CHAPTER IV

THE PERIOD OF THE CIVIL WAR

In the summer of 1859, during one of his sojourns at the baths of Ragatz, Fay made the acquaintance of Joseph E. Davis, the brother of the president-to-be of the Confederate States, and his family. He was entrusted by Davis with the care of his twenty-one year old grandson. For the attention devoted to this young man Fay received a mark of gratitude which did not exactly please him. In a letter, dated January 17, 1861, Davis wrote: “If Lincoln should recall you, I hope you will unite your destiny with the South, and if you should desire diplomatic service, it may be in the Southern Confederation.” Fay’s reply was firm and unequivocal. “I have chosen my country and my God, and would not accept anywhere else the highest place.” A few weeks later he realized that the situation was more serious than he had thought, and he apologized to the Secretary of State: “Had I been aware of what has since been publicly stated, that the proceedings of certain persons are not the result of temporary phrenzy, but of a premeditated conspiracy, I should have replied with greater indignation.” He refused two further offers of a diplomatic post in the Confederacy “with increasing indignation.”

In 1861 Fay had been away from the United States for over a quarter century. Although he had kept himself well informed on the developments there and was deeply concerned over the threat to peace created by the abolition and secession movements of the 1850’s, he did not think that anybody could be so foolish and so nefarious as seriously to try to secede from the Union. He had given much thought to the slavery problem and had come to the conclusion that not all the fault lay with the South. Not being a partisan for either cause he felt entitled to give some counsel to his government in a despatch which was loaded with emotional undertones as hardly

another one in diplomatic correspondence. Fay, at his most typical, wrote:

Your administration stands higher than any past one, not excluding that of Washington. You represent christianity and civilization. I have never been an abolitionist. I think the South has been too much insulted and browbeaten by the extreme northern party. It was not the way to treat the question. . . . On the other hand, the South has always been more in the wrong than the North, and has at last, by a gigantic folly and the blackest crime of any nation since the Egyptians under Pharaoh, cut itself off from the sympathies of christian civilization, from all right founded on human law, and from the benediction of the Almighty. I take it for granted the North must prove ultimately superior in the pending conflict. . . . A sublime path opens itself to the administration of President Lincoln. No human being since Moses ever stood in so interesting a position. . . . Congress ought now to pass a law, wisely and carefully framed according to the necessities of the case, providing progressive measures for the gradual emancipation of the succeeding slave generation. . . . I know all that can be said against it. I know all the powerful interests, classes and States, which will fall away from you. . . . But this great measure ought to be based upon the principle of such a just pecuniary indemnification as would leave the South no proper grounds of complaint. . . . Even a failure would cover you with more true glory than the success in any other mode of attempting to settle the present question. There are great moments in a nation’s history, where God speaks almost as on Mount Sinai—face to face. This is one of them.

The grandiose comparison of contemporary events with the familiar scenes of the Old Testament impressed President Abraham Lincoln and Secretary of State William H. Seward, and Fay was thanked sincerely for his “kind and confidential view.”

Shortly after Lincoln’s inauguration, Fay was recalled and replaced by George C. Fogg, a Republican party wheel horse of New Hampshire. His last official acts at Bern were devoted to the task of exhorting the Swiss government to take an unambiguous position on the side of the Union. Fay begged President Melchior Martin Joseph Knüsel not to receive the commissioners of the Confederacy, even if A. Dudley Mann, who had become one of the principal agents of the Confederate States on the Continent, should come to Bern in person. He told Knüsel that the United States did not expect “any sentimental engagements” from Switzerland. It was, however, the opinion of his government and his own private conviction that “the

1 Desp., Sw., V (March 5, and May 8, 1861).

2 Desp., Sw., V (May 8, 1861); and Inst., Sw., I, 107. Four years later Fay published a book in German, Die Sklavenmacht (Berlin, 1805), in which he condemned secession bitterly.
wise course of Switzerland would be a flat refusal to receive, in any
way, the Commissioners of the revolted States; that a different
course would be painfully remembered, while a prompt action in
this direction would surely draw much closer the band of friendship
between the two republics."

Fay's successor, Fogg, who arrived at Bern late in June, continued
to use the same kind of arguments. He was the bearer of an
important message from Seward to the President of the Swiss Confe-
deration in which the Secretary of State expressed the following
ideas:

For the first time in our history the standard of civil war has been raised
with the purpose of overthrowing the Federal Republic. It is a cardinal
point with the seditions in modern revolutions to gain aid or at least
sympathy in foreign countries. That sympathy is sought in the form of rec-
ognition of the simulated sovereignty set up by faction. An act of recogni-
tion carries moral weight and material aid is expected soon to follow it.
No state ought to lend its support to revolution in foreign countries. That sympathy is sought in the form of al-

Seward's thoughts were impressively formulated and his language
carried a strong persuasive character, yet neither he nor the two

American diplomats at Bern need have worried about Switzerland's
attitude in the struggle. There could hardly be any doubt about
the ideological position of the Federal Council. President Knüsel, on
the occasion of Fay's last official call and Fogg's introduction at
the Federal Palace on July 1, 1861, assured the two that the Federal
Council was well aware of the similarity of the democratic insti-
tutions of the two countries. Comparing the civil war in the United
States with the Sonderbundskrieg which had threatened to tear asunder
Switzerland fourteen years ago, he pointed out that in reality the
war had helped to create a new and strong confederation. He
expressed the wish that the United States might also emerge
renewed and strengthened out of its crisis. As to the relations be-
tween the two countries, Knüsel strongly felt that they always would
be of the most friendly character. Even Frey-Herose, one of the
Swiss signers of the treaty of 1850 and an old friend of Mann,
declared in plain terms that Switzerland had always opposed rebel-

1 Desp., Sw., V (May 18, 1861).
3 Desp., Sw., V (June 7, and July 2, 1861); and Inst., Sw., I, 108-110.
They felt that the destiny of republican institutions everywhere was at stake and knew the war to be a struggle between freedom and despotism. A little later in the war, Fogg was happy to inform his government of an interview with President Jakob Dubs in which the Swiss chief of state expressed the opinion that not only Switzerland but also all Europe was increasingly impressed by the character and person of the President of the United States as a man whose name "would one day, and that not far hence, be enrolled among those rulers who have done most for the advancement of human progress." 6

Another factor which facilitated Fogg's task was the fact that the Confederate government at no time during the war attempted to open negotiations with the Federal Council. Mann repeatedly suggested that he proceed from Brussels, his European headquarters, to Bern, and assured Secretaries of State Robert M. T. Hunter and Judah P. Benjamin that he would be able to render important services there. But, to his sincere regret, he was never authorized to do so. 7

Fogg reported only one small affair which revealed that the cause of the South had its followers in Switzerland. Americans who had traveled through Geneva complained in Washington that the government was feeding and clothing a person who was in sympathy with the rebels and who openly gave vent to his opinion. Fogg, entrusted with the investigation of this charge, went immediately to Geneva. He was told that several prominent Confederate politicians had stayed at Geneva for a number of days and that Fortunatus Crosby, the American consul there, had spent a large part of his time with them. Crosby was also reported to have repeatedly stated that the South could not be conquered, yet Fogg himself did not hear him use disloyal language. Crosby had several close relatives in the Confederate army and, being himself a Kentuckian far advanced in life, it was not surprising that he should sympathize with a cause to which his children were giving their lives. To this official despatch Fogg added a personally written confidential note in which he expressed his astonishment that a man of Crosby's age, having an infirmity which at times made it impossible for him even to write a letter and being unacquainted with any foreign language, was nominated to this post. 8

These were reasons enough, Fogg thought, to remove Crosby without charging him with disloyalty. 8

The Swiss public followed the events of the war closely and attentively. Its opinion was not quite as unanimous as it appears to have been from the despatches of Minister Fogg. The Catholic conservative press of central Switzerland and the main organ of the commercial interests, the Neue Zürcher Zeitung, were in sympathy with the goals of the Southern states. Merchants and industrialists hoped for a victory of the South and a separation of the Union because they believed that an independent South would uphold the policy of free trade and would be much easier to deal with than the protectionist North. Cotton manufacture had increased rapidly in the years preceding the outbreak of the war, and the interruption in trade relations led to much hardship in the industrial centers, especially those of the region of Zurich and eastern Switzerland. Industrial circles felt the war as an obstruction of their business and not as a threat of liberal ideology. They generally evaded discussions of the slavery question and never failed to point out that the emancipation of the Negroes had been a tactical war measure. In all this they were close to the viewpoint of the English Liberals, as in general they tended to support English policy which seemed most likely to assure them commercial freedom and security. 9

The victory of the North was a disappointment for many of the manufacturers. An appeal for a general mass meeting in Zurich at the beginning of May, 1865, met with so little response that, according to the report of United States Consul J. Remington Fairlamb, "this idea was dropped and a meeting of simply 'the German residents of Zurich and all who feel an interest in the matter' called." The event led the consul to make the disparaging comment: "The attendance was large and though but few Swiss were present the meeting suffered not at all, in consequence, as it is a well known fact that most of the able men to be found here are Germans." Fairlamb's successor, Charles A. Page, on the other hand, was much impressed "by many manifestations of kindly feeling toward the United States and of admiration of our institutions." He mentioned

6 Desp., Sw., VI (Feb. 15, 1862, Jan. 24, 1863, and Jan. 2, 1864).
8 Desp., Sw., VI (June 16, 1862). Within a year Crosby was replaced by Consul Charles Upton of Virginia.
9 See Ch. III, "Der wirtschaftliche Liberalismus und der Sezessionskrieg," in George Müller, Der amerikanische Sezessionskrieg in der schweizerischen öffentlichen Meinung (Basel, 1944), 98-129. This monograph examines in detail Swiss public opinion toward the Civil War. Hereafter cited as Müller, Sezessionskrieg.
that the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* had a long article in memory of Abraham Lincoln and the abolition of slavery, and that on New Year's day, 1866, "In all the churches... the preachers, in prayer and in sermon, referred to the overthrow of the rebellion, and the securing of the abolition of slavery as the two facts of the last year, for which mankind at large should be most grateful to Providence."  

If there was such a discrepancy in the reporting of two consuls working at the same place, Fogg can hardly be accused of having falsified knowingly his description of Swiss public opinion. For manifestations in favor of the North and its cause were numerous and vociferous. They ranged from emotional outbursts at mass meetings to the offering of practical help in the form of lives and goods. A large group of Swiss citizens identified themselves spontaneously with the goals and interests of the North, looking at the war as one of irreconcilable principles rather than as a war for territorial separation. Such were the Radicals. They still judged world events in terms of supranational struggles for liberty and unity, struggles which ultimately would involve all mankind. Lincoln was identified by them with the idea of freedom itself; the victory of the North was the victory of popular sovereignty over reactionary revolution.  

The opinion of the Radicals found expression in many newspaper articles and editorials and in public addresses. On July 9, 1864, a great public demonstration was staged in Geneva. A number of politicial leaders and the new consul, Charles Upton, made fiery speeches for the North. Several thousand people hailed the abolition of slavery and praised the election of Abraham Lincoln as an event of greatest significance for mankind. An "Address to the People of the American Union" was drafted which contained many high sounding phrases such as: "People of the Union! Soldiers of the entirety of the country! Courage and constancy. You have our sympathies, because in defending the Union, you also defend liberty..." The *New York Times* carried an extensive report of the meeting, reproducing the speeches at great length. A few weeks later, however, the paper became aware of the fact that the meeting had been an election campaign rally as much as anything else. The Radical party, leading members of which had organized the meeting and provided the speeches, lost the election. Bad losers, they protested against the election outcome with bloody violence.  

The event put Minister Fogg in a quandary. Secretary of State Seward had written a reply to the "Geneva Address" which Fogg received on the day on which the riots in Geneva took place. Under these circumstances he hesitated to transmit the despatch to the Geneva press. "But while I was weighing this question," he reported later, "my Washington and New York papers arrived with your response, and I seemed to have no option but to forward it at once as above indicated. It is well enough as it is... One must sometimes pray to be 'saved from friends'; and this is one of those times. In the circumstances, it is lucky that the 'response' is brief, general and beyond criticism."  

The message of the capture of Richmond in the spring of 1865 excited widespread enthusiasm. The leading newspapers issued extra editions with weighty editorials about the significance of the event, and the President of the Confederation came in person to congratulate Fogg on this great victory. Fogg reported home that "the satisfaction could hardly have been exceeded had the news been that of a great Swiss, instead of an American victory."  

The feelings of a large part of the Swiss population erupted and found expression in the extraordinary address movement of the spring of 1865. Florian Gengel, editor of the Bern newspaper *Der Bund*, wrote an address of congratulation to the President of the United States which was signed by all members of the Federal Council and many of the members of the Bernese legislative assembly. This address was distributed all over the Swiss capital and people were called upon to sign it. The Radical press was enthralled by the idea and exhorted the Swiss people to participate in the movement. "It is a matter of honor for the Swiss people not to remain silent when confronted with one of the greatest events of world history but to take sides unanimously and decidedly with the cause of political and social freedom."  

The sad news of President Lincoln's assassination gave an additional impetus to the movement. Fogg wrote: "The mourning and regret for the death of our President are universal, from the old men to the
The Federal Council had maintained a neutral position through the greater part of the war. It did not yield to the demands of the Radicals to take the side of the North officially. On the other hand it refused to participate in any mediation efforts, although this was suggested by certain commercial circles. Toward the end of the war the personal sympathies of individual members of the Federal Council for the cause of the Union broke through. In the annual message for 1864 it expressed the hope that the recent success of the Union army might find a speedy continuation and victory.\(^{19}\)

In 1864 several efforts at knitting closer ties with the United States were made. The propellant force behind these efforts was President Jakob Dubs, described by Minister Fogg as "a gentleman of large public experience, a highly cultivated mind, moderately, but earnestly liberal in his views, and thoroughly sympathizing with the efforts, principles and purposes of the Government of the United States in its struggle for the suppression of the first great popular rebellion against popular government."\(^{20}\)

Dubs wanted to add to the treaty of 1850 an article according to which Swiss citizens were to be placed under the protection of the United States in those countries where Switzerland had no representatives. He also approached Secretary Seward, through Consul General Hitz, with an inquiry as to the disposition of the American government toward the introduction of the Swiss flag on the high seas. In his note Dubs stated that Switzerland considered the right of operating ships under its own flag as one of its inherent rights as an independent nation. There were, however, practical difficulties arising from the fact that Switzerland was landlocked and therefore dependent on the hospitality of other nations which would open their ports for its vessels. Because the replies from other nations to which the Federal Council had presented similar notes were mainly negative and because there was great opposition to the project of a Swiss merchant marine even within the Federal Assembly, Dubs hoped that the response from the United States would be favorable.

\(^{18}\) Desp., Sw., VI (May 4, and June 20, 1865, and Enclosures).

\(^{19}\) New York Times, June 7, 1868, and April 1, 1869.

\(^{20}\) Dules to Harrington, April 7, 1866, enclosed in Desp., Sw., VII (April 23, 1866). See also Page to Seward, Despatches, Zurich, III (March 14, 1866). The appeals of the various committees were published in J. Henri Serment, *La Question des Nègres et la Reconstruction du Sud aux États-Unis* (Geneva, 1866).

\(^{21}\) Bundesblatt, 1865, II, 22.

this being the only means to save the project.\footnote{The Federal Council to Seward, Dec. 31, 1864, enclosed in Seward to Fogg, Feb. 8, 1865, U.S. Legation Berne, Instructions, II. See also Max Huber, Die rechtlichen Verhältnisse einer schweizerischen Meerschiffahrt unter Schweizerflagge (Zurich, 1918); and Desp., Sw., VII (Jan. 3, 1867).} During the same year, 1864, the Federal Council also invited the United States to participate in the first international congress for the amelioration of the condition of the sick and wounded soldiers, to take place at Geneva.\footnote{Henri Dunant to Upton, June 23, 1864, enclosed in Despatches, Geneva, I (June 23, 1864); and Inst., Sw., I, 144-145.}

Some of the contemporary manifestations of confidence in American friendship must be termed extravagant. Excitement and apprehension expressed in the debate about Swiss military preparedness in the Federal Assembly on the occasion of the Austro-Prussian war in the fall of 1866 were allayed with a cool speech by Federal Councillor Constant Fornerod, the chief of the Military Department, in which he assured the federal legislators: “In case that Switzerland should be overtaken by events, she would nevertheless be able to purchase the necessary supply of breech-loaders either in England or the United States in a very short time. Many offers have already been made to the Federal Council, and I do not doubt that, in case of need, the Government of the United States would put the large rifle manufactory of Springfield at our disposal. In that manufactory 1000 rifles are completed every day.” Now there had been going on an exchange of rifle models for some time. The models received from the United States War Department were exhibited in the Federal Palace during the winter session of 1864 and admired by civilians and soldiers. They were also carefully tested. But when Fornerod made his speech he had no material basis for his assertions, and Harrington commented that “the expression of Mr. Fornerod appeared to have been uttered simply as his own opinion, based, I suppose, upon the cordial relations existing between the two republics.” Only in December, 1866, were several thousand Winchester rifles and Peabody guns ordered in America.\footnote{Desp., Sw., VII (Oct. 16, and Dec. 12, 1866). See also “Botschaft des Bundesrates ... betreffend die Einführung von Hinterladungsgewehren (Vom 28. November 1866).”}

Following the speech certain elements of the Swiss press began to talk about an alliance between Switzerland and the United States. An editorial in Der Bund, the semi-official newspaper of the capital, pondered the question: “Ought Switzerland to seek foreign aliances?” and came to the following conclusion: “In our opinion she would find the most efficacious succour on the other side of the Atlantic. The question is not as to the sympathy between Switzerland and North America. But the American Union has a real interest in maintaining the only republic which exists in Europe. That could be a sufficient reason for extending her Monroe doctrine to Switzerland. And, if the latter were menaced, the former would cover her with its hand, saying to the European Powers, ‘Touch her not, or you will have to do with my fleets!’ ” Part of the argument was based on the information received from the Swiss consul general in Washington, that Switzerland, in case of any danger, could count upon the effective aid of the United States.\footnote{Editorial from Der Bund, Bern, quoted in Desp., Sw., VII (Oct. 16, 1866).} This editorial, as extravagant as it is, was in complete accordance with the ideological creed of the Radicals. It was the climax of an attitude which had found its earliest expression in the unequivocal support of the North on ideological grounds and had been manifest in the address movement and the humanitarian efforts to aid the freedmen.

Actually the United States government furnished very little substance on which to base such wild dreams. Secretary Seward occasionally uttered some very fine phrases but did little to help realize the practical proposals of the Federal Council. As a matter of fact, all the diplomatic overtures made by Switzerland during 1864 were rejected. Minister Fogg was authorized by the Department of State to attend the Geneva conference for the amelioration of the condition of the sick and wounded soldiers “in an informal manner.” He reported that the question of the accession of the United States to the convention was one “of no little interest among a people and in a country where the opinion and decision of the Government of the United States are deemed of the very highest authority and importance.”\footnote{Desp., Sw., VI (Nov. 26, 1864).} Yet the United States abstained from signing the Geneva Protocol for many years. The formal regulation of protection of Swiss citizens by American consuls was not one of Seward’s important problems, and he declined in friendly but firm words to deal with the matter.

He was similarly noncommittal toward the question of the introduction of the Swiss flag on the sea. He conceded that Switzerland had the right to fly its flag, but he also stated that he could not compromise his government in the then pending prize cases by prom-
ising to recognize the flag of a country which had neither vessels, nor ports, nor access to the sea. Very discreetly, he directed Minister Fogg to "make this communication in a confidential manner, if the President should prefer to receive it in this way, for the reason that this Government, animated by the highest friendship for Switzerland, does not wish even to appear to be indifferent to a proposition that engages the attention of Switzerland." 25

Seward was certainly familiar with the amenities necessary to please a foreign government. At the end of the war he authorized the American minister at Bern to state that the attitude of Switzerland during the hostilities had been noticed in the United States with much satisfaction. Seward recalled the memory of the Swiss Sonderbundskrieg of 1847, asserting that the United States "have not been unmindful that the integrity of the Swiss Confederation was under similar circumstances externally threatened; but the Swiss nation by prudence and firmness successfully averted the danger. The re-collection of that successful achievement of Swiss wisdom and virtue had no small effect in cheering us and enabling us to persevere in the same course." 27

In November, 1865, Seward sent a note of thanks for the bound volumes of addresses. President Andrew Johnson, Seward said, had perused the papers "with feelings of profound and affectionate gratitude to the Government and people of Switzerland," and had arranged for keeping the papers as a perpetual remembrance in the archives of the government. The American minister was to publish the list of the addresses received as an acknowledgment. "It is confessed that in adopting this summary form of acknowledgment," Seward wrote, "I am unable to give full and discriminate expression of the sentiments of the United States. But the proceedings on the part of the Government of Switzerland vary so much and so generously from customary forms of national intercourse that I have not been able to bring my response to them within any measure of acknowledgments heretofore adopted in international correspondence." 28

This despatch was printed, and a thousand copies were distributed among the members of all the cantonal governments and many private individuals. The United States minister was under the impression that the whole was very gratifying and flattering to the Swiss. 29

The story of American-Swiss relations during the Civil War would not be complete without mentioning the part played by the Swiss in the actual fighting of the war. If one takes into account the total contribution of foreigners made to the war—one out of every four or five men who wore the blue was of foreign birth—the Swiss part was minor. Yet from a Swiss point of view the contingent of men fighting on American soil was very considerable. In no other war since Napoleon's campaigns were there so many Swiss participating as in the Civil War. Considering this fact, one is surprised that it hardly found an echo in the diplomatic correspondence between the two countries and at no time had any disturbing repercussions on the relations of the two nations. This may be partly accounted for by the fact that most Swiss involved in the war were fighting for the cause of the Union, a cause which, as has been shown, found the vigorous support of a majority of the Swiss people. Another reason was that it was not illegal for Swiss to do military service in a foreign army, because there was no federal law at the time prohibiting them to do so. Be this as it may, there can be no doubt that a high percentage of Swiss who had emigrated to the United States fought in the Civil War. Many entered the army voluntarily. Some were induced by the noble sentiment of being able to contribute to the advancement of mankind by fighting against slavery. Others, who had immigrated recently and were still unsettled and perhaps even unemployed, were hired by the various bounties and the high pay. 30

Most of the Swiss who served in the armies, however, were drafted, and Hitz reported that the majority of them wanted to leave the service as soon as possible. Yet the Federal Council directed the consuls in the United States not to intervene on behalf of Swiss who had begun to procure American citizenship. This attitude did much to prevent friction. The consuls were often able on their own to

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25 Inst., Sw., I, 158, and 185-187. See also Bundesarchiv, Bern, Politisches Departement, 1848-1877, Schachtel 7, Fahnen- und Flaggenfrage.
27 Inst., Sw., I, 166-167. The recollection of the Sonderbund war was very pronounced in Switzerland, and it was also remembered in the United States. See Ch. V, "Die Erinnerung an den schweizerischen Sonderbundskrieg," in Müller, Sezessionskrieg, 151-162; and the address given by J. Watts de Peyster before the Vermont State Historical Society on October 20, 1863, entitled "Secession in Switzerland and the United States Compared."
29 See Rudolph Aehmann, Drei Jahre in der Potomac Armee oder eine schweizer Schützen-Compagnie im nordamerikanischen Kriege (Richtersweil, 1905), ill.
arranged discharges in instances in which minor Swiss, or Swiss who had just arrived in the United States, were wrongfully impressed into the military service.36

The United States government, on the other hand, refrained from officially recruiting people in Switzerland. Early in the war, it did so because it dismissed the possibility of a prolonged war. This undue optimism was reflected in a letter by Secretary of War Simon Cameron. In answer to an offer by a group of Swiss officers and soldiers to cross the ocean and to enlist in the Union army he wrote: “I very much regret that the Government could not accept the generous offer which you made through the United States consul at Geneva. We have already an army composed of more than 300,000 men, a number greater than we need for the actual crisis.”37

Secretary Seward was more diplomatic when he replied to a letter of three officers from La Chaux-de-Fonds who had assured Minister Fogg they were in a position to “organize readily a Swiss legion composed exclusively of brave soldiers, disciplined, devoted, and already experienced in the art of war.” Seward softened the refusal of this offer by explaining that “if the gentlemen . . . were now here, their services would no doubt be gladly accepted. Hitherto, every officer of merit who has come to us from abroad has been received into our army and taken a commission equal to his rank abroad. But the volunteer force is rapidly advancing to its maximum, and the acceptance of officers in the future is a matter of much uncertainty.”38 Later in the war, however, there seems to have been a number of agents trying to interest young Swiss in joining the Union army. The New York consul reported in 1864 that he had been approached by a very respectable person as to the feasibility of establishing recruiting bureaus in Switzerland, and the Federal Council repeatedly issued official warnings that same year, enlightening the people as to the malpractices of unauthorized agents and the dangers of emigration to the United States.39

The exact number of Swiss citizens who fought on either side is hard to ascertain. Consul General Hitz estimated in 1862 that over 6,000 Swiss were members of the Union Army.40 Swiss companies were found among the Ninth New York State Militia, the Eighty-second Illinois Volunteers, and the First “Berdan’s” U.S. Sharpshooters. The Fifteenth Missouri Regiment was named “Swiss Rifles,” but the Swiss seem actually to have been a minority in this unit. The most colorful of these units was the company of sharpshooters in Berdan’s regiment. The recruits for this regiment were carefully selected according to their marksmanship as well as their physical qualifications and intelligence, and were mostly employed as skirmishers on account of their excellent proficiency. Their distinguished services in the Army of the Potomac from the Peninsular campaign in the spring of 1862 to the siege of Richmond in the summer of 1864 were well described by the Swiss officer Rudolph Aschmann in his Drei Jahre in der Potomac Armee.41 Numerous Swiss could also be found among the Thirty-ninth New York, the Garibaldi Guard, the unnumbered regiment named “Enfants Perdus,” and the Fifth New York Independent Battery. The Swiss in the Union army were esteemed because of their quiet courage and their special skill in marksmanship.42

The number of high ranking Swiss officers was not very great, but they were described as “men of ability.”43 Five Swiss reached the rank of colonel. Perhaps the most outstanding of them was Hermann Lieb from the canton of Thurgau who advanced in two years from private to major in the Eighth Illinois Infantry. His remarkable military ability was recognized by General Grant who commissioned him to organize a Negro regiment. Within a short time he trained a colored unit of 1,500 men which was assigned to the regular army under his command. After the fall of Vicksburg, he was transferred to the Fourth and then to the Fifth United States Colored Heavy Artillery and became commander-in-chief of the artillery forces in the district west of the Mississippi. On March 13, 1865, he was

36 Bundesblatt, 1862, III, 324; ibid., 1864, I, 313-314; and ibid., 1865, II, 21.
38 Raus, Altermann and Werner to Fogg, Oct. 16, 1861, Desp., Sw., VI; Inst., Sw., I, 115.
39 Bundesblatt, 1864, II, 569; and ibid., 1865, I, 233.
40 Bundesblatt, 1862, III, 301-323. The list contains only 537 names, and the estimate based on it seems to be rather high.
41 Aschmann advanced from private to captain and lost his left leg in one of the last encounters before the term of his service was over. He wrote his book after his return to Switzerland in order to give the Swiss a first-hand account of the momentous American war. Aschmann later became secretary to several U.S. ministers to Switzerland.
42 Ella Lonn, Foreigners in the Union Army and Navy (Baton Rouge, 1951), 139-139, 140, 143, 156, 652. Lonn lists several additional units which contained a sprinkling of Swiss. Hereafter cited as Lonn, Union.
43 Ibid., 238.
made a brevet brigadier general for meritorious service during the war. Kaspar Trepp from the canton of Graubünden was one of the few Swiss officers who lost their lives in the war. He began his military career in America as captain of the Swiss company in Berdan’s Sharpshooters and was commander of the same unit when he was killed in battle at Mine Run. Having collected many experiences in the English Foreign Legion during the Crimean War, it was he who, according to Aschmann, conceived the idea of organizing a special outfit of marksmen.  

Among the Swiss of the rank of major was “one of the most interesting and dramatic of the foreign figures in the Union Army.” He was Emil Frey, a student from Basel. Visiting with relatives in Highland, Illinois, when the war broke out, he immediately joined the Illinois regiment commanded by his friend, the German revolutionary Friedrich Hecker. He later related: “The prospect of fighting in a jolly, merry campaign possessed a great charm for me. But I dare say that I was not less inspired by the idea of supporting the great cause of the republic, of fighting for the preservation of the Union.” First color bearer of the regiment—“and well may I add that no native American was prouder than I to bear the Star-Spangled Banner”—he raised his own company among the Swiss at Highland in the summer of 1862. After Chancellorsville he became acting major. At Gettysburg he was captured. The next eighteen months he spent in the ill-famed Libby Prison. His life as prisoner was made doubly miserable when he was chosen by lot as a hostage for a Confederate officer condemned to death by a Northern court-martial. After his release he went back to Switzerland where his American major’s brevet was readily recognized. His story made news when Frey returned to the United States in 1862 as the first Swiss diplomat to be accredited in Washington and even more so, when later in his career he became a Federal Councillor and the President of the Swiss Confederation in 1894.

Frey always liked to refresh the memories of the war in congenial meetings with other veterans. He initiated and organized a Civil War veterans’ reunion at Lucerne in 1899. Twenty Swiss survivors were invited to partake in a dinner consisting of “Potage purée de Libby Beans; Vol-au-vent à la Gettysburgh; Filet piqué, importé de Chickamauga; Légumes, Pommes Château; Fromage, Fruits and Texas Leckerly.” The latter dessert was offered in honor of a Colonel G. Kellersberger, who had fought the war in a Confederate corps of engineers in Texas.

Kellersberger was one of the small number of Swiss who are known to have worn the gray. Information about the Swiss in the Confederate army is very scant. Swiss immigrants in the South were even more scattered and isolated than their compatriots on the other side. There is no single company on record which consisted chiefly of Swiss. Yet there were a few persons of Swiss birth who are well-known for one reason or another for their service to the Confederacy. One of them is Major Henry Wirz of Andersonville Prison fame. Wirz, a native of Zurich, was practicing medicine in Louisiana when the war began. An enthusiastic supporter of the Southern cause, he immediately offered his service to the Confederacy and was appointed clerk in Libby Prison at Richmond. In January, 1864, he was given the superintendency of Andersonville Prison in Georgia, which appointment “in the light of his experience… would seem to have been a very appropriate one.” Much has been written about Andersonville Prison and the gruesome conditions under which ten thousands of prisoners lived, starved, and died. Henry Wirz was tried after the war for being responsible for the death of the prisoners, was found guilty and executed in November, 1865. Since then many historians have reviewed the trial and given another hearing to the defendant, citing many additional witnesses before the court of history. Most of them have come to the conclusion that Wirz was the victim of a mistrial, having done the best he could under the circumstances, and that the judges were giving way to “the inflamed war feeling” which “demanded a sacrifice.”

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38 Ibid., 238. See also Prominent Americans of Swiss Origin, Swiss-American Historical Society, comp. (New York, 1932), 83-84.
40 Lonn, Union, 250-251. Another Swiss major, A. G. Studer, of the Fifteenth Iowa, was later appointed U.S. consul in Singapore (Ibid., 609).

42 Bericht über die I. Zusammenkunft der in der Schweiz wohnenden Veteranen des amerikanischen Sezessions-Krieges, abgehalten in Luzern am 29. Januar 1899.” A copy of this report is among the Frey Papers in the Staatsarchiv Basel-Stadt.
43 Ella Lonn, Foreigners in the Confederacy (Chapel Hill, 1940), 273-275, see also the unpublished Ph. D. dissertation by Ovid Futch, "History of Andersonville Prison" (Emory University, Ga., 1959).
The most prominent Swiss on the Confederate side was Henry Hotze, special agent of the South in Europe. One of "perhaps the two ablest and most successful Confederate agents sent to foreign countries," he worked tirelessly toward the influencing of European public opinion in favor of the South. One of his ingenious means was the founding in May, 1862, of a Confederate weekly newspaper in London, the Index. The circulation of 2,250 was small, but the paper was read by many of the most influential people of English society and government, and its articles served as basis for the editorial writers of English papers. By winning the friendship of M. Havas of the Havas Bullier Telegraphic Company he was also able to control practically all the American news distributed to the French press. Hotze showed, according to an authority in the field of the diplomatic history of the Confederacy, "more insight into the public opinion and tendencies than did either Mason or Slidell, and his fastidiousness, his deftness and his lightness of touch in a delicate situation were remarkable. His resourcefulness had a masterly fineness that would have done honor to Cavour or Bismarck." Despite all this, his mission had no measurable result.44

Another Swiss must be mentioned, one who, though not fighting in the Confederate army and not belonging to the diplomatic corps of the South, was nevertheless heavily involved in the war business. He was J. C. Kuhn, Swiss consul at Galveston, Texas, a person who despite the war was not to be detained from trading in cotton. Although Galveston, like all Southern ports, was blockaded, Kuhn fitted out several ships, loaded them with cotton bales and let them run the blockade—under the Swiss flag. Two of the ships were captured by the Union navy late in August, 1863. They contained 80 and 133 bales of cotton respectively. A third one, the vessel Sarah, was more successful and landed safely in Tampico, Mexico, on September 5, 1863. After the cotton was unloaded for transshipment to England the Sarah returned to Galveston. The records do not disclose whether other vessels sailed under the Swiss flag before or after August, 1863, or if this was a unique event. Kuhn probably was discouraged enough not to try it again, especially after the Swiss government had refused to support his demand for indemnification. The unauthorized use of the flag displeased the Federal Council, as it was not exactly something to help advance its project of introducing the Swiss flag on the high seas.45

In the spring of 1860, a Swiss painter, thirty-eight years of age, left Switzerland for the United States, well equipped with letters of introduction from the American minister at Bern and several of the Federal Councillors to Secretary of State Seward and other prominent Americans. He was Frank Buchser, a widely traveled artist of established reputation. His object was to sketch the leading American personalities of the heroic period which had just come to an end, in order to assemble material for a large mural in the Federal Palace at Bern, a companion piece to one featuring eminent men of Swiss history. This was another manifestation of the spirit of friendship for the United States which animated the Swiss public at the time.46 Buchser stayed in America for five years, and his experience is not without a symbolical value for a certain change in American-Swiss relations in the late 1860's.

Buchser was quite well received. He was allowed to paint Seward and members of Seward's family at Auburn, N.Y., President Johnson, General William Tecumseh Sherman, William Cullen Bryant, and others, and made two trips to the West, sketching the Indians and the plains. But he was almost irresistibly drawn to the South, its people and its landscape. Despite the denunciation of his pictures of Negro groups and local scenes in the Shenandoah Herald in August, 1867, he returned to Virginia repeatedly. In October, 1869, he had the opportunity to paint a portrait of General Robert E. Lee. Deeply impressed, he wrote in his diary: "What a genteel, noble soul, good and amiable, is the old white-haired warrior. I come to the conviction that if the American politicians of the last fifteen years had been only half as intelligent and only half as honest and able as the soldiers, that is the Generals Grant, Lee, Sherman, etc., the war would never have been begun... three months at Seward's have opened my eyes! Grant, Lee, Sherman, all are of more value than these intriguing snakes and profane swindlers of wiredrawers who hereabouts are called politicians." In other words, Buchser, while disillusioned by the persons who dominated the political scene, found

44 Frank Lawrence Owsley, King Cotton Diplomacy (Chicago, 1931), 120 and 167. See also Lonn, Confederacy, 69-73, and Robert F. Darden, "The Index: Confederate Newspaper in London, 1862-1865," (M.A. thesis, Emory University, Ga., 1948). Hotze's despatches were published as part of the Pickett papers in Navy Records, Ser. 2, III.

45 Navy Records, Ser. I, XX, 475, 482 and 595; and Despatches, Zurich, VI (Sept. 18, 1860).

the America he was looking for in the personalities of the military leaders of both sides, in the landscapes of the West, and in the people, white and black, of the South. He was able to sell very few of his paintings but he probably harbored no resentment; for, all in all, he had had a good time in America. He took most of the pictures back to Switzerland, where they now adorn the walls of the art museums in Solothurn and Bern.47

There was no mention in 1871 of the large mural in the Federal Palace. The peak of American-Swiss good relationship had passed. The two decades from 1850 to 1870, the period of Mann and Fay and of the Civil War, had produced a great amount of friendly words and phrases and witnessed much ideological fraternizing. Some people in Switzerland, full of the liberal and democratic ideals of the revolutions of the 'forties, had dreamed of a close alliance between the only two republics of the time, and the first representatives of the United States in Switzerland, engulfed by this wave of sympathy and respect, had added their benevolent efforts to make such a result possible. The manifestations of these feelings were many and often extraordinary. Yet the attitude in distant Washington was, though friendly and attentive, always cool, very correct and very sober. Switzerland was much esteemed, no doubt about that, but it was far away and small, and its proposals and wishes lacked the urgency and immediacy of the many problems closer to home.

The climax of enthusiasm for America of the Civil War period was followed by a short period of disenchantment, caused by the manner in which certain questions of extradition and emigration were handled by the American government.48 But the Swiss government and public were quick to adopt the rules of Realpolitik without changing much in the basic relations which remained in a state of quiet, steady friendliness. The friendship between the two countries was anchored in common political ideals and in the treaty of 1850; it had grown strong and deep during the turbulent decades of the 1850's and '60's, and it provided a durable basis during the sometimes involved dealings of the following decades.

47 H. Lüdeke, "Frank Buchser, a Swiss Painter in Post-War Virginia," William and Mary College Quarterly Historical Magazine, 2d Series, XVI (October, 1930), 501-514. Buchser's diary was edited by Gottfried Walchli under the title Mein Leben und Streben in Amerika (Zurich, 1942).

48 See Chs. VI and VIII.