist tendency started to appear as early as 1830. According to Bruno Schoch, the economic depression of the 1930s hit the region particularly hard and while the Catholic parts of the region went into economic stagnation, Biel and the districts of Saint Imier and Moutier rose to become centers of the Swiss clock- and watchmaking industry. They attracted immigrants on a mass scale who settled in the southern Jura, strengthening its ties with Bern (Schoch, 2000: 51).

In 1959 a widely supported popular initiative resulted in a referendum on the separation of the Jura. As expected, the voters of the canton Bern rejected the proposal by an overwhelming majority, but the initiative was also narrowly defeated in the Jura itself – Schoch argues argues at this point that once again, the old opposition between north and south had proved stronger than language (Schoch, 2000: 52).

In 1974 a narrow majority of the residents of the Jura voted for an independent canton, but the southern part of the Jura region, being predominantly French-speaking with a Protestant majority, did not join the newly-formed canton and instead remained part of Bern. This area is known as *Bernese Jura*. The northern Jura formed itself into a canton and the secession was approved in a national referendum conducted in 1978. Today, the

canton Jura is divided into three districts: Delémont, Porrentruy and Franches-Montagnes. The population is almost entirely French-speaking and just one municipality, Ederswiler, is German-speaking. The capital of Jura is Delémont.

The result of the national vote (1 310 000 votes *for* and 280 000 *against*) was interpreted as "revealing the great respect and understanding of the Swiss people for its minority groups" (Linder, 1994: 67). On the other hand, McRae reminds us that some critics regretted the prospect of a divided Jura and considered this solution through voters' choice to be a "departure from Swiss traditions of moderation and compromise among elites" (McRae, 1983: 191). However, this solution was modern in the sense that it rejected the nationalist formula of "one people, one language, one culture, one state".

Chapter 4: Methodology

The first part of my research was done in April 2008 when I visited Switzerland and the second part was done later, online. The research is based on qualitative methods, more precisely on content analysis. More specifically, I analyzed journal articles in order to see the contexts and the frequency of the word *Röstigraben* and how it is connected with my argument that, although visible in everyday life as well as in many political decisions, it does not threaten the Swiss unity to the extent that the country would break apart.

As sources for my research I used miscellaneous national reports and press data from the Swiss Federal Office of Statistics, press articles from the German-speaking and the French-speaking press as well as my own personal impressions and observations which I collected on both sides of *Röstigraben* during my life in Switzerland. Apart from that, I used secondary literature such as academic books and journal articles, articles from the popular press and primary historical sources.

In Switzerland all daily newspapers with a circulation over 100'000 are owned by multimedia companies. Ringier, the largest publishing company, owns the tabloid *Blick* (309'444) and its Sunday edition *Sonntagsblick* (336'336), the leading Sunday newspapers. The second largest publishing company is Tamedia, the owner of the leading quality newspaper *Tages-Anzeiger* with a circulation of 250'000 copies. Tamedia publishes also the *Sonntags Zeitung*, a Sunday paper with a circulation of 221'100. In addition it has a minority share in the leading newspaper in Bern, the *Berner Zeitung* (162'202), owned by the publishing company Espace Media Group. The third salient

media company is AG für die Neue Zürcher Zeitung, which publishes the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* (170'113) and controls *St. Galler Tagblatt* (110'502), *Der Bund* in Bern (68'212) and – as minority shareholder – *Neue Luzerner Zeitung* (133'820).

The leading publishing house in the French-speaking region is Groupe Edipresse (based in Lausanne), which controls two-thirds of the newspaper circulation with the four large dailies: *24 Heures* (88'467), *La Tribune de Genève* (77'420), *Le Matin* (65'121) and *Le Temps* (53'526).

In my research I included seven leading dailies from German Switzerland – *Tages-Anzeiger*, *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, *Berner Zeitung*, *Südostschweiz*, *Neue Luzerner Zeitung*, *St. Galler Tagblatt*, *Basler Zeitung* as well as *Der Bund (see Table 1)* and Sunday paper *Sonntags Zeitung (see Table 3)*. Two of those newspapers are based in Zurich and Bern and each one in Chur, Lucerne, St Gall and Basle respectively. I also analyzed the three leading dailies from the French speaking part – the Geneva based *La Tribune de Genève* and *Le Temps* and Lausanne based *Le Matin (see Table 2)*. I also included in the research three main weeklies from German Switzerland - *Facts* (103'363), *Weltwoche* (90'000) and *Wochenzeitung* (15'000) *(see Table 4)*.

The criteria for including those newspapers and not others were firstly their circulation data and secondly their online availability – all of the above mentioned newspapers have also their online editions, which considerably facilitated my research. More precisely, I

included every article where the word *Röstigraben* showed up (I looked for it in the online editions of the newspapers) and I came to the number of 927 articles *(see Table 5).* I excluded the articles which were not relevant to my thesis, e.g. those where the word *Röstigraben* appeared in, for example, culinary context or in the connection with the diverse beauty contexts. Using this method, I narrowed the number of articles to slightly more than 100, which I then thoroughly read and analyzed. The time span for the analyzed articles ranges between 1997 and 2008.

In addition to this, I also used some of my previous notes taken when writing my BA thesis three years ago as well as my own notes taken during my high school education in Bern between 1991 and 1995.

Chapter 5: Reasons for the Swiss linguistic peace

5.1 The most important cleavages in Swiss society

There are several demographic, political and institutional factors that can explain why Switzerland has never experienced mass linguistic discord or, as Schoch calls them, "irresolvable tensions" between its various linguistic and cultural areas. According to Carole Schmid, the first and the most important factor that helped neutralize language conflicts in Switzerland is the fact that cleavages crosscut linguistic borders. The most obvious cleavage is the religious division between Protestants and Catholics, which has been characteristic of Switzerland since the Reformation and may probably be accounted as the most persistent source of internal tensions in Swiss history. Since the Reformation, the Swiss citizens have been fairly evenly divided along religious lines - there are French-speaking Catholics and French-speaking Protestants as well as German-speaking Catholics and German-speaking Protestants. Only the Italian speakers are nearly all Catholics. The conflict between city and land cantons in the Middle Ages, the struggle between Catholic and Protestant places after the Reformation, even the war between conservative and liberal cantons in the last century ran usually across the language borders. This so-called "cross-cutting cleavages" defused the tensions between German Swiss and French Swiss until nowadays. A Protestant Geneva-based inhabitant, for example, stands nearer to a German-speaking person from Basel than to a French-speaking Catholic from Fribourg.

Further, there is the question of urban-rural division. French Switzerland has two of the five largest metropolitan areas (Geneva and Lausanne) against three in German

Switzerland (Zurich, Basel and Bern). Italian Switzerland does not have cities of this size, but does have three smaller urban concentrations, namely Lugano, Locarno and Bellinzona. The Romansh region is disadvantaged in this respect, having no urban concentration above 5 000 (Chur). However, there has been a trend to centralization in favor of a single metropolis which nowadays acts as a factor of disequilibrium in the Swiss federal system. The problem is not so much between French and German part as between the Zurich region and the rest of the country.

A third line of cleavage, which arises from the special Swiss geographical setting, is that between the mountain population and that of the more densely populated and more developed Plateau region. From a linguistic point of view, the mountain areas account for 12 % of the German-speaking, 20 % of the French- and Italian-speaking respectively, but 80 % of the Romansh speaking population. This means that Romansh speakers are more severely disadvantaged in terms of the potential of their region for economic development.

Finally, there are social class cleavages and those of economic well-being. While the French and German Swiss follow the relatively similar occupational patterns, the Romansh region is more traditional and more oriented to family enterprise, with almost two thirds of its employers coming from the agricultural sector.

In addition to this, Schmid argues that the relatively equal distribution of wealth between French and German Switzerland has contributed to linguistic harmony. For many years

there were no prosperity differences between the Swiss regions (the Geneva-sea area, for example, belonged for a long time to the markedly wealthy areas of Switzerland) and Switzerland did not have a superior economic metropolis, but several regional centers: Zurich, Basel, Bern, Geneva and Lausanne. Chemical firms are concentrated around Basel and the largest insurance companies and two of the three dominant banks have their head offices in Zurich. Both parts have an equal concentration of watch-making firms and in Lausanne is the headquarters of world famous chocolate factory Nestlé. This polycentric economic structure certainly neutralized the tensions between the German and French Switzerland.

However, my remark here is that this has to be taken into account very carefully, because the situation has slightly changed in the last couple of years. The spectacular growth of Zurich as a financial centre has threatened the equilibrium of a Switzerland formerly balanced among several urban centers. These slowly growing imbalances in economic resources can hardly be described as conflictual but they do constitute a source of concern. The question whether Zurich will emerge as a single dominant metropolis is an issue important from a language perspective. The other side of uneven development is the economic marginality of the Jura area, Ticino and Graubünden, though they share that characteristic with other cantons where marginality has no linguistic repercussions.

5.2 Decentralized federalism and cantonal autonomy

The second factor Schmid mentions – and in no case less important – is decentralized federalism and cantonal autonomy (Schmid, 2001: 137). Switzerland is one of the world's most decentralized states and is divided between the central government and the governments of twenty cantons and six half-cantons.

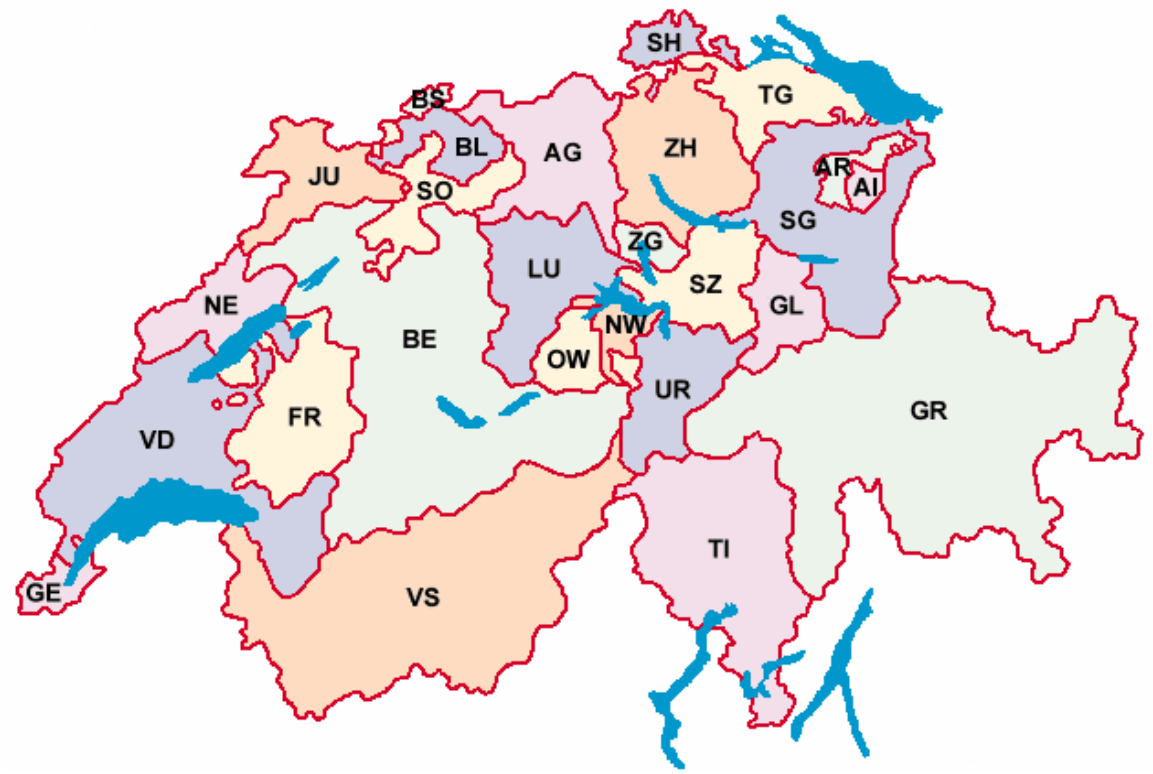

Photo 3: The Swiss Cantons

According to the 1848 Constitution, Switzerland is the parliamentary federal republic, confederation, but formally federation. At the same time, it is also the only referendum democracy in the world because its citizens have the right of direct arbitrations about all the important questions via referendum, which allows all the citizens the participation in the decision making process.

The very frequent use of referendum and popular initiative has its roots in the medieval institution, the so-called *Landesgemeinde*, the popular assembly of the mountain cantons where the sovereign body of full-aged citizens (men only!) had the ultimate right to accept or reject confederal decisions. This assembly in which all the citizens gathered in one place originated in small mountain cantons of German Switzerland whose ancestors – the Allemanic tribe – preserved for a very long time, because of the inaccessibility of the regions they inhabited, the institutions of military democracy and tribal system. This form of assembly can technically be applied only in the regions with a small number of inhabitants and nowadays it exists only in the two small cantons (Glarus and Appenzell-Innerrhoden) which have 25'000 and 40'000 inhabitants respectively.

Furthermore, not only is the state highly decentralized, but the primary locus of political identification for most Swiss lies in the cantons, and Schoch argues that it is the key to understanding Swiss linguistic peace (Schoch, 2000: 17). The devotion to the cantons is in Switzerland called *Kantönligeist* ("canton spirit") and in more simple words, it means that among Swiss citizens the canton feeling is much stronger than the feeling to be part of a linguistic or religious unit.

Chapter 6: Swiss cultural pluralism

The two most important ingredients of Swiss cultural pluralism are the ethnic-linguistic and the religious structure of the Swiss population. One of the reasons why linguistic nationalism came so late in Switzerland is the youth of the Swiss nation. The original defensive alliance of 1291 consisted of three mountainous cantons, Uri, Schwyz and Unterwalden[9]. Those cantons were exclusively German-speaking and linguistic diversity was hardly significant in this early period. It is also worth mentioning that German remained the only official language of the Confederation until 1798 – only in 1803 did the state, with the access of Ticino, included the significant number of Italian-speakers and only in 1815 did it come into possession of French-speaking parts of Valais, Geneva and Neuchâtel.

On 6th November 1848 the first Federal Assembly was held in Bern, a city which was chosen to be the Capital of the Confederation. The new confederal Constitution was brought, based not on the ethnic, but on the civic model of the nation. Respecting the regional and cantonal particularities coexistence model between majority and minority peoples as well as between different religions was created. Since then Switzerland was regarded as a model case for integrating the linguistic and ethnic minorities.

The second reason for the late emergence of nationalism was the backwardness of the country which – in combination with the lack of useful natural resources – contributed to the fact that mightier neighbors did not "absorb" it. It might be difficult for us to imagine

today that until World War II Switzerland was a poor rural country (with exception of Zurich which was already then a rich city, primarily because of the silk trade which dates into the 14th century), however, this backwardness was not just economic, but also political and cultural.

The breaking point was World War I because Switzerland was the only country in Central Europe which was neutral, which traded with everyone and profited from everyone. Because of the well developed bank system, Switzerland became the place where the rich from all over the world invested their (or foreign, but snatched away) money. During the big economy crisis in the 1930's a huge unemployment wave reached Switzerland, but thanks to invested wealth they manage to sustain and there was not a single sign of radicalization, which was a unique case in Europe then. They faced extremely rapid development after World War II because their economy was not significantly affected during the war. The big economic development went hand in hand with the lack of working labor so that in the 1950s they started to import foreign workers. Switzerland became an immigration destination and nowadays has one of the highest rates of foreigners in Europe, more than half of which are Italian nationals.

The major cleavages in the Middle Ages were those between rural and urban cantons, and after the Reformation between Protestant and Catholic ones. The Reformation split Switzerland into two opposing camps. Zurich (which was the first reformed city), St. Gall, Schaffhausen, Basel and Bern immediately adhered to Protestantism, while most of the

[9] Later, in the 14th century, the canton Unterwalden was divided into half-cantons *Obwalden* and *Nidwalden*

rural cantons as well as the cities Lucerne, Zug, Solothurn and Fribourg rejected the new faith[10]. The reasons for the rejection were the strong traditional consciousness together with the influence of the powerful families on the land and patricians in the cities who feared the danger for their privileges.

It is important to mention at this point that from the Reformation onward, religious divisions became the primary line of cleavage, leading to numerous armed conflicts. In the 19th century this cleavage partially transformed into a struggle between liberalism and Catholic conservatism and the same period was also the formative period of mass political parties.

In her book *Conflict and Compromise in Multilingual Societies: Switzerland* Kenneth McRae states that language cleavages "appear relatively late in Swiss history and remain subordinate in relation to the more salient cleavages of religion and social class" (McRae, 1983: 46). The second part of this statement might have been true 25 years ago, when McRae's book was published, but certainly not in the last ten years and especially not today when the linguistic variety of which Switzerland was once so proud of, threatens to become a problem.

6. 1 Röstigraben – the cultural barrier which divides the country

As I wrote in the introduction of my thesis, above all the relations between German and French Switzerland give rise for the concern. Kurt Mayer gave probably the best

[10] In the cantons Glarus and Graubünden religion was divided on equal terms, and from the canton of Appenzell two half-cantons emerged: Catholic *Innerrhoden* and Protestant *Ausserrhoden*

explanation of *Röstigraben*: "The dividing line between the French- and German-speaking zones is not marked by any natural boundaries [although it coincides with the flow of the Saane river]. This is a purely historical line created at the end of the 5th century BC by the influx of German-speaking Allemani into the territory previously occupied by another Germanic tribe, the Burgundians, who had, however, become Latinized. This line eventually evolved into the language boundary between the French- and the German- speaking zones of Switzerland" (Mayer, 1951: 161).

Beside that, *Röstigraben* is a good example of the fact that also in one's own country prejudices towards others exist[11]. However, only rarely are there bad intentions behind it and the prejudices may not always be taken completely seriously.

In the First World War it came to a pronounced conflict, as German Swiss sympathized with the Germans and French Swiss sympathized with the Frenchmen. At that time Switzerland was very close to breaking apart. Such a threatening situation happened never again since then, but numerous votes in the recent past show that *Röstigraben* is more than just a catchword.

As I just mentioned above, during World War I Switzerland almost broke apart when the political elites opted for different sides in the conflict between its neighbors – the majority of German-speaking Swiss identified with the German side, whereas the French-speaking population sympathized with France. Carole Schmid talks about "a deep fissure, which came to be known as the trench (*Graben* or *fossé*), opened between French and

German Switzerland and [which] threatened to destroy the moral unity of the country" (Schmid, 2001:128).

In November 1918, just when the war in Europe ended, the militant general strike began in Switzerland. 250'000 strikers were opposed to 100'000 soldiers and the strike happened particularly in the bastions of the Social Democrats: Zurich, Basel, Bern, Schaffhausen, Biel and La Chaux-de-Fonds. The general strike split Switzerland: on the one side there was a radicalized workers' movement, on the other side a frightened bourgeoisie. Anyhow, the social ditch shifted attention from the linguistic cleavage to the division across class and economic lines and the ditch between the German and the French Switzerland temporarily stepped into the background. However, although they were overlapped by the social question, the divergences between the two language groups were by no means eliminated.

Nevertheless the interest in the relationships between the German and the French Switzerland grew particularly in the media. And sometime in the seventies the metaphors such as *Röstigrenze*, *Röstigraben* and similar word combinations began to pop up. According to Christophe Büchi, oldest known written proof comes from the year 1979 and it involves a polemical contribution of the magazine *Sprachspiegel* against the use of the word *Röstigrenze* (Büchi, 2000: 259). In the following years the *Rösti*-metaphor spread epidemically over the country and newspaper accounts from the later 1990s

[11] It is, however, remarkable that there are no similar prejudices towards Italian Switzerland

onwards are filled with the renewed opening of a *Röstigraben* between French and German Swiss.

Let me start with some examples I found during my research which show that the usage of this word is very frequent nowadays. The Graubünden based daily *Südostschweiz* from 25th November 2002 speaks about "one Switzerland with two faces[12]" and in *Die Weltwoche* November 2004 issue Markus Schneider writes about "Switzerland, consisting of two halves: on the left side the one of the casual west, on the right side the one of the strict east", adding that "the Western part of Switzerland in various regard goes beyond the language border.[13]" Stefan von Bergen states in his 2007 article *"Andere Fronten und Köpfe"* that it is undisputed "that there is a line, which divides our country into two political mentality regions[14]" and *Südostschweiz* from 27th November 2000 reports about "two fronts which stand opposite to each other."

There are several reasons for the widening gap, and one of them is the language situation in Switzerland, which has significantly changed in the last decade or two. In the German-speaking cantons the second national language learned is French, while in the French-speaking cantons the second national language learned is German. The third language once used to be Italian, which in the last decade has been losing a battle with English as the third language learned in the schools.

[12] *"Eine Schweiz mit zwei Gesichtern"*
[13] *"Schon diese wenigen statistischen Extremwerte deuten auf eine Schweiz, bestehend aus zwei Hälften: links der legere Westen, rechts der strenge Osten. Wobei die Westschweiz in vielerlei Hinsicht weit über die Sprachgrenze hinauslappt."*

English is rapidly gaining on importance, not only in school education. Apart from its attractiveness to young people it is irreplaceable in the communication in areas such as science, business and leisure. In a letter to the editor published in *St. Galler Tagblatt* issue from 26th January 1998, parents from some school children wrote that "today most instructions of use are written in English, which became the communication language in most industries of the working sphere and which everybody will have to know sooner or later.[15]"

What is a very interesting feature of Switzerland is that today young Swiss people, in order to overcome the language barrier, are more and more using English among themselves. According to Bruno Schoch, the major issue in the future will therefore be whether the three national languages will become isolated from each other as a result of the predominant position of English (Schoch, 2000: 55).

However, in the French-speaking newspaper *Le Temps* of 12th May 2001 I found another letter to the editor, which claims that "French should receive further priority, because it is our second national language, because we want to be able to communicate with the west Swiss too. Of course, English can be introduced, but French may not suffer from it. How do we otherwise want to solve the problems with *Röstigraben*?" asks the unsigned reader.

[14] *"Unbestritten ist unter den Politgeografen, dass es eine Scheidelinie gibt, die unser Land in zwei politische Mentalitätsregionen teilt."*
[15] *"Das meiste ist heute englisch beschrieben (z. B. Computer-, Verpackungsbeilagen). In den meisten Branchen der Arbeitswelt ist Englisch zur Verständigungssprache geworden."*

Barbara Ramel, a reader who wrote a letter to *St. Galler Tagblatt* on 12th February 2000 argues that "we should be honest and admit that *Röstigraben* cannot be eliminated by French instruction at school, but perhaps we can build bridges with English.[16]

Further language problem is a Swiss specificity in the form of Swiss German dialect(s), which is one of only four examples of *diglossia*[17] in the world. The widely used term S*chwyzertüütsch* represents not a single language, but a wide range of local and regional dialects that are generally classed as High Allemanic[18] and they become stronger and more archaic in the Alpine valleys towards the Southwest (Upper Valais) and Southeast (Graubünden). Most of these dialects are mutually comprehensible and they are spoken by people regardless of their educational level or social class.

However, the dialect has a high social prestige among Swiss Germans and its continuing existence and resistance to standardization emphasize the desire of Swiss Germans to maintain an identity distinct from Germany. High German is used – or is supposed to be used - in secondary and post-secondary education, the churches, the army and – although less rigorously – in public meetings, most legislative bodies and broadcasting. As Bruno Schoch rightly notices, massive incursion which the dialect has made over the last 20 years into areas formerly reserved to High German makes communication across internal Swiss borders more difficult and is a constant cause of complaint from members of the other three language groups (Schoch, 2000: 16).

[16] *"Seien wir doch ehrlich, der Röstigraben wurde auch durch den Französischunterricht in der Schule nicht schmäler. Vielleicht lässt sich mit Englisch Brücken bauen."*
[17] The coexistence of two forms of the same language in a speech community.
[18] With a few exceptions, such as those of Basel (Low Allemanic) or Samnaun (Tyrolean)

A further interesting fact is that although there are many dialects in Switzerland, sometimes it happens that economic power of some cities and the domination of their mass media cause heavy spread of certain dialects, as is nowadays the case with Zurich dialect (*Züritüütsch*), which is used in the wider region of Zurich and figures as a *"dialectus francus"*, being the most likely dialect to be heard on radio and TV.

Until 20th century the usage of the dialect was restricted to the sphere of the private life. In public life, especially after the Reformation, High German was preferred. However, higher strata (patricians) and bourgeoisie of some cities like Basel and Bern preferred French and used it in everyday life, which we can see today in a lot of French words which are still used in the spoken Swiss German.

According to McRae, there are obvious historical reasons for the prominence of French which "for more than two centuries dominated European culture and ... was the language of civilized discourse" (McRae, 1983: 103). The historical roots of this prestige derive from the use of French by ruling aristocracies in several German-speaking cantons from the 17th century onwards, from longstanding close relations with the Kings of France and, last but not least, from the position of French as the language of diplomacy and of international organizations.

Besides, Schoch mentions that the French-speaking Switzerland never regarded itself culturally as a minority or inferior – on the contrary, "it always had the status of a model

in many areas of everyday life such as culture, cuisine, table-manners, etiquette, fashion, and intellectual style – in short, *savoir vivre*" (Schoch, 2000: 64). This "compensatory balance" indisputably defused the language relations.

On the other hand, Schoch stresses that Italian lacks the kind of "charisma" which gave French its prestige for such a long time. The probable reason is that since the start of labor-based immigration in the second half of the last century Italian has been regarded – and continues to be regarded – as the language of the guest workers (2000: 50). Moreover, until 1996 when *Universitá della Svizzera Italiana* was opened in Lugano and Mendrisio, Ticino students who wanted to pursue university studies had to study in Swiss institutions in other language or in universities in Italy.

Chapter 7: Different voting patterns

The second main reason for the widening gap between the German- and the French-speaking part of Switzerland are different voting patterns in those two country parts. This difference became especially visible on 6th December 1992 when the Swiss people, in a popular vote, turned down membership of the EU. No other political decision since World War II has been of such a crucial importance to Switzerland than this one as the vote left behind a divided nation. The voters' turnout amounted to a considerable 78 %, a record level, which had never been reached since AHV[19]-vote in 1947. All the French cantons, as well as both Basels accepted the proposal with majorities of up to 80 %, all other cantons refused it (some cantons such as Zurich and Bern however scarcely) with majorities of up to 74 %. Urban regions and better-educated people were in favor of the treaty, rural areas and lesser-educated people rejected it. The consequence was that the *Röstigraben* widened again and even with all the will in the world could not be argued away.

All the Swiss newspapers reported on this event, and further analyzed the popular vote. *Berner Zeitung* wrote that it was seldom a case that "a vote engaged Swiss population in such a manner, which is expressed in the extraordinarily high voters' turnout." Moreover, the newspapers mentioned that "the victory against the EU made SVP-leader Christoph Blocher the leader of a broad opposition movement, which soon began to spread itself beyond the foreign policy questions[20]. A French Swiss journalist from *Le Temps* used the

[19] *Alters- und Hinterlassenenversicherung* (= old age pension)
[20] *"Der Sieg gegen den EWR macht SVP-Führer Christoph Blocher zum Leader einer breiten Oppositionsbewegung, die schon bald über die Aussenpolitik hinaus wirkt."*

expression "black Sunday" as a metaphor for the results of the votes, which shows us how disappointed people were in the French part of the country.

However, the 1992 EU vote was not an exception. Moreover, the same kind of voting pattern has occurred repeatedly since then – the 1994 vote on facilitating naturalization for young foreigners or the 1995 vote on the relaxation of restrictions on the acquisition of landed property by foreigners, the so-called *Lex Friedrich*, being just some of the examples which divided the two parts of the country.

It is not new that Switzerland has long been a "secret battlefield" for anti-immigrant agitation. Since 1965, there have been several popular initiatives to limit the percentage of foreigners in the country. The most recent one, in 2000, tried to reduce the percentage of foreign residents from the current 19.3 % to 18 %, which would have meant the expulsion of 100'000. Half of the targeted "foreigners" were actually born in Switzerland or had lived there for at least 15 years. Finally, there were two proposals from 2004 for the facilitated naturalization of foreigners of the second and third immigrant generations, which were also rejected by the majority of the German-speaking population, while they were accepted in the French-speaking areas.

The rejection of both naturalization proposals was differently commentated in Swiss press. While some papers saw it as "a victory of the demagogues" for the others it was a clear indication of a "diffuse discontent with the policy on foreigners". The verdict for the west Swiss *Le Temps* was "a slap for the foreigners". According to *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*

of 27th September 2004 "the left wing parties and trade unions were also disappointed". The Swiss trade union federation spoke about a "punch against the integration" and the Greens of an "evidence of incapacity for democratic Switzerland". Genny Russo, the president of the IG Secondas[21], stated in the same papers that "young foreigners should only work and pay taxes, but they do not have to say anything.[22]" French Swiss papers *Le Matin* and *Le Temps* agreed that the *No* was due to an ugly and foreigner-hostile rushing campaign of the SVP and similar was the attitude of *Berner Zeitung* which stresses that "*Röstigraben* was never that deep.[23]"

Right and populist parties, under the leadership of Christoph Blocher, the leader of the Swiss People's party, have therefore managed with heavy campaign against the "endangering of the Swiss identity" to obstruct the ideas of the Government to enable the obtaining of citizenship for the immigrant children, meaning that Switzerland keeps the most restrictive legislature in Europe in regard to citizenship.

7.1 Reasons for the anti-EU trend in Switzerland

But let me shortly go back to the 1992 treaty. At that time Switzerland had the biggest economic crisis in the last 50 years. The number of unemployed in French Switzerland was between 10 and 14 %, while in German Switzerland it amounted to 4 %. West Swiss thought that only the binding up with Europe will get them out of economic difficulties, while the German Swiss tended to further isolation. It seems that the latter were right,

[21] Interest group Secondas

[22] *"Enttäuscht zeigten sich auch die Linksparteien und Gewerkschaften. Der Schweizerische Gewerkschaftsbund (SGB) sprach von einem Schlag gegen die Integration, die Grünen von einem Armutszeugnis für die demokratische Schweiz. Das Nein stehe am Ende einer hässlichen und fremdenfeindlichen Hetzkampagne der SVP. Offenbar wolle die Schweiz von den Secondos nur profitieren, sagte Genny Russo, Präsidentin der IG Secondas."*

because today, the number of unemployed in Switzerland has decreased to only 3 %. On the other hand, the Swiss Franc appreciated by 6.5 %, which was the latest occurrence of revaluation in the last 100 years.

For many French Swiss the EU treaty signaled a more open Swiss society. On the other hand was the German Swiss point of view built on the historical myth of Switzerland as a special case (*Sonderfall Schweiz*) or, as Schmid describes it, "a small Alpine nation that has constantly been endangered and that must continue to be vigilant against potential threats to neutrality, direct democracy and independence of the small and affluent nation-state" (Schmid, 2001: 132). Fearing losing political neutrality, federalism and direct democracy as well as an authentic Swiss culture and skeptical about "big government", foreign influence, international bureaucracies and foreign political engagement, the German Swiss believed that the country was still strong enough to go alone.

Moreover, it is a well known fact that the German Swiss identify themselves more strongly with the political institutions and particularly with direct democracy (the aforementioned institution of *Landesgemeinde* is completely unknown in the French part of the country). A striking proof is a very recent article *"Urne ist den Romands fremd"* written by Denise Lachat from *The Bund* who explains why the initiative for implementing this old-fashioned way of voting into the French part of the country failed. Lachat also argues that "German Swiss citizen municipalities are still embodied

[23] *"Der Röstigraben war noch selten so tief."*

particularly in the land cantons and it is imaginable that this circumstance also leads to a restrictive attitude in naturalization questions.[24]"

Beside that German Swiss have a split relationship to Germany, the French Swiss, in contrast, demonstrate a more relaxed relationship to their French neighbors. Moreover, Büchi mentions the fact that in the beginning of the 1990's the European Union was coined by the strong French personalities such as Jacques Delors and François Mitterrand, which might have likewise strengthened the sympathy of the French Swiss for Europe (Büchi, 2000: 266).

And finally, the economic situation might have also played a significant role. At the beginning of the 1990's the recession reached Switzerland and it hit particularly fast and particularly hard the French part of the country. Consequence was that unemployment rose in the Romandy rapidly (until today it lies significantly higher than in German Switzerland). Thus, in 1992 the Romandy already stood in a mood of crisis, while German Switzerland partly still thought itself safe.

Six years ago Switzerland became a member of the United Nations (with the support of 55 % of the voters) and the daily *Le Matin* paraphrased Neil Armstrong's words and said that *"it is a very small step for the United Nations but a big step for Switzerland."*[25]. Jürg Sohm from the *Berner Zeitung* argues that "the fear of the political isolation was

[24] *"In der Deutschschweiz wiederum sind Bürgergemeinden laut Schuler vor allem in den Landkantonen teils noch stark verankert, und es ist denkbar, dass dieser Umstand auch zu einer restriktiven Haltung in Einbürgerungsfragen führt."*
[25] http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/low/world/europe/1854240.stm

considered as the principal reason for the Swiss *Yes* to the UN, to which in the meantime belong almost all the states of the world.[26]"

This situation was much different than that of 1986 when the Swiss people decisively rejected an entry to the UN, whereby all cantons produced negative majorities. What is more interesting is that even the voters of the canton Geneva which, beside New York, serves as a UN seat, rejected the entry with more than two thirds. According to Büchi it is a very good indicator "that it was not always that the Romandy would have proven its world openness at any time" (Büchi, 2000: 265).

On the other hand, although Switzerland is not an EU member it has numerous bilateral agreements with the Union in areas such as agriculture, air traffic, research and many more. Switzerland is also a part of the Schengen zone and it ratified the Schengen/Dublin agreement, which foresees that an asylum seeker who has been rejected asylum in one country member of the Union cannot apply for asylum in any other EU country, which would decrease the number of asylum requests in Switzerland by 20 %. Beside that, Switzerland is a member of OSCE, Council of Europe and EFTA, it participates in the NATO Partnership for Peace and it also ratified the Kyoto protocol. Although not a NATO member, the yearly budget for the army in Switzerland amounts to an amazing 4.6 billion Francs!

[26] *"Die Angst vor der politischen Isolierung gilt als Hauptgrund für das recht klare Ja zum Beitritt zur Uno, der inzwischen alle Staaten der Welt angehören."*

How can we then explain the big Euro-skepticism of the Swiss people? The key argument of the *Europhiles* – that it would raise the life standard – is rather irrelevant for the Swiss: they already have higher life standard than the unified Europe. The economic structure is stable, the unemployment is around the biological rate of 2 % (meaning that everybody works who can and wants to work), and the Swiss Franc is reliable and strong.

Among many reasons why the Swiss citizens do not want to join the EU, three seem crucial for me: *firstly*, the costs of EU membership are too high, meaning that Switzerland's contributions for the less developed members of the Union would be bigger than its benefits. *Secondly*, the appropriation of the EU regulations in the area of the European single market, in the making of which Switzerland did not participate. And *thirdly*, the high degree of direct decisions of citizens through referenda in Switzerland, which is not always the case in the European Union where some decisions are made by its institutions (Council of Europe, European Parliament, etc...). Moreover, there is also a concern in regard to the application of the rule about free movement of people, which would enable free employment and settling of all the EU citizens in Switzerland, a country where every fifth inhabitant is already a foreigner.

One further argument could be that Brussels would like Switzerland to harmonize its legislature with that of the EU, which would mean stronger control over Swiss banks as well as the "revealing" of the "centenary holy Swiss bank secret", for which they are, understandably, not ready yet. Moreover, Switzerland is well aware of the fact that its neutrality spared it from the war tragedies which in the last 500 years made the lives of

its neighbors miserable and it considers the neutrality as a part of its national identity which is not so easy to be separated from.

Chapter 8: Deepening of the *Röstigraben*

How is the re-emerging of the *Röstigraben* problem in the course of the last ten years to be explained? What contributed to the rise of *Röstigraben*, to its maintenance and occasionally what made it even deeper? There is no one reason for this, but a whole bundle of causes which I will now disentangle.

8.1 Causes for the emergence of the Röstigraben

The first reason was the ethno-nationalist fever in Europe - with the collapse of the Soviet system nationalistic and separatist trends in East, Central and Southeast Europe got again the strong upswing and the already described Jura conflict was just the catalyst - a sensitivity for the language and minority problems sharpened itself, first in French Switzerland, but then also in German Switzerland.

Secondly, the question whether the Romandy is an economical province also had to do with the economic development. In the seventies the period of the economic boom of the postwar years came to an end. The oil shock of 1974 led to a recession, letting the numbers of unemployed in Switzerland rise. The watch- and clockmaking industry was particularly affected, where the break-down relating to market conditions was accompanied with a technological revolution, namely the transition of the mechanical watch making to the quartz technology. Thus, the whole Jura region was particularly hard hit by the crisis.

Beside that, the Swiss German dialect spread in advertisements, in the audiovisual media and in instruction. This strengthened the regional identity of German Switzerland and

facilitated the demarcation towards Germany. On the other hand, with the emphasis of the regional characteristic a communication barrier was developed towards French and Italian Switzerland, which stimulated the French Swiss discomfort.

Here are some of the further newspaper articles that speak in favor of my arguments about deepening the *Röstigraben*. *Die Südostschweiz* of 27th November 2000 had a title "The vote weekend intensified the *Röstigraben*[27]" and the same paper of 28th September 2004 writes about "Record depth of the *Röstigraben*.[28]" In the article *"Andere Fronten und Köpfe"* Stefan von Bergen adds that "these regions differ particularly in their relation to the state". The French Swiss think in favor of the state and centralization, while the northeast and central Switzerland is local and decentralized, the state does not provide for it and it sees the state rather as a "necessary evil". According to von Bergen, "the mental *Röstigraben* points itself especially during national votes over the European question or questions about trade union[29]".

Differences appear also in political behavior, as I have already stated. French-speakers tend to be more open to government foreign policy proposals such as joining the EU, while in issues such as ecology or speed limits they reject government proposals more often than German-speaking voters. SUVA[30]-assistant Willi Morger reveals an interesting fact in the November 2005 edition of the weekly *Die Weltwoche* that "in east Switzerland

[27] *"Das Abstimmungswochenende hat den Röstigraben verstärkt"*
[28] *"Rekordtiefe der Röstigräben"*
[29] *"Diese Regionen unterscheiden sich vor allem in ihrem Verhältnis zum Staat. Die Romands ticken etatistisch-zentralistisch...Der mentale Röstigraben zeigt sich ... bei nationalen Abstimmungen über die Europafrage oder zu Gewerkschaftsanliegen."*

[30] *Schweizerische Unfallversicherungsanstalt* (= Swiss Accident Insurance Fund)

many more whiplashes are reported than in west Switzerland and this does not depend on the extent of the motor traffic, but solely on cultural factors. The French Swiss simply do not have a tense relationship to the automobile, which reflects also in the accident processing.[31]"

But not only did the foreign policy lead in the intermediate war years to anxiety between the German and the French Switzerland. It was also the long-known question: how much central statehood does the country need, how much autonomy do the cantons need? In addition to this, the restrictive refugee politics of Switzerland[32], the disastrous invention of the Jew stamp by the Swiss federal immigration authorities and the business of Swiss economics with National Socialist Germany were already in the post-war period the subject-matters of polemics.

In 1973 the Federal Council recommended the creation of a civilian alternative for those who objected to military service on grounds of conscience or religious faith, but this initiative failed in the German part and so Switzerland remained the only Western country which does not recognize any civilian alternative on religious or conscientious ground. This issue has proved more sensitive in French than in German Switzerland and it is without doubt linked with more generalized French Swiss attitudes of antimilitarism

[31] *"Suva-Geschäftsleitungsmitglied Willi Morger erzählt zum Beispiel davon, dass «in der Ostschweiz viel mehr Schleudertraumen gemeldet werden». Zurückzuführen seien solche Differenzen kaum auf das Ausmass des Autoverkehrs, sondern allein auf kulturelle Faktoren. Die Romands haben einfach ein unverkrampfteres Verhältnis zum Automobil, und das widerspiegelt sich auch in der Unfallverarbeitung."*

[32] During the World War II Jewish refugees were sent back to the German border in order to avoid additional difficulties with the Nazi regime

Yet another time when *Röstigraben* opened was in 1980 when the voters had to decide over a belt carrying obligation for car drivers. The proposal was accepted scarcely, with 52 % of the voices - however against the resolute resistance of all the French cantons and Ticino. For certain French Swiss politicians this represented interference into their personal civil rights and freedoms (Büchi, 2000: 258).

Furthermore, Büchi gives two more interesting examples from his own research, which show the disagreement between two sides. In the first example he describes the so-called "Zurich-initiative" which was introduced a couple of years ago in the canton Zurich. This initiative intended to begin with English instruction already in primary school, even before French instruction. But, the confederate directors of education had agreed in the seventies on the principle according to which foreign language instruction into all Swiss schools should begin with a national language - usually with French in the German Switzerland and with German in the French Switzerland. Thus, the initiative caused negative reactions, particularly in the Romandy (2000: 273).

Büchi's second example was, however, much more serious, and had a bigger echo in the press. Namely, in April 1996 Philippe Bruggisser, the administrator of the SAirGroup, announced that the Swissair will abolish the long-distance flights from the airport Geneva-Cointrin, with the explanation that the national airline wanted to concentrate completely on its main airport Zurich Kloten in the future, in order to be able to work more economically. This demotion of Cointrin to the second-class airport provoked brusque reactions in the Romandy (2000: 271).

8.2 Urban-rural cleavages – a new gap?

However, some newspapers and journalists do not see anymore a linguistic-ditch as the biggest problem for Switzerland, but the cleavages between urban and rural areas. One of the best examples which proves this theory was the popular vote on Schengen / Dublin agreement of 2005. Jürg Sohm from *Der Bund* wrote that "the ditch between city and country, which was as deep as never before, is remarkable. The cities - also the smaller towns - and their agglomerations voted *Yes* and were thus decisive.[33]" All the French Swiss cantons accepted the proposal and not a single French Swiss administrative district (sic!) rejected the proposal, whereas the German Swiss cantons voted by the majority *No*.

Sohm also observes that the border cantons, for which the Schengen security regime is of special interest, followed the vote trend of their respective language region. On the other side far less euphoria was noticeable in the open-minded Geneva than in former times, which is to be likewise explained with the border proximity. Namely, Geneva feels more strongly than other cantons the practical consequences of the opening of the boarders since the competition from commuting workers from adjacent France has caused upset among its inhabitants for some time already[34].

Almost a year before that event, *Berner Zeitung* journalist Stefan von Bergen interviewed Claude Longchamp, a political scientist from Bern, who asserted that "what structures

[33] *"Auffallend ist der Graben zwischen Stadt und Land, der sich so tief wie noch selten aufgetan hat. Die Städte – auch die Kleinstädte – und ihre Agglomerationen sagten Ja und waren somit ausschlaggebend."*
[34] *"Die Grenzkantone, für die das Schengen-Sicherheitsregime von speziellem Interesse ist, folgten dem Abstimmungstrend ihrer jeweiligen Sprachregion. Auf der anderen Seite ist im öffnungsfreundlichen Genf weit weniger Euphorie spürbar als früher, was ebenfalls mit der Grenznähe zu erklären ist. Genf spürt stärker als andere Kantone die praktischen Folgen der Öffnung. So sorgt die Konkurrenz durch*

Switzerland is not the *Röstigraben* anymore, but a strong agglomeration-country contrast[35]". Also notable was the vote on the asylum law of 2006 which was accepted in the rural areas, but rejected in almost all the bigger cities, except Bern. Jürg Sohm from *Der Bund* argues that "larger skepticism in relation to the asylum law in the cities can be attributed to left-green majorities and perhaps also to the opponent argument, that the aggravations pushed humans in the unlawfulness and crime, which would hit the cities in the first place.[36]"

However, probably the most "extreme" newspapers article I found was written by Hans-Ulrich Jost, history professor at the University of Lausanne, who occasionally gives political comments for the weekly *Die Wochenzeitung*. In the edition of 30th November 2000 professor Jost wrote a very sharp comment on the relationship between German and French Switzerland. Here is the exact quote:

> "How many more votes and elections do we actually still need, so that the public accepts that there is no "Switzerland", no emotional and patriotically loaded "community" with uniform "national" values? Switzerland is now no fraternal commonwealth, but a political structure, steered, administered and also instructed by one centre, namely Zurich, downtown Switzerland. Whoever lives outside the downtown area and does not speak German, dialect or English, belongs to the minority, which indeed may take part, but does not have a say.[37]"

Arbeitskräfte aus dem nahen Frankreich bei Arbeitnehmern und Kleinunternehmern seit einiger Zeit schon für Verunsicherung."

[35] *"Was die Schweiz strukturiert ist nicht mehr der Röstigraben, sondern ein harter Agglo-Land-Gegensatz."*

[36] *"Die grössere Skepsis gegenüber dem Asylgesetz in den Städten kann auf links-grüne Mehrheiten zurückgeführt werden und vielleicht auch auf das Gegnerargument, die Verschärfungen drängten Menschen in die Illegalität und Kriminalität, wovon die Städte am meisten betroffen wären."*

[37] *"Wie viele Abstimmungen und Wahlen braucht es eigentlich noch, damit die Öffentlichkeit akzeptiert, dass es keine "Schweiz", keine emotional und patriotisch aufgeladene "Volksgemeinschaft" mit einheitlichen "nationalen" Werten gibt? Die Schweiz ist nun einmal kein brüderliches Staatswesen, sondern ein von der deutschschweizerischen Übermacht dominiertes politisches Gefüge, das schon über ein Jahrhundert lang von einem Zentrum – Zürich, Downtown Switzerland – gesteuert, verwaltet und nun auch*

Professor Jost concludes his article with a statement "the less we understand each other and the less we hear from each other, all the more we feel freer on the banks of the Lake Geneva.[38]"

Photo 4: *"Eat your soup, or I'll send you to the German Swiss!"*

noch belehrt wird. Wer ausserhalb von Downtown lebt und nicht Deutsch, Dialekt oder Englisch spricht, gehört zur Minderheit, die zwar mitreden, aber nicht mitbestimmen darf."

[38] *"Je weniger wir uns verstehen und voneinander hören, desto freier fühlt man sich an den Ufern des Genfersees."*

Conclusions

In the first half of the 19th century the ethnically diverse composition of Switzerland played a remarkably minor political role. Because the founding cantons were German-speaking, the question of multilingualism did not appear until the 19th century, when French-speaking cantons and the Italian-speaking Ticino joined the Confederation.

From the very beginning, Swiss identity relied not only on what its people shared together, but on Swiss specificities which made them different from their neighbors in other countries. The reasons for isolation lie partly in the fortuity of easily defended Alpine terrain, but partly also in deliberate abstention from European dynastic conflicts from the early 16th century onwards. By the time that the Confederation first faced the implications of linguistic nationalism, its members had more than five centuries of experience in the settling of other types of disputes through well-developed techniques of neutrality, mediation and decentralization.

The answer to my *first* research question, namely to which degree are values and attitudes shared among the language groups, is that although there *are* cultural specificities which exist in the life style (for example, there is a popular saying that German-speakers *live to work*, whereas French- and Italian-speakers *work to live*, which means a more carefree and less serious attitude to life than that held in German Switzerland), the Swiss have common customs, learned habits, cultural traditions and political institutions. The creation of a multicultural state and the political integration of different religions and

languages without destroying particular cultural identities is probably the most precious legacy of Switzerland's democracy.

Secondly, German dominance is being perceived as the threat and the feeling that the political, economic and cultural identity of the French part of Switzerland has been endangered by the German part appeared as yet as before World War II. However, the French speaking part was even before the establishment of the Swiss state connected with the German territory and not with France[39], and that is, beside the different religion, one of the main reasons why it never expressed a tendency to join France. Moreover, the Reformation led not only to a break between German Swiss and Germans, but also to alienation between the French Swiss and French. A majority of the today's Western part of Switzerland - Geneva, Vaud, Neuchâtel and south Jura - had in the meantime become likewise reformed and thereby permanently alienated from the catholic France. The Reformation was thus the crucial turning point in the history of the rapprochement between the French and German Switzerland.

To answer my *third* and *fourth* research question I argue that the most prominent conflicts in the Swiss society are, as I have showed, the linguistic differences as well as different political decisions which split the population of the two language groups. Those are the areas in which *Röstigraben* is especially deep and particularly strongly marked, although the recent urban-rural cleavages are also gaining on importance.

However, there is also a multiplicity of factors, whose interaction defused the relations between the language groups and they will be the answer to my fifth research question, namely what are the basic elements of the Swiss linguistic peace.

The oldest reason for the preserved linguistic peace is the fact that multilingual Switzerland, as we recognize it today, was the result of a long and a slow process, which extended not over years, but over centuries. The Swiss community feeling developed much more before Switzerland grew together to a political unit. Both the German- and the French Swiss share common myths and common attitudes. Both language groups have the same core values, such as tardiness, ponderousness, tidiness, but also seriousness and reliability and both French *and* German Swiss are equally very proud to be Swiss. The development of collective identity relied on national symbols, history and myths or legendary symbolic figures such as William Tell. The many local battles in the old peasant cantons to defend their independence against invasions by the "Habsburg hordes" were part of a glorious heritage that all Swiss are equally proud of. The picture of a nation - consisting mainly of farmers and shepherds living in isolated mountain *châlets* or small villages – was drawn to distinguish Switzerland from other countries.

Another important factor which speaks in favor of the cohesion is the fact that in Switzerland the national minority is often the cantonal majority. The exceptions are the French-speaking Jura inhabitants and the French-speaking Biel inhabitants in the canton

[39] During the divide of the Frankish Empire in 843, which was divided into three parts (Germany, France and Lorraine), the Romandy came neither to France nor to Germany, but to Lorraine (German Switzerland became part of the German Empire)

Bern, who are a double minority, and it is not a coincidence that minority conflicts emerged exactly in those regions.

Taking all the aforementioned factors into account, I am convinced that my *last* research question whether the cohesion of Switzerland is in danger because of the existence of *Röstigraben,* has to be answered negatively. We should also not forget that Swiss confederation and Swiss multicultural federalism were built over a relatively long period and they have developed a stability that is embedded in Swiss culture (Versluis, 2007). Furthermore, Switzerland is a country with a successful economic history and the stability of the political institutions guarantees the protection of the minorities, both political and linguistic ones.

As once French president de Gaulle said that it is very difficult to rule the country which has more than 300 different sorts of cheese, we could paraphrase this sentence today and say that it is very difficult to judge the cultural scopes of the country which has seven million inhabitants (two million of which are foreigners) as well as six million cattle. The culture of the cow bell in Central Switzerland has nothing in common with the patrician culture of the University city of Basle, for example, and so has the idyll of the *Heidi*-land nothing in common with the Aussersihl (Zurich's Red light district).

Today, in my opinion, the biggest cultural differences do not exist any more between the members of different cantons, regions or religions, but between the different generations. The older inhabitants further live in the spirit of tradition of independent and freedom-

loving, but from the world isolated Switzerland, while the members of the younger generation turn more and more towards the world problems. The reasons for this are numerous – in the first place the dominance of the English language as well as of the television and Internet. Today's Switzerland is divided into one Switzerland which wants to be European and open towards the world and into one which considers itself a special case and therefore tries to be preserved this way, which is what I was trying to show through my research.

The difficulty for the Swiss is that he or she is at the same time a *political* Swiss, but *culturally* stretched between the Germanic and the Romanic cultural circle, which is not easy in a time which strongly stresses *the national*. On the other hand, the feeling of common belonging is based upon common history, common myths and upon the identification with the political institutions, above all with the direct democracy, and last but not least upon the feeling that they represent a special case in Europe.

Furthermore, since the number of xenophobic parties and groups, which brought pressure on the political authorities to restrict immigration and protect Swiss society against the "alienation", is rapidly growing, I think that foreign workers, asylum seekers and immigration in general remain highly controversial issues and to integrate foreigners in the same way as the native minority groups of the past will be a much bigger challenge for Swiss society. This, however, would be an interesting topic for further research.

To conclude, I could say that compared to countries where minorities are suppressed or discriminated, Swiss linguistic problem seems quite harmless. Described as a multilingual "nation by will", the Swiss model has very often served as an attempt to settle violent nationality-conflicts in the recent European history – for example, in proposals for bringing peace to Cyprus and Bosnia, and in the very last case Kosovo and Macedonia. And to quote Bruno Schoch for the very last time, "in the age of triumphant nationalism multilingual Switzerland has appeared either as a medieval curiosity projected into the modern age, or as a pioneering example of how nationality conflicts and linguistic quarrels can be settled" (2000: ii).

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Photo 2: http://www.tlfq.ulaval.ca/axl/Europe/images/Suisse-roestigraben-map.gif Retrieved June 2, 2008

Photo 3: http://www.bahn-bus-ch.de/sprachen/listen.html#kantone Retrieved June, 2 2008

Photo 4: http://www.kzu.ch/personen/schueler/projekte/4a/roesti.htm Retrieved June 2, 2008

Appendices

Table 1: Leading dailies in German Switzerland

Blick (Zurich)	309 444
Tagesanzeiger (Zurich)	250 000
Neue Zürcher Zeitung (Zurich)	170 113
Berner Zeitung (Bern)	162 202
Südostschweiz (Chur)	138 993
Neue Luzerner Zeitung (Lucerne)	133 820
St. Galler Tagblatt (St Gall)	110 502
Basler Zeitung (Basle)	109 095

Table 2: Sunday Press in German Switzerland

Sonntagsblick	336 336
Sonntagszeitung	221 100
Neue Zürcher Zeitung am Sonntag	150 000

Table 3: Leading dailies in French Switzerland

24 Heures (Lausanne)	88 467
La Tribune de Genève (Geneva)	77 420
Le Matin (Lausanne)	65 121
Le Temps (Geneva)	53 526

Table 4: Weekly Press in German Switzerland

Facts	103 363
Weltwoche	90 000
Wochenzeitung	15 000

Table 5: Analyzed journal articles

NAME:	**Number of articles:**
Tages Anzeiger	2
Neue Zürcher Zeitung	263
Berner Zeitung	19
Südostschweiz	127
Neue Luzerner Zeitung	4
St. Galler Tagblatt	312
Basler Zeitung	2
Der Bund	9
Sonntags Zeitung	1
La Tribune de Genève	31
Le Temps	135
Le Matin	7
Facts	2
Weltwoche	2
Wochenzeitung	7
TOTAL	**927**