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## Fighting for Faith? Experiences of the *Sonderbund* Campaign (1847)

When invited to contribute to this volume, I was told that it would be about an issue not usually connected with Switzerland: war. As true as such an observation obviously must be for a non-Swiss, it sounds strange to a member of probably the most militarised society in Europe, who remembers officials proudly repeating the apophthegm: 'Switzerland does not *have* an army, it *is* an army'. Fortunately, being an army does not necessarily mean being at war; probably, on the contrary, (democratic) societies which – like all others in Europe, except Sweden – have really experienced the horrors of war in this century tend to minimise the public role of their army. Hence a rare kind of militia-militarism is typical of Switzerland where the battles fought between Morgarten and Marignano have always been the nucleus of national identity. War is somehow omnipresent in a country whose sons have lost their lives as mercenaries on all the battlegrounds of old Europe and its colonies. This tradition was strengthened – and this again must perplex a foreigner – by the experience of World War II. Although one of only four countries on the European continent not to get involved in it, the Swiss felt themselves to be at war – *Schweiz im Krieg* is the title both of a book reprinted ten times and of the most successful television series about this issue.<sup>1</sup>

In spite of this martial tradition and identity, the wars fought on Swiss territory *after* Marignano occupy a small part of the national memory. The Swiss do not like to remember their history as what it mostly has been: constantly recurring civil strife. Since the fifteenth century, every century has had its civil war: the war with Zurich (1440–1446), Zwingli's disaster at Kappel (1531), the first (1656) and the second war (1712) of Villmergen, let alone the peasant revolts of 1524/25 and 1653. The *Sonderbund* War of 1847 belongs to this series: if it is remembered at all it is with a certain

1 Werner Rings, *Schweiz im Krieg 1933–1945. Ein Bericht* (Zurich, 1974).

shame, as something that should not happen in a nice family. Public memory is to a large extent reduced to the figure of Guillaume-Henri Dufour, not because he, as the Commander-in-Chief of the Federal troops, won the war, but because, from the beginning, his declared aim was reconciliation.

Harmony may be an indispensable element of national history everywhere; it is especially palpable in a country that has had no constitutional change since 1848 and whose government has been composed of the same four parties almost without interruption since 1944 – four parties which, in 1995, together attracted 75 per cent of voters in a large coalition of opposed ideologies that had been implacable enemies not only in the *Sonderbund* War, but also in the national strike after World War I. This strange model of harmony has recently met a lot of criticism and has been severely examined for various reasons; one of them is the difficulty in defining Switzerland's relation towards supranational institutions, namely the EU. This obvious paralysis might explain why the at present predominant interpretation of the *Sonderbund* War has met almost general acceptance.<sup>2</sup> To Hansjörg Siegenthaler, it is by no means evident that people act jointly, as this involves personal risk and sacrifice; collective action, a community of action ('*Handlungsgemeinschaft*') is the product of an extraordinary situation, a widely conceived epistemological crisis which in the case of the *Sonderbund* would originate in the precarious 'sources of truth'.<sup>3</sup> Siegenthaler's in other respects convincing interpretation, an avowed theory of modern democratic and highly differentiated societies of growth and learning

- 2 It has to be said that Siegenthaler's purpose is the construction of a general theory of crisis; he did not develop it from an analysis of the *Sonderbund* crisis, but later applied the theory (in order to exemplify it) to that event; see Hansjörg Siegenthaler, *Regelvertrauen, Prosperität und Krisen. Die Ungleichmässigkeit wirtschaftlicher und sozialer Entwicklung als Ergebnis individuellen Handelns und sozialen Lernens* (Tübingen, 1993).
- 3 Hansjörg Siegenthaler, 'Supranationalität, Nationalismus und regionale Autonomie. Erfahrungen des schweizerischen Bundesstaates, Perspektiven der europäischen Gemeinschaft', *Traverse* 3 (1994), 117–40 and 'Weg der Vernunft in die Modernität. Vom Kampf um die Quellen der Wahrheit zur Gründung des Bundesstaates', *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 27/28 Juni 1998, p. 71. For a historiographical assessment see also Thomas Maissen, 'The 1848 Conflicts and their Significance in Swiss Historiography', in Michael Butler/Joy Charnley/Malcolm Pender (eds.), *Between Continuity and Change – 150 Years of Modern Switzerland* (London, forthcoming 2000).

('*Wachstums-Lerngesellschaften*'), possibly underestimates what nowadays could be called 'archaic' elements in nineteenth-century Switzerland, for example the bellicosity especially among the young. This after all unpolitical impulse which has been traditional at least since the *Saubannerzüge* of the fifteenth century, is undeniable among the Radical partisans of the *Freischarenzüge* in 1844 and 1845 and can be traced through to the riots of 1980 which appropriately were called *Jugendunruhen*. Besides this, it is enough to mention Clausewitz to understand that the moral and political inhibition against war was much less developed in the nineteenth century than it has become nowadays after two world wars. It undeniably was a difficult decision for many politicians to wage war in 1847, but their sorrow was less – as it would be today – the loss of individual life so much as an aversion towards civil war among confederates.

Yet the war was fought, and our question will be what the soldiers felt when they started marching. What were their motives and convictions and how did they subjectively experience the war? The political process leading to the formation of the *Sonderbund* between Lucerne, Uri, Schwyz, Unterwalden, Zug, Fribourg, and the Valais (11 December 1845), the resolution ordering its dissolution (20 July 1847) and its military execution (4 November 1847) is well known, as is the campaign itself. The Diet's troops first conquered Fribourg (14 November) and won – after some skirmishes in the Argovian *Freiamt* and the Ticino – the decisive battle at Gislíkion and Meierskappel (23 November 1847) at the eastern border of Lucerne, while Bernese troops conquered the Entlebuch Valley on the same day. Lucerne capitulated on 24 November 1847, the other cantons soon after. While we are well informed about the opinions of the leaders within the different parties,<sup>4</sup> we know less about the ordinary people, and it has already been claimed that their religiosity in particular should be examined more closely.<sup>5</sup> On the other hand and especially among Catholic historians, it has been a commonplace since 1848 that deep-rooted Protestant hatred of the Catholic religion was an important cause for the war which in that

- 4 Essential reading for the *Sonderbund* War is Erwin Bucher, *Die Geschichte des Sonderbundskrieges* (Zurich, 1966); see also Joachim Remak, *A Very Civil War. The Swiss Sonderbund War of 1847* (Boulder/San Francisco/Oxford, 1993).
- 5 Carlo Moos, 'Dimensionen eines Bürgerkriegs. Für eine Neubewertung des Geschehens um den Sonderbund', in Brigitte Studer (ed.), *Etappen des Bundesstaats. Staats- und Nationsbildung der Schweiz, 1848–1998* (Zurich, 1998), pp. 21–44 (p. 32).

respect was said to have continued the confessional antagonism of 1531, 1656 and 1712.<sup>6</sup> In the standard work on modern Catholicism, Urs Altermatt maintains that the radicals and liberals mobilised the masses through anticatholicism and antijesuitism.<sup>7</sup> While authors like Altermatt assert such religious motives especially among ordinary people, Karl Bühlmann's study of the *Freischarenzüge* concludes that the motives of most partisans were neither political nor religious, but that they were constrained by economic dependence upon liberal entrepreneurs.<sup>8</sup>

With such differences in interpretation, it may be helpful to have a look at the testimonies of those who actually fought the war – to what were they loyal when they took the oath, how did they experience the campaign of November 1847, how did they judge the enemy and their own deeds? We will examine contemporary sources like diaries and letters, and with few exceptions no later memoirs or reports which started to be published soon after the war. We will concentrate on the 'unknown' soldiers, because the most eminent political and military leaders have already been studied in detail.<sup>9</sup> Unfortunately, the sample of surviving printed 'ego-documents'<sup>10</sup> is biased; the capacity and – even more – the time to write down one's

6 See Philipp Anton von Segesser, Constantin Siegwart, *Sammlung kleiner Schriften*, 2 (Bern, 1879). On pp. 451–2 it is commented that 'es bedurfte der Aufregung des protestantischen Fanatismus [...] um den Sonderbundskrieg zum Ausbruch zu bringen.' See also pp. 485–6.

7 Urs Altermatt, *Katholizismus und Moderne. Zur Sozial- und Mentalitätsgeschichte der Schweizer Katholiken im 19 und 20 Jahrhundert* (Zürich/Einsiedeln/Köln, 1989), p. 136.

8 Karl Bühlmann, *Der zweite Freischarenzug: Motive und soziale Ursachen anhand der Prozessakten*, Beiträge zur Luzerner Stadtgeschichte, 7 (Luzern, 1985), p. 179. On p. 182 he says that 'die wirtschaftliche Abhängigkeit und die Furcht vor Vergeltungen und Verdienstausschlag scheinen als Motive eine stärkere Rolle gespielt zu haben als der umstrittene Beschluss über die Berufung der Jesuiten.' Bühlmann's interpretation is based on the partisans' judicial examinations; hence one could be more cautious about this interpretation than Bühlmann is himself where he discusses the methodological problem concerning his sources.

9 For testimonies of different leaders see Edgar Bonjour, *Das Schicksal des Sonderbunds in zeitgenössischer Darstellung* (Aarau, 1947).

10 For this category, still focused on the early modern period, see Winfried Schulze (ed.), *Ego-Dokumente. Annäherung an den Menschen in der Geschichte*, Selbstzeugnisse

experiences differed according to social groups. Thus, officers are definitely over-represented among our sources, and testimonies from *Sonderbund* soldiers are very rare. But we encounter also a small farmer and ordinary soldier like Niklaus Christen from the Bernese village Utzensdorf who was kept quite busy earning money as a ghost-writer for his fellows who did not know how to write or formulate a letter.<sup>11</sup>

Some maybe unexpected facts must be stated right away to clarify that the *Sonderbund* War was not fought just between Conservatives and Liberals, let alone between Catholics and Protestants.<sup>12</sup> The leader of the Diet's troops, Dufour, was a Conservative Protestant, just like the Commander-in-Chief of the *Sonderbund*, General Johann Ulrich von Salis-Soglio from the Grisons. The first victim of the war was a Liberal officer from Lucerne who was defending a regime he politically opposed; on the other hand, many Conservative officers served the Diet (*Tagsatzung*) and their canton, although they disliked the ruling Liberals. Among this majority, there were two completely Catholic cantons, Solothurn and Ticino, and several mixed cantons with a high Catholic population, namely Aargau, St. Gall, Grisons, Thurgau, Basel-Land, but also – a fact that is often forgotten – Geneva and Bern. We can roughly discern five 'parties' in the conflicts leading to the war.<sup>13</sup>

der Neuzeit, 2 (Berlin, 1996), especially Schulze's introduction. The neologism 'ego-document' is particularly ugly; we use it once here to explain that we will also refer to studies of judicial examinations which are not 'auto-testimonies' ('Selbstzeugnisse') or autobiographical texts in the pure sense, but which – with some methodological caution – enable us to become familiar with the convictions of those examined.

11 Niklaus Christen, 'Der Sonderbunds-Feldzug', in Alfred G. Roth (ed.), *Burgdorfer Jahrbuch* 59 (1992), pp. 9–64; see pp. 55–6 for Christen's ghost-writing and *Erlebnisse des Bataillons Bänziger Nr. 66 im Feldzuge gegen den Sonderbund* (Trogen, 1848), p. 23, for many soldiers' problems in writing an address correctly.

12 For a detailed account of the heterogeneous alliances of the *Sonderbund* period see also Maissen, op.cit.

13 It must be emphasised that there were no parties in the modern sense of the word during the first half of the nineteenth century; on the contrary, a party was considered to be somewhat illegitimate, because it did not organise itself according to the commonwealth, but according to particularism.

1. The Radicals who were declared heirs of the principles of the French Revolution (like a centralised national state with universal suffrage) and believed that the general will of the sovereign people could change constitutions whenever it felt like doing so;
2. The Liberals who thought that in society an elite was necessary, remained rather cautious towards revolutionary claims and were most interested in individual economic freedom;
3. The Protestant Conservatives who detested Radicalism as a Jacobinian movement, but who did not like the Jesuits either, whom they considered a historical foe;
4. The Catholic Conservatives who, like their Protestant fellows in mind, were traditionalist particularists or (in the German sense of the word) 'federalists': their main concern was cantonal sovereignty and the solemn role of the institutionalised church which did not mean that they were particularly fond of the Jesuits;
5. The Catholic 'Ultras', like the *Sonderbund*'s leader Constantin Siegwart-Müller, who wanted to fight Liberal modernity with modern weapons: hence they supported the sovereignty of a devout people and relied on popular religious feelings and the Jesuits as 'whips' in a conflict whose intensification they considered inevitable.

Very typical of this last group is the harangue by Theodor Ab Yberg, the *Landammann* of Schwyz, when he talked to his fellow citizens on 30 September 1847. According to him, the war would be about 'freedom in church and state', and thus he exhorted the people of Schwyz: 'You will not allow Catholic institutions – which must be sacred to all true Catholics – to be robbed and pillaged.'<sup>14</sup> Ab Yberg's spirit of religious war was already contested by his contemporaries for on 30 September 1847, the Liberal *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* published a long article entitled 'The Big Lie'. Those Conservative leaders who claimed that the Catholic religion was in danger were not honest, because they knew that the conflict was political; that was why – according to the *NZZ* – several clergymen from Zurich openly supported the *Sonderbund*. The Diet, too, in a final proclamation some days before the war started, declared that it by no means wanted to

14 See the description of the *Landsgemeinde* at Rothenthurm by Johann Jacob Bachofen, *Gesammelte Werke*, 1, edited by Karl Meuli (Basel, 1943), pp. 390–2.

compromise religion in the seditious cantons.<sup>15</sup> As a pamphlet by the Lucernese judge Georg Josef Bossard (1814–1894) shows, some Catholic authors also considered the conflict as mainly political and not confessional; according to him, it was necessary for any honourable Catholic *and* Protestant to arm against the revolutionary spirit of unbelief and injustice that mocked the holy and the ecclesiastical.<sup>16</sup>

Bossard's hope was vain, for the Conservative Protestants and even many moderate Liberals opposed war for a long time, but ended up marching for the Diet. The role of the Conservatives was naturally the most important within the army; when Dufour, after serious scruples and emotional discussions with the political authorities, accepted his appointment as Commander-in-Chief, many officers followed him against their own convictions, among them three conservative divisional commanders.<sup>17</sup> One may think that their decision, as that of Dufour, originated not only from their sense of duty, but also from the ambition to prove their soldierly qualities.<sup>18</sup> They were determined to go to all lengths; war was not only their profession, but also their calling, and they did not want to miss the rare opportunity to fight a battle with a Swiss army – even if it was in a civil war against their counterparts. Edouard Burnand from the Vaud, a major in the General Staff, was a typical exponent of that attitude. As he knew, the local Radicals hoped that he would not take the oath of loyalty, an act which would make it impossible for him, as a deserter, to continue his political career and opposition after the war. But apart from that reason, he confessed to a feeling that seemed paradoxical even to him: as a true militarist, he was looking forward to the battle against his own friends.<sup>19</sup> Similarly Adolf Bürkli of Zurich, a first lieutenant within the artillery, was broken-hearted as he took the oath of loyalty; but he was determined to

15 The full text of the proclamation is printed for example in Jakob Amiet, *Der siegreiche Kampf der Eidgenossen gegen Jesuitismus und Sonderbund* (Solothurn, 1848), pp. 114–16.

16 Georg Josef Bossard, *Der Kampf zwischen Radikalismus und Sonderbund. Ein Wort an das Luzernervolk und seine Verbündeten* (Lucerne, 1847), pp. 63–4.

17 Bucher, *Sonderbundskrieg*, pp. 107–9; Remak, *Civil War*, pp. 87–8.

18 For Dufour see Bucher, *Sonderbundskrieg*, p. 98.

19 Edouard Burnand, 'Souvenirs personnels sur la campagne du Sonderbund', *Revue historique vaudoise* 32 (1924), 165–6.

fulfil his civic duty even against his inclination and conviction.<sup>20</sup> Still, he confessed his craving to measure himself against the enemy and was always disappointed whenever an attack was postponed.<sup>21</sup> We must not neglect the local mutiny of Catholic soldiers, notably in St. Gall, who even after yielding to the authorities remained very uneasy about the war;<sup>22</sup> but still we can state that there was considerable martial enthusiasm especially among the young who, it was said, 'feel a deep joy about the campaign' because they 'want to march'.<sup>23</sup> The *Sonderbund*'s soldiers, too, were extremely happy

20 Adolf Bürkli, *Tagebuch des Artillerie-Oberlieutenants A. B. über den Winterfeldzug von Anno 1847*, 1 Teil, 91 Neujahrsblatt der Feuerwerker-Gesellschaft in Zürich (Zürich, 1896), p. 15. See also the memories of Simeon Bavier, who later became a Federal Councillor, quoted in Bruno Steiner, 'Die eidgenössische Militärjustiz unter General Dufour im Sonderbundskrieg 1847/48. Ein Forschungsbericht zur Entstehungsgeschichte der modernen schweizerischen Militärstrafrechtspflege' (Dissertation, University of Zürich, 1983). He says that 'die üblichen Redensarten wie: Bund im Bund, Jesuiten, Vaterlandsverräter, Dunkelmänner, Pfaffen usw. zogen nicht mehr recht und waren nachgerade abgenützt worden. Ich selber musste mir sagen, dass der begonnene Krieg mehr auf Gewalt als auf Recht beruhe, und ich beklagte es auf das tiefste, dass die Eidgenossen den Bruderkrieg begonnen hatten. Aber meine Pflicht hatte mich nun einmal ins Feld gestellt, und ich erfüllte sie auch, soweit als es mir möglich war' (p. 217).

21 Bürkli, *Tagebuch*, 1, pp. 16–7.

22 Gustav Bänziger, Johann Jakob Wiget, 'Ein Flawiler Augenzeuge im Sonderbundskrieg 1847', *Toggenburger Annalen* 15 (1988), 85–94. On p. 86 we have the case of a soldier who did not take the oath but promised his officer that he would do his duty. On other refusers from St. Gall see Ulrich Dütschler, 'Tagebuchnotizen eines Infanteristen', in Johannes Dierauer (ed.), *St. Gallische Analekten*, 1, p. 20, and Joseph Boesch, 'Tagebuch aus dem Feldzug gegen den Sonderbund 1847', in Paul Boesch (ed.), *Zürcher Taschenbuch* 51 (1931), 27–72 (p. 33). See also Johann Konrad Züst from Appenzell, 'Aus dem Tagebuch eines Schützenlieutenants', in Johannes Dierauer (ed.), *St. Gallische Analekten* 8 (St. Gallen: 1898). He comments on 'ein höchst ungerechter, ein höchst unchristlicher und meinen Grundsätzen total zuwiderlaufender [Zweck]'. See also Steiner, *Militärjustiz*, pp. 62–5, 239–259, 290–97, 300–01, 339–344 for examples of a considerable number of Catholics who deserted for religious reasons (notably among the Bernese) or even mutinied (St. Gall).

23 See the comments of Corporal Joseph Boesch, 'Tagebuch', pp. 30, 50, and of Lieutenant Karl Walder in Bürkli, *Tagebuch*, p. 30; Matthias Johann Henseler, *Erlebnisse aus dem Sonderbundskriege von einem Soldaten des St. Gallischen Bataillons Martignoni* (St. Gall, 1848), pp. 3, 9–10; Hans Gränicher, 'Meine Erlebnisse und Beobachtungen im Sonderbundskriege', in Hans Jenny (ed.),

as they felt that they were about to encounter the enemy;<sup>24</sup> many sources mention their 'famous roar' that gave them courage and intimidated the enemy.<sup>25</sup>

What, besides such 'archaic' feelings, are the motives to which the soldiers confess? Quite close to the aforementioned sense of patriotic duty is the conviction that the mutinous *Sonderbund* had violated federal law.<sup>26</sup> Such a reasoning implies that Switzerland (and not a particular canton) merited patriotic feelings above all and that federal law outweighed the decisions of the cantons. That kind of formal approach to the conflicts is typical not only, but especially, of Conservative soldiers such as Dufour:<sup>27</sup> they agreed to maintain the order which was threatened by the separatists. It was probably decisive for the whole war that the higher officers, however conservative they may have been, developed a greater sensitivity for national unity than many politicians and the common people. Since 1815 the army

*Zofinger Neujahrsblatt* 5 (1920), 40–63; Rudolf Heiz, *Erlebnisse als Feldprediger im Sonderbundskriege 1847*, edited by Rudolf Hafner (Zürich, 1903), p. 51; Gustav von Hoffstetter, *Bericht über seine Teilnahme am Sonderbundsfeldzuge als Ordonnanz-Offizier* (Bern, 1894), pp. 41, 49–50. The latter comments that 'es ist etwas Eigenes, Unerklärliches um die Kampfeslust im Menschen'.

24 Erich Aschwanden, *Nidwalden und der Sonderbund 1841–1850, Beiträge zur Geschichte Nidwaldens*, 45 (Stans, 1996) p. 100.

25 Bürkli, *Tagebuch*, 1, p. 22; *Tagebuch* 2, p. 11; Gränicher, p. 52; Hansruedi Mazzolini-Trümpy, 'Es gibt Frieden, es gibt wieder eine einige Eidgenossenschaft! Briefe des Glarner Alexander Spelty an seine Frau Verena, geb. Tschudi, aus dem Sonderbundskrieg 1847', *Jahrbuch des Historischen Vereins des Kantons Glarus* 77 (1997), 71–2; August Alioth, 'Briefe aus dem Sonderbundsfeldzug', *Basler Jahrbuch* 1898, 230–248, (p. 234); Theodor Greyerz, 'Briefe von Dr. Konrad Kern an seine Brüder aus den Jahren 1845–1870', *Thurgauische Beiträge zur vaterländischen Geschichte* 66 (1929), 177–212 (p. 192). See also Walter Zelger, 'Journal interessanter und uninteressanter Tagesneuigkeiten 1847–1850', in F. Niederberger and J. Wyrsh (eds.), *Beiträge zur Geschichte Nidwaldens* (32/33), (Stans, 1970), p. 14, about the sorrowful soldiers who went to war without the 'usual cheers'.

26 Alfred Schneider, 'Berichte von zwei Kriegsfreiwilligen über das Gefecht bei Meierskappel 1847', *Zürcher Taschenbuch* (1929), 158–168 (p. 164); Henseler, *Erlebnisse*, p. 3; Traugott Siegfried, 'Aus der Sonderbundszeit. Briefe von Friedrich Siegfried', *Zofinger Neujahrsblatt* 9 (1924), 46–63, especially p. 54 (27 November 1847); see also Greyerz, 'Briefe von Dr. Konrad Kern', p. 189 (4 November 1847), p. 191 (6 November 1847).

27 For Dufour see Bucher, *Sonderbundskrieg*, pp. 96–8, 125–144.

had been the only national institution over which the Diet had been able to exercise federal power. In 1818, a centralised military school was established in Thun, and in 1820, troops from six cantons went on manoeuvres together for the first time; the military elite met in the Society of Swiss officers, the common soldiers in the various rifle clubs, a hotbed of liberal nationalism. Hence many of our authors blame the scornful obstinacy of those cantons who cold-shoulder the counsels, exhortations and prayers of the Confederation, a Confederation whose unity could only be preserved through the use of arms.<sup>28</sup> The Radical Johann Philipp Becker (1809–1886) from Biel, a secretary of staff, praised the beautiful death for one's country,<sup>29</sup> and Colonel Johann Ulrich Blumer from Glarus defended the honour of his country, his canton, his squadron, and himself,<sup>30</sup> while Leonhard Hunger from the Grisons felt the internal fire of a freeborn native of the Alps for justice, liberty and his country.<sup>31</sup> Among the Diet's troops, all these traditional elements of martial rhetoric were focused on the Swiss nation. We lack the sources, but it is probable that the same language was common among the soldiers of the *Sonderbund*, but with its focus on cantonal sovereignty. At least in the Ticino, a once subject territory (*Gemeine Herrschaft*), the fight for a just and holy cause against the rebels could additionally be justified, in the words of captain Sebastiano Beroldingen from Mendrisio, as a war against the former tyrants, 'contro gli antichi loro tiranni'.<sup>32</sup>

Liberty against tyranny was, of course, the war-cry of the *Sonderbund* as well as of the *Tagsatzung*: the first defended the freedom of the church and the sovereign canton, the latter the freedom of the individual in a national state. An ordinary soldier such as Matthias Johann Henseler from St. Gall was very well aware that he was participating in the 'great fight of our time

28 *Erlebnisse des Bataillons Bänziger*, p. 5; Mazzolini, 'Briefe des Alexander Spelty', p. 115 (19 November 1847), p. 118 (25 November 1847).

29 Fritz Häusler, 'Der letzte Kriegseinsatz einer bernischen Heeresinheit. Zwei Berichte über den Sonderbundsfeldzug der Berner Reservedivision Ochsenbein 1847', *Archiv des Historischen Vereins des Kantons Bern* 75 (1992), 101–281, (pp. 210–11).

30 Fritz Stucki, 'Die Scharfschützenkompanie Blumer im Sonderbundskrieg', *Neujahrsbote für das Glarner Hinterland* (1986), p. 111.

31 Leonhard Hunger, 'Aus dem Tagebuch, 1847, Savien. Erinnerungen eines Bündners an den Feldzug im Tessin im Jahre 1847 anlässlich des Sonderbundskriegs', *Bündner Monatsblatt* (1957), 177–188, (pp. 177, 179).

32 Gaetano Beretta, *La campagna del Sonderbund contro il Ticino 1847. Monografia storico-militare* (Lugano/Bellinzona, 1954) pp. 106–07.

for principles'.<sup>33</sup> Captain Johannes Kaiser from Solothurn was contributing to a patriotic struggle for intellectual freedom and light against the Jesuits' obscurantism.<sup>34</sup> Loyola's order was not by any means mentioned in every testimony; sometimes more generally, the 'reign of the priests and the aristocrats' is the origin of the evil.<sup>35</sup> But if the Jesuits are mentioned, they are the symbol of ultramontanism and the source of discord among the Swiss; and it is they who have fanaticised the people in the primitive cantons whom they have taught 'fury, hatred and exasperation'.<sup>36</sup> As the 'brothers' of one and the same nation who defend the *Sonderbund* are considered to be blinded yet stubborn victims rather than active foes,<sup>37</sup> only seldom are rude names addressed to them: once they are called 'Saubündler',<sup>38</sup> and the aforementioned Bernese Christen sees his neighbours from the Valais as an 'obstinate, cretinist, and goitrous people'.<sup>39</sup>

The Protestant clergymen form a group of their own. If the war was a fight between the Catholic and the Reformed Church, the successors of Zwingli should have been happy to get the opportunity to repay the defeat at Kappel; on the other hand, if they considered it to be a fight between modern individualist atheism and the traditional rule of providence, they would have been more likely to sympathise with the *Sonderbund*. After all, in 1839, the Liberal government installed in Zurich in 1830 was overthrown by a popular movement led by orthodox clergymen who feared that the liberal and critical theology taught at the University of Zurich would spread

33 Matthias Johann Henseler, *Erlebnisse aus dem Sonderbundskriege von einem Soldaten des St. Gallischen Bataillons Martignoni* (St. Gallen, 1848) p. 3; see also Greyerz, 'Briefe von Dr. Konrad Kern', p. 189 (31 October 1847).

34 Tino Kaiser, 'Briefe eines Solothurner Offiziers aus dem Sonderbundskrieg', *Jahrbuch für solothurnische Geschichte* 59 (1986), 171–184, (p. 179, 18 November 1847; p. 180, 26 November 1847). See also the speech by a member of Zurich's government in Heiz, *Erlebnisse* p. 9.

35 Alioth, 'Briefe', p. 237.

36 Christen, 'Sonderbunds-Feldzug', pp. 14–5, 59; Greyerz, 'Briefe von Dr. Konrad Kern', p. 189 (31 October 1847).

37 Christen, 'Sonderbunds-Feldzug', pp. 15, 60; also Kaiser, 'Briefe', p. 183 (6 December 1847); Mazzolini, 'Briefe des Alexander Spelty', p. 117 (24 November 1847), p. 70; *Erinnerungen aus dem Feldzuge gegen den Sonderbund. Aus dem Tagebuche eines Offiziers* (Zurich, 1847), p. 13.

38 Stucki, 'Scharfschützenkompanie Blumer', p. 114.

39 Christen, 'Sonderbunds-Feldzug', p. 52.

unbelief.<sup>40</sup> Johann Caspar Bluntschli and the other members of the Conservative regime installed after this so-called *Züri-Putsch* had for their part to resign in 1845, precisely because its orthodox supporters were not willing to support the prudent politics of what the Liberal antagonists call the 'Jesuitenrégime' that – out of respect for cantonal autonomy – actually tolerated the appointment of the Jesuits in Lucerne, the century-old foes of Calvinism. Thus, already during the decade preceding the war, the orthodox members of Zurich's Reformed Church seriously felt the dilemma of choosing between two evils. Once it was over, the army chaplains of Zurich had to report their experiences to the consistory<sup>41</sup> and apart from that, some of them even wrote diaries.

Johann Heinrich Schoch (1801–1890) from Dielsdorf followed the levy because he considered it to be his duty as a citizen.<sup>42</sup> Before the decisive battle at Meierskappel, Schoch was wistful as he imagined the many victims the fight would cost. After the victory, he met a Capuchin friar who obviously did not treat him as a colleague; Schoch was neither surprised nor scandalised and noticed that later, when the friar was no longer frightened, he even accepted another Protestant chaplain as a guest with him in his bedroom. Apparently, it was customary to lodge the army chaplains with their Catholic colleagues. Later, on his way back to Zurich, Schoch met a Catholic priest whom he describes as well-behaved and respectable. We get the impression that Schoch was a convinced supporter of the federal policy against the *Sonderbund*, but by no means fanatical; he did his duty as a clergyman and was glad that there was little suffering on both sides. At the beginning of his service, Schoch realised that the political authorities had left no precise instructions for him and that the band could not even play a hymn. Military service was obviously a secular job, for him as for others; nobody expected the minister to preach against the enemies of faith.<sup>43</sup>

A colleague of Schoch's, Carl Dändliker from Elsau, felt out of place because on the first two Sundays of the campaign, he could not conduct a

service for technical reasons.<sup>44</sup> When he finally stood in front of the soldiers, Dändliker comforted them, telling them to trust in God and to respect the Catholic church and its property. During the battle at Gislikon, Dändliker, like Schoch, was very concerned about his soldiers; he was far from martial and very sincere when he praised God and sang, after the victory and together with the troops, 'Wir danken Alle Gott!' Again like Schoch, Dändliker met a respectable Catholic priest, towards whom he even felt love and friendship.<sup>45</sup>

As far as Rudolf Heiz, another army chaplain from Zurich, is concerned, he even preferred well-bred discussions with the different Catholic colleagues who shared quarters with him to the mundane pleasures and pomposity of his fellow Liberal officers. Heiz's account is almost a book of martyrdom as he relates the humiliations and machinations these officers prepared against him, especially attempts to sabotage his sermon. He was a notorious Conservative, yet freely agreed to take the oath of loyalty and wanted to do his duty obediently without entering into political discussions. But many distrusted him as a 'Septemberheld', a reference to the *Züri-Putsch* of September 1839, and one soldier even threatened to shoot him down as a friend of the Jesuits.<sup>46</sup> Yet, when the soldiers of his battalion fled at Meierskappel, Heiz was proud to prove his faith and his courage by recovering the dead and wounded they had left behind. Heiz was by no means a friend of the Catholic rites which he considered to be mechanical and devoid of spirituality; but he was offended by many anticlerical statements made by his compatriots and felt that the *Zeitgeist* was against clergymen of both confessions, that the Radicals did not acknowledge positive Christianity or ecclesiastic community.<sup>47</sup> Thus he gladly accepted his colonel's suggestion to take Dufour's exhortation for humanity as a basis for his sermon: charity and indulgence towards the mistaken brother had to go along with the fulfilment of one's military duty.<sup>48</sup>

While Heiz deliberately did not claim the Almighty for any particular political party, other army chaplains, like Johann Jacob Streiff from Glarus,

40 See *Züriputsch, 6. September 1839. Sieg der gerechten Sache oder Septemberschande?* (Wetzikon, 1989).

41 They are preserved in the *Staatsarchiv* in Zurich (shelf-mark Q I 100/3).

42 Erwin Bucher, 'Feldprediger Johann Heinrich Schochs Tagebuch aus dem Sonderbundskrieg', *Zürcher Taschenbuch* (1968), 94–122.

43 Bucher, 'Schochs Tagebuch', pp. 95–6.

44 For Dändliker see Ulrich Helfenstein, 'Ein zürcherischer Feldprediger im Sonderbundskrieg', *Zürcher Taschenbuch* (1961) 96–106.

45 Helfenstein, 'Feldprediger', p. 104.

46 Heiz, *Erlebnisse*, pp. 1–2, 39, 35, 53.

47 Heiz, *Erlebnisse*, pp. 23, 56–57, 131–32, 121, 155.

48 Heiz, *Erlebnisse*, pp. 60–62.

even stated that the Diet's troops could rely on God and his justice when they fought the rebels and the Jesuits behind them. Consequently, the victory at Meierskappel was obtained thanks to the 'Herr der Heerscharen'.<sup>49</sup> Streiff was obviously a firm supporter of the Liberals, but he too, finished with the hope that the resentments among Confederates would soon be forgotten.

This mixture of sincere conviction to fight for the right cause and desire for reconciliation is quite typical of most lay soldiers, too. The way they describe their experiences during the war often tells more about their sentiments than an open account of their own feelings. Almost all relate the joyful, optimistic singing of the 'beautiful martial' or 'patriotic' songs when the troops march off, popular singing that might vanish temporarily when the real danger approaches, but still helps to bear the tension and even purifies the warriors ('ein köstliches Veredlungsmittel').<sup>50</sup> But when the battle approaches, many confess fear, they become quiet and thoughtful; not dejected, but somewhat anxious.<sup>51</sup> When the enemy capitulates, soldiers shout for joy and relief after having felt mortal terror.<sup>52</sup> A cavalryman who happened to be far from any battle and did not see any victims either, noted in his diary, 'we are not angry about that'.<sup>53</sup> Those who really had to fight were often not models of bravery. Vicar Heiz was not the only one to relate

shameful actions on the part of his troops and the once boastful Catholic leader Ab Yberg; unfounded panic could break out in both camps.<sup>54</sup> Friedrich Siegfried, the Argovian *Landammann* and general staff officer, judged soberly that there were, on both sides, resolute men as well as lukewarm or frightened ones.<sup>55</sup> A doctor of the Diet's troops counted many sick who visited him when the battle started; he calls them 'women in uniform' ('beuniformierte Weiber').<sup>56</sup> In actual fact, many militiamen lacked the soldier's skill and discipline: one soldier shot himself in the hand while playing and touching the trigger with his feet, another killed his comrade when he fell and accidentally fired his gun.<sup>57</sup> The officers were often not at the height of their powers either: orders and competencies were not clear and created a confused staff ('Confusionsstab'), campsites were so badly reconnoitred that disappointed troops openly mutinied.<sup>58</sup> Almost every author reports a series of false alarms.<sup>59</sup>

Under these circumstances, as the Conservative Bürkli from Zurich put it, a barrel of brandy had good effects on some desperate soldiers and the like-minded Heiz agreed as he saw his soldiers gaining courage while drinking,<sup>60</sup> which is why the army itself offered alcohol to the soldiers, although it was to turn out to be one of the main causes of many excesses<sup>61</sup> and another Conservative officer, Burnand, suggested prohibiting alcohol henceforth.<sup>62</sup>

49 Johann Jacob Streiff, *Das Bataillon Schindler No. 73 von Glarus und die Brigade Ritter No. III. Reminiscenzen aus dem Sonderbundskriege* (Glarus, 1848). See also the religious service attended by Boesch, 'Tagebuch', p. 47, where war is said to be God's will and indispensable for restoring peace, concord and justice. Another lieutenant from Glarus, Alexander Spelty, thought that God was obviously protecting the confederates, see Mazzolini, 'Briefe des Alexander Spelty', p. 112 (16 November 1847), p. 115 (19 November 1847).

50 Christen, 'Sonderbunds-Feldzug', pp. 20–1, 31, 41, 62; Häusler, 'Kriegseinsatz', p. 189; Beretta, *Campagna del Sonderbund*, where 'allegria e canto' are spoken of (p. 107); Stucki, 'Scharfschützenkompanie Blumer', p. 111; Boesch, 'Tagebuch', pp. 31, 35, 52; Heiz, *Erlebnisse*, p. 51; *Erlebnisse des Bataillons Bänziger*, p. 16; *Erinnerungen aus dem Feldzuge*, which mentions 'ähtes, herzliches Freundesleben' (p. 12); also Alioth, 'Briefe', pp. 233–35.

51 Adolf Erismann, 'Aus dem Tagebuch eines Militärarztes', *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 3rd part; Henseler, *Erlebnisse*, pp. 5–6; Bucher, 'Schochs Tagebuch', p. 111, Heiz, *Erlebnisse*, p. 52, and Boesch, 'Tagebuch', p. 50.

52 Christen, 'Sonderbunds-Feldzug', p. 27.

53 Franz Zimmerlin, 'Tagebuch eines aargauischen Kavalleristen aus dem Sonderbundsfeldzug', *Zofinger Neujahtsblatt* 9 (1924), 64–80, (p. 76).

54 Heiz, *Erlebnisse*, pp. 68–9, 116–19; Bürkli, *Tagebuch*, 2, pp. 4–5; Louis Wyrsh, 'Tagebuchaufzeichnungen des Obersten L. W., des Kommandanten des Unterwaldner Bataillons im Sonderbundfeldzuge 1847', 2nd part, *Nidwaldner Volksblatt* 51, 18 December 1897; Aschwanden, *Nidwalden und der Sonderbund*, pp. 101–02. On the frequent lack of courage and motivation see also Steiner, *Militärjustiz*, pp. 36–45.

55 Siegfried, 'Sonderbundszeit', p. 49 (4 November 1847).

56 Erismann, 'Tagebuch', 2nd/3rd part.

57 Bucher, 'Schochs Tagebuch', pp. 102–3; Züst, 'Tagebuch', pp. 12–13; Jean-Charles Baudet, *Echos du Sonderbund. Lettres choisies de Samson Vuilleumier 1847* (Lausanne, 1947), p. 187, on similar accidents in the Vaud.

58 Bucher, 'Schochs Tagebuch', pp. 115–18; Boesch, 'Tagebuch', p. 46; Hunger, 'Tagebuch', pp. 182–85.

59 For example Boesch, 'Tagebuch', pp. 40–5.

60 Bürkli, *Tagebuch*, 2, p. 12; Heiz, *Erlebnisse*, p. 72.

61 Steiner, *Militärjustiz*, p. 65.

62 Burnand, 'Souvenirs personnels', pp. 236, 244.



The decisive battles at Gislikon and Meierskappel on Tuesday 23 November became a myth for those who participated, even though the casualties were relatively low: seventeen dead and 121 wounded among the attacking Diet's troops, about eight dead and over fifty wounded on the other side. Even more than the battle itself, it was probably the following night that made these villages on the border between Lucerne and Zug *lieux de mémoire* of Swiss history. Accordingly, the Radical Becker was convinced that military life among comrades was a stronger tie than any religious cult.<sup>63</sup> After the victory at Meierskappel, when the Federals lit the fires of the bivouac, Schoch was impressed by the wild, picturesque beauty of the soldier's life.<sup>64</sup> And the Liberal Boesch was surprised to sit fraternally at the fire with people whom he had never seen before but who felt like old friends.<sup>65</sup> The chaplain Streiff from Glarus exclaimed when he remembered the fires with the slaughtered cattle over them, 'Oh, what a life it was.'<sup>66</sup> Gränicher from Zofingen was convinced that a painter could become rich, if he were to paint the gruesomely beautiful scenery with burning houses and many fires, bellowing cattle and working soldiers.<sup>67</sup> And Henseler from St. Gall wrote that the bivouac on the battlefield of Gislikon would have been 'beautiful beyond description', had there not been blood shed on it.<sup>68</sup>

One officer was impressed by the good manners of his men who were saddened to find the body of a tall, strong soldier from Unterwalden at Gislikon; he got the impression that they would have liked to bring him back to life again. There was no hatred against this enemy, but against the most 'impertinent clerics' and the 'venal server of princes' who fanaticised him.<sup>69</sup> Similarly, during the armistice after the battles, the Diet's soldiers soon fraternised with those from Schwyz, but scolded them, asking, 'Did you really believe we wanted to take away your religion as your clerics told you?'<sup>70</sup> Suddenly, among the vanquished, everybody wanted to be liberal

63 Häusler, 'Kriegseinsatz', pp. 239–240.

64 Bucher, 'Schochs Tagebuch', p. 114; also Hoffstetter, *Bericht*, pp. 114–15.

65 Boesch, 'Tagebuch', pp. 51–2.

66 Streiff, *Bataillon Schindler*, p. 28; the *Erinnerungen aus dem Feldzuge* (p. 27) is very similar.

67 Gränicher, *Erlebnisse*, pp. 54–5.

68 Henseler, *Erlebnisse*, p. 11; see also *Erlebnisse des Bataillons Bänziger*, p. 20, and Häusler, 'Kriegseinsatz', pp. 195–96, about similar scenery in Düringen (Fribourg) where 'es waren schöne, erhebende Augenblicke!'

69 *Erinnerungen aus dem Feldzuge*, pp. 20, 26.

and *eidgenössisch*, truly federal; in the canton of Schwyz, the Diet's troops could even be welcomed by an improvised triumphal arch.<sup>71</sup> Yet some authors were rather disgusted by such a joyful reception: those who just recently had voted and prepared the war, now seemed to have forgotten that they were about to fight the Federal soldiers they now cheered.<sup>72</sup>

There were several reasons for this friendliness. Everywhere in the *Sonderbund* cantons, there were Liberal minorities who opposed the war;<sup>73</sup> even the most Conservative were bitter after the faint-hearted flight of their government.<sup>74</sup> And there was a mixture of relief and shame, when the foe did not turn out to be quite as described. Some priests spread the rumour that the Federal soldiers took an oath to spare not even the unborn in their mother's womb.<sup>75</sup> The civilians in the Catholic cantons were positively surprised that the Federal troops did not kill, burn and set fire to things as they were expected to do; and the *Sonderbund* soldiers who prayed for mercy realised that nobody threatened them with mass executions.<sup>76</sup> But the Liberals derided their blind superstition and sneeringly confiscated their blessed amulets which promised invulnerability to the true defenders of the Catholic faith. The custom of wearing such medals was obviously widespread; authors within the *Sonderbund* camp relate this also, the Federal troops were scandalised by the priests who sold such trickery, and the vanquished joined them in cursing the lead that turned out to be useless.<sup>77</sup>

70 Heiz, *Erlebnisse*, pp. 92–3.

71 Henseler, *Erlebnisse*, p. 14; Züst, 'Tagebuch', p. 18; Heiz, *Erlebnisse*, p. 102; Bürkli, *Tagebuch*, 2, p. 31.

72 Bucher, 'Schochs Tagebuch', p. 110; Heiz, *Erlebnisse*, pp. 93–4; see a positive mention in Alioth, 'Briefe', p. 235.

73 See Wyrsh, 'Tagebuchaufzeichnungen', 2nd part, about the inhabitants of Cham.

74 Zelger, *Journal*, pp. 39–41; Alioth, 'Briefe', p. 238 (28 November 1847).

75 Mazzolini, 'Briefe des Alexander Spelty', p. 117 (24 November 1847); see also p. 70 and Kaiser, 'Briefe', p. 183 (6 December 1847).

76 Bucher, 'Schochs Tagebuch', p. 114; Häusler, 'Kriegseinsatz', p. 194. For unjustified rumours on the other side, about members of the *Sonderbund* eating prisoners see Heiz, *Erlebnisse*, p. 39; similarly Christen, 'Sonderbunds-Feldzug', pp. 17, 29.

77 Häusler, 'Kriegseinsatz', p. 193; Heiz, *Erlebnisse*, p. 83; Christen, 'Sonderbunds-Feldzug', pp. 16, 30; Züst, 'Tagebuch', p. 14; Johann Nef, 'Aus seinem Tagebuch (1847–1848)', *St. Gallische Analekten* 7, edited by Johannes Dierauer, (St. Gall, 1897), p. 18; Andreas Wüthrich, *Erlebnisse im Militärdienst und während des Sonderbundfeldzuges 1847* (Bern, 1907), p. 35; Beretta, *Campagna del Sonderbund*, p. 108.

While superstition was a phenomenon limited to the *Sonderbund*, rumours about battles and atrocities spread on both sides. In their letters, some soldiers warned relatives not to believe what they may be told.<sup>78</sup> Yet, imagination seemed once again to flourish more among the Conservatives: in Nidwalden, someone disseminated the rumour that half Fribourg had been burnt after the capitulation, while 100,000 soldiers from Bern were said to have been killed; even an official message by telegraph reported 433 dead Bernese. There were hopes that the Austrians and French would invade the country to help the *Sonderbund*.<sup>79</sup> Against their better judgement, the latter's leaders as well as its newspapers, especially the *Katholische Staatszeitung*, spread false news about Fribourg's victorious resistance.<sup>80</sup> During an excursion on 16 November, Colonel Louis Wyrsh from the *Sonderbund* canton of Nidwalden found, in an Argovian inn, a copy of the Liberal *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* of the day before. There he learnt that Fribourg had surrendered and he immediately reported the news to General von Salis.<sup>81</sup> As a member of a governing family, Wyrsh's fellow citizen Walter Zelger was informed of the fatal newspaper article on 17 November while the Conservative governments suppressed the news; on 21 November, the *Katholische Staatszeitung* still doubted the fall of Fribourg, and the *Schwyz Volksblatt* even wrote about a conservative victory in the west. When the news was confirmed, the people saw only one possible reason for such an inexplicable loss: treason by Fribourg's military leader Maillardoz.<sup>82</sup> It is characteristic of the lack of information that a woman from Schwyz desperately asked a Diet's sentinel at the border to give her the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, saying that they only got biased information from the authorities and believed it less and less as time went on.<sup>83</sup> The same paper was authoritative in the eyes of the Diet's soldiers too, and they almost tore it

78 Kaiser, 'Briefe' p. 176 (14 November 1847); Stucki, 'Scharfschützenkompanie Blumer', p. 111; Christen, 'Sonderbunds-Feldzug', pp. 17, 29; Bürkli, *Tagebuch*, 2, pp. 4, 15; Heiz, *Erlebnisse*, p. 45.

79 Zelger, *Journal*, pp. 11, 13, 15, 37, 38.

80 Heiz, *Erlebnisse*, p. 89.

81 Louis Wyrsh, 'Tagebuchaufzeichnungen des Obersten L. W., des Kommandanten des Unterwaldner Bataillons im Sonderbundfeldzuge 1847', 1st part, *Nidwaldner Volksblatt* 49, (4 December 1897); also Aschwanden, *Nidwalden und der Sonderbund*, p. 104.

82 Zelger, *Journal*, pp. 23–35.

83 Mazzolini, 'Briefe des Alexander Spelty', p. 66.

apart to read the reports about their comrades' victories.<sup>84</sup> Yet, when Zurich troops, on their way back from Lucerne, got a copy of the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* that talked at length about their brave heroism, all those who listened agreed that the style was not appropriate and that modesty ordered them to stop reading the newspaper.<sup>85</sup> Some of these testimonies may be a little bit stylised, but they all show that the Liberal notion of a public space and free press turned out to be a considerable advantage: even their adversaries expected to hear the factual truth from the Liberal papers rather than the Conservative ones, a fact that throws serious doubt upon the Catholic claim of defending the *true* religion. Thus, Zelger does not believe the *Staatszeitung* any more when it writes about *Tagsatzung* soldiers horribly profaning churches and tabernacles.<sup>86</sup>

Walter Zelger (1826–1874) from Nidwalden, later *Landammann* and national councillor, is actually the most interesting of the few known sources from within the *Sonderbund*; he was in his early twenties when he started writing his diary on 11 November 1847, right after the war had been declared. As his comments on newspapers have already shown, he was quite critical, even sceptical towards the separatist league. Although a convinced Conservative himself and the son of the ruling *Landammann* Clemens Zelger, he did not approve of the war and the agitators in his country who had engaged in an 'audacious and useless enterprise'. Zelger accused the Conservative leaders, both clergymen and politicians, of being zealots who spread or at least tolerated the diffusion of popular creed and superstition. Walter Zelger mocked the lies and exaggerations of the Catholic priests who told their flock that the enemy waved blasphemous flags with the Holy Mary surrounded by seven pigs; the priests also promised that the bullets from the Diet's troops could be prevented from hitting the Catholics. Zelger quotes a woman who hoped that the enemy would attack soon – thus the *Sonderbund* troops could kill the heretics ('die Ketzer totschiagen') and come home again.<sup>87</sup> When they marched off, they got a general indulgence, and a clergyman in ceremonial vestments blessed them with the monstern.<sup>88</sup>

84 Nef, 'Tagebuch', p. 12.

85 Bucher, 'Schochs Tagebuch', p. 120.

86 Zelger, *Journal*, p. 36.

87 Zelger, *Journal*, pp. 11–13, 18–19, 36.

88 Wyrsh, 'Tagebuchaufzeichnungen', 1st part, *Nidwaldner Volksblatt* 49, (4 December 1897).

As they had to leave quickly, many soldiers wept because they had not yet received the indulgence. Lieutenant Colonel Louis Wyrsh, in spite of his Liberal convictions the leader of Nidwalden's troops, stated that the aforementioned rituals such as praying, blessing, prophecy and pilgrimage fanaticised his soldiers and convinced them that they must win.<sup>89</sup> He could not understand how the *Sonderbund* could face the enemy so thoughtlessly, as if the battle were already won.<sup>90</sup>

Like Wyrsh, but unlike most of his countrymen, Zelger was not surprised by the final defeat: shame, financial ruin, calamity for the state and for many families were the fruit of the dragon's teeth planted by Siegwart, a new Cadmus, and his gang.<sup>91</sup> The obsession that guided the primitive cantons clearly appeared where Walter's father, the *Landammann* Clemens Zelger, negotiated the conditions of Nidwalden's surrender and, a moderate Conservative himself, insisted on a guarantee for their holy religion, their old rights and freedoms. General Dufour got angry and pointed out that the manifest mistrust inherent in such a request was an offence to all Swiss and it was precisely this that was the source of the country's misery. Thus he declared, 'jamais nous n'en voulions ni à votre religion, ni à vos droits et libertés.'<sup>92</sup>

Of course not all Conservatives agreed with Zelger concerning the extremism of the *Sonderbund* warriors. Josef Maria Büntner, another politician from Nidwalden, thought that it was the Diet which was blinded.<sup>93</sup> Philipp Anton von Segesser from Lucerne, a Conservative opponent of the 'Ultra' Siegwart-Müller, stated that there had been no trace of fanaticism in the pilgrimages and other rites of religion, but a very deep solidarity for political and religious freedom, half melancholic, half joyful, but without hatred against the aggressor.<sup>94</sup> Yet even he spoke about a 'wonderful popular

89 Wyrsh, 'Tagebuchaufzeichnungen', 1st part; also quoted in Aschwanden, *Nidwalden und der Sonderbund*, p. 110.

90 See also the opinion of the pious priest Egli in Wyrsh, 'Tagebuchaufzeichnungen', 2nd part.

91 Zelger, *Journal*, pp. 40, 45.

92 Zelger, *Journal*, p. 54; see also Wyrsh, 'Tagebuchaufzeichnungen', 2nd part.

93 Aschwanden, *Nidwalden und der Sonderbund*, p. 84.

94 Philipp Anton von Segesser, *Beiträge zur Geschichte des innern Krieges in der Schweiz im November 1847. Von einem Luzernischen Miliz-Offizier* (Basel, 1848). He says that 'von Fanatismus war keine Spur' (p. 15).

rising for a holy war'.<sup>95</sup> Thus it is very probable that in a more or less radicalised way, religious feelings were the strongest motivation for the *Sonderbund*'s soldiers.<sup>96</sup>

Segesser's report, written some weeks after the *Sonderbund*'s defeat, is obviously biased: he wanted to oppose the losers' restraint to the aggressiveness of the winners. Segesser was not the only one to accuse them of looting and burning down many houses without reason.<sup>97</sup> The Diet's leaders did not contest such acts of outrage which Dufour railed against in all his orders of the day and which were also investigated, but barely punished.<sup>98</sup> The General grew very angry when he heard about excesses in Fribourg, but concerning Lucerne he later wrote that the descriptions of the damage were very often exaggerated.<sup>99</sup> Thus, when Dufour made a full apology for Ulrich Ochsenbein, the Radical leader of the Bernese troops who savaged the Entlebuch, Segesser called him a 'villain from Geneva'.<sup>100</sup> Yet, Zelger sadly related plunderings and destructions ('Razziazug') that the *Sonderbund* troops had committed as well, in the Ticino. A Catholic

95 Segesser, *Beiträge*, declares that 'grossartige Volkserhebung zu einem heiligen Kriege' (p. 17).

96 See also Ferdinand A. Tschümperlin, 'Reminiszenz an den Sonderbundskrieg', *Mitteilungen des Historischen Vereins des Kantons Schwyz* 89 (1997), p. 141, who quotes a letter from a farmer in Schwyz leaving for the campaign. Carl Dominik Tschümperlin does not mention politics at all, but resigns himself to the will of God.

97 Segesser, *Beiträge*, p. 88; see also Peter Dahinden, *Das Schicksal der Landschaft Entlebuch im November des Jahres 1847. Nach Briefen eines Augenzeugen* (Schaffhausen, 1850), pp. 10, 18, 20–21, 31–3, 41–55, 72–3, and Joseph Balthasar Ulrich, *Der Bürgerkrieg in der Schweiz* (Einsiedeln, 1850), pp. 553–64 (Gräuel im Kanton Freiburg), pp. 565–89 (Lucerne), pp. 589–98 (Schwyz).

98 Steiner, *Militärjustiz*, pp. 53–61; 194–215 (reports from the authorities in Fribourg and Lucerne), pp. 308–37 (specific outrages in Lucerne).

99 Guillaume-Henri Dufour, *Allgemeiner Bericht des Eidgenössischen Oberbefehlhabers über die Bewaffnung und den Feldzug von 1847* (Bern/Zürich, 1848); see also Guillaume-Henri Dufour, *Campagne du Sonderbund et événements de 1856* (Neuchâtel et al., 1876), p. 143, and Olivier Reverdin, *La Guerre du Sonderbund vue par le Général Dufour, juin 1847–avril 1848. D'après des lettres et des documents inédits* (Genève, 1997), pp. 67, 79.

100 Philipp Anton von Segesser, *Briefwechsel*, edited by Victor Conzemius, prepared by Heidi Bossard-Borner, vol. 1 (Zürich/Einsiedeln/Cologne, 1983), p. 468 (24 December 1847, to Andreas Heusler).

army chaplain was even said to have incited the soldiers by telling them that pillage was in conformity with the law of war.<sup>101</sup> Major Burnand was probably right when he talked about the Swiss instinct to plunder ('l'instinct décidément pillard'): woe to the vanquished when the Swiss have won!<sup>102</sup>

Besides the national character regretted by Burnand, there are several other explanations for the spoliations deplored or at least described in almost every document.<sup>103</sup> The Diet mobilised 100,000 soldiers, the *Sonderbund* about half as many; compared to a population of 2.4 million and to the logistic means of the nineteenth century, these are immense armies. On the crowded battlefields and without enough reinforcements, many soldiers felt hungry and thirsty, especially for alcohol; some of them paid for the food they confiscated,<sup>104</sup> others took it by sheer force, sometimes apparently with a clear conscience.<sup>105</sup> One must also bear in mind that many soldiers were poor and had left their jobs for some weeks without salary or had already wasted their pay in gambling and drinking before the battles started. Civilians of the local mob or the Liberal opposition often joined or even preceded the Diet's soldiers, for example in destroying the Jesuit monasteries in Fribourg<sup>106</sup> and Schwyz.<sup>107</sup>

Even if pillage was not limited to one single canton,<sup>108</sup> it is notorious that the Bernese troops ravaged by far the most;<sup>109</sup> many of them belonged

101 Zelger, *Journal*, pp. 59–60; see also Beretta, *Campagna del Sonderbund*, pp. 113–17.

102 Burnand, 'Souvenirs personnels', says that 'nos voisins s'en souviennent, hélas. Malheur aux vaincus lorsque les Suisses sont vainqueurs' (p. 240).

103 Gränicher, 'Erlebnisse', pp. 57–8 (Elgger's house); Bucher, 'Schochs Tagebuch', pp. 113–14; Henseler, *Erlebnisse*, p. 6; 'Tagebuch eines aargauischen Kavalleristen', p. 79.

104 Bucher, 'Schochs Tagebuch' p. 114; Henseler, *Erlebnisse*, p. 6; Bürkli, *Tagebuch*, 2, p. 21; Burnand, 'Souvenirs personnels', p. 236; Heiz, *Erlebnisse*, p. 91.

105 Christen, 'Sonderbunds-Feldzug', pp. 25–6; Boesch, 'Tagebuch', pp. 42–3, 53, 55; Heiz, *Erlebnisse*, pp. 78–80.

106 Christen, 'Sonderbunds-Feldzug', p. 29; Ernst Bloesch, 'Aus den Tagen des Sonderbunds. Die Plünderungen in Freiburg und Umgebung 14/16 November 1847', *Berner Zeitschrift für Geschichte und Heimatkunde* (1942), 231–38.

107 Heiz, *Erlebnisse*, pp. 109–16; Züst, 'Tagebuch', p. 22; Dütschler, 'Tagebuchnotizen', p. 23.

108 For Glarus see Mazzolini, 'Briefe des Alexander Spelty', p. 117 (24 November 1847); but also the officer from Glarus who thanked his soldiers for having been

to the 'raw land militia',<sup>110</sup> but officers were among the marauders too.<sup>111</sup> When they looted the Capuchins' convent in Schüpfheim, the Bernese deliberately sang the anthem of Schiller's *Robbers*: 'Heut kehren wir bei Pfaffen ein, bei reichen Bauern morgen.'<sup>112</sup> Even if Bernese officers were more indulgent than others towards the marauders, some intervened to save houses and furniture from burning or destruction.<sup>113</sup> But often they did not have enough power or courage to oppose the unchained aggressiveness of their drunken soldiers; a frustrated lieutenant helplessly wept at his troops' lack of discipline.<sup>114</sup> As the same soldiers, especially the reserves, turned out to be rather cowardly,<sup>115</sup> the other Federals despised them and wished them 'eternal shame'.<sup>116</sup> A Bernese doctor deserted the troops because he no longer wanted to stay with such a miserable pack of robbers; the court-martial was to punish him far more than those who caused his loathing.<sup>117</sup>

Besides thirst for plundering, there was another motive behind many crimes: revenge.<sup>118</sup> Hans Gränicher (1826–1855) from the Argovian town of Zofingen was already a partisan in the second *Freischarenzug*; he got caught, but was released because of his young age. In October 1847 and against the will of his parents, he immediately volunteered for the artillery,

'anstatt rohe Zerstörer und Plünderer treue Beschützer fremden Eigenthums', quoted in Stucki, 'Scharfschützenkompanie Blumer', p. 115.

109 S. A. Gassner, 'Erinnerungen an den Sonderbunds-Feldzug', *Berner Zeitschrift für Geschichte und Heimatkunde* (1948), 89–95. Even the Radical Becker admits that 'es bietet diese Thatsache keine Lichtseite dar in unserer Feldzugsgeschichte'; see Häusler, 'Kriegseinsatz', p. 232.

110 Dahinden, *Schicksal der Landschaft Entlibuch*, p. 51.

111 Burnand, 'Souvenirs personnels', pp. 239–240; also Bloesch, 'Plünderungen', pp. 234–36.

112 Häusler, 'Kriegseinsatz', p. 219.

113 Häusler, 'Kriegseinsatz', pp. 197–98, 229; Christen, 'Sonderbunds-Feldzug', p. 39.

114 Steiner, *Militärjustiz*, pp. 310–11.

115 Häusler, 'Kriegseinsatz', p. 223.

116 Kaiser, 'Briefe', p. 177 (15 November 1847) where he comments that 'ewige Schande treffe diese Feiglinge, welche das eidgenössische Militär so herunter würdigen.'

117 Steiner, *Militärjustiz*, p. 258.

118 See also Gassner, 'Erinnerungen', where he remarks that 'um die Tagesbefehle Dufours kümmerten sich am wenigsten jene Mannschaften, die zwei Jahre früher als Freischärler mitgezogen waren und manche Unbill erlitten hatten. Gar oft siegte bei ihnen das Rachegefühl über die christliche Bruderliebe' (p. 93).

because he wanted revenge.<sup>119</sup> In his naive sincerity, the aforementioned Bernese Niklaus Christen (1825–1891) illustrates such feelings. He describes how his comrades got restless as they approached the territory of Lucerne, because many of them had been partisans and sought revenge for the defeat of 1845; its vivid description also stimulated those who had not been with them.<sup>120</sup> Especially when the Bernese pass through Malters, the memory of those who had been mistreated in that small town was revived, and it was only Ochsenbein's intervention that averted a massacre.<sup>121</sup> Christen and his fellows claimed the 'right to retaliate': they slaughtered the best cow, confiscated whatever they wanted and behaved as if they were rulers, indeed their meal was worthy of a lordly manor. With the clear conscience of those dealing with killers of partisans ('Freischarenmörder'), the Bernese deliberately humiliated or – as Christen himself puts it – chastised the inhabitants of the small town, in a haunt of *Sonderbund* robbers ('sonderbündisches Raubnest').<sup>122</sup> Using the same pretext, Christen excused robbery, burning and sacking; he himself stole a miniature edition of German classics. In the castle of Willisau, everything which was not stolen was destroyed, before the soldiers went to sleep among the torn books, broken mirrors, cut portraits and splintered barometers.<sup>123</sup> Christen justified all these crimes, although inadvertently he and his comrades had even burnt down the house of an ex-partisan who had fled from Lucernese repression leaving behind his wife and small children in precarious conditions. Christen admitted that there was little glory in their actions, but that even the innocent may suffer in a war, because the soldiers need a recompense for their labours.

Christen goes so far as to consider their pillage and burning a judgement from God who wanted to punish the *Landsturm*,<sup>124</sup> the militia formed by

119 Gränicer, 'Erlebnisse', pp. 40–63.

120 Christen, 'Sonderbunds-Feldzug', pp. 30, 33, 51.

121 Dufour writes to Ochsenbein on 26 November 1847: 'Je sais en particulier ce que vous avez fait à Malters pour détourner les effets de funestes ressentiments. Et ce service est à mes yeux si grand que j'estime que la Patrie vous en doit de la reconnaissance.' Ochsenbein's secretary Becker also gives quite a positive picture of the Bernese in Malters; see Häusler, 'Kriegseinsatz', pp. 231, 254.

122 Christen, 'Sonderbunds-Feldzug', pp. 41–4.

123 Christen, 'Sonderbunds-Feldzug', pp. 36, 50.

124 Christen, 'Sonderbunds-Feldzug', pp. 34, 51.

those who were not yet or no longer liable for military service, roughly 15,000 lightly armed youngsters and men over fifty.<sup>125</sup> Before the campaign already, appropriate publications had designated specific names among the *Landsturm* as targets for vengeance,<sup>126</sup> and several of its members really were attacked or almost executed.<sup>127</sup> On the other hand, a Lucernese *Landstürmer* who was recognised as having participated in the killing of partisans was mistreated and humiliated, but then dismissed alive.<sup>128</sup> Regularly, members of the militia were jeered at and had to lift their hat when they encounter soldiers of the Diet, but generally, they were not attacked personally.<sup>129</sup> There was even an explicit order not to harm the *Landstürmer*, which obviously meant that they were in particular danger.<sup>130</sup> The judgement about what really happened differs in the two camps: while an Argovian cavalryman thought that those who mistreated the partisans in 1845 did not suffer a tenth of what they had done,<sup>131</sup> Segesser judges that the mostly

125 Marie-Louise Hitz-Droz, 'Der Prozess gegen den Landsturmkommandanten Niklaus Glanzmann aus Escholz matt. Ein Kriegsgerichtsfall aus der Zeit des Sonderbunds mit Berücksichtigung der politischen Situation im Entlebuch', (Dissertation, University of Bern, 1972), pp. 22–3.

126 See 'Verzeichnis der grausamsten Landstürmer im Freischarenkrieg 1845', printed in the newspaper *Wochenblatt des Emmenthals* on 15 November 1847, just before Bernese troops invaded the Entlebuch and reprinted in Dahinden, *Schicksal der Landschaft Entlebuch*, pp. 73–80. See also Hitz-Droz, 'Prozess', p. 21, and *Landsturmbüchlein, oder kurze Zusammenstellung der grössten, blutigen Gräueltaten, Ermordungen und entsetzlichen Unmenschlichkeiten, die im Fraeischarenzuge vom 31. März 1845 von den fanatisirten Luzerner Soldaten, Landstürmlern und ihren jesuitischen Genossen aus den kleinen Kantonen an wehrlosen und erschöpften Freischaren verübt worden sind* (Bern, 1845). For specific cases of aggression and murder against members of the *Landsturm* see Ulrich, *Bürgerkrieg*, pp. 579–80, 584–85.

127 See Bucher, 'Schochs Tagebuch', p. 112. He recounts that soldiers from Zurich wanted to immediately execute some members of the *Landsturm* whom they had caught and who pleaded for mercy; a Federal officer prevented them from being harmed. Unfortunately, Schoch does not tell us whether these prisoners were in great danger simply because they belonged to the *Landsturm* or because they had committed a particular outrage.

128 'Tagebuch eines aargauischen Kavalleristen', p. 72.

129 Christen, 'Sonderbunds-Feldzug', p. 40.

130 Kaiser, 'Briefe', p. 177 (15 November 1847).

131 'Tagebuch eines aargauischen Kavalleristen', p. 79.

exaggerated misdeeds of 1845 had been paid back with interest.<sup>132</sup> But it is undeniable that Dufour's repeated appeals for humanity and generosity are very present among our authors, as is his exemplary personality.<sup>133</sup> The case of occupied Lucerne shows that the military authorities intervened quickly to establish order after some initial maybe unavoidable riots.<sup>134</sup> Even the vanquished acknowledged that the Diet's officers imposed strict discipline.<sup>135</sup> As soon as the population realised that it was not going to be harmed, quite regular, sometimes even friendly contacts were established between civilians and victorious soldiers.<sup>136</sup> Even the Catholic clergy, that at first had fled the enemy, sought contact with these antagonists who had once been so horrible.<sup>137</sup> Especially the soldiers from the eastern, politically moderate part of Switzerland felt welcome among the former members of the *Sonderbund*,<sup>138</sup> who sometimes were even sad when the occupying forces marched home again.<sup>139</sup> Therefore, even if rather mundane occupational duties prevented many soldiers from spending Christmas at home, the outcome generally was positive. An officer from Zurich saw the three weeks of the campaign as among the best of his life: a sense of duty and true understanding produced real comradeship.<sup>140</sup>

It may be appropriate to compare this positive assessment with the investigations of the three court-martials after the war against members of the Federal troops.<sup>141</sup> One can generally distinguish three counts:

- a) political actions against the Diet's army (such as mutiny);
- b) non-political lack of discipline;
- c) crimes against the population of the *Sonderbund*'s cantons.

The punishment for the 199 condemned ranged from ten days to about three years, with an average of nine months in prison, 26 months with hard labour; only the ill-famed and drunken Jean Pierre Sauge from the Vaud, who without reason shot and almost killed one of his own comrades, got eight years with hard labour.<sup>142</sup> From these documents, one gets the impression that the complaints of the defeated were not paid too much attention and that the guilty were treated with considerable indulgence. We may, nevertheless, come to some conclusions concerning the role of religious feelings in the war.

One could expect that for political reasons, churches and priests would become the first targets of aggression; on the other hand, Dufour particularly commanded the protection of both in his orders of the day, a practice which was in accordance with the century-old Swiss tradition of the 1393 *Sempacherbrief*. Parsonages could be furiously attacked,<sup>143</sup> but when the Bernese sacked a church, a federal officer like Kaiser was particularly scandalised.<sup>144</sup> There obviously were cases of sacrilege: robbed silver-plate and vestments, a prior's residence in Munster or the parsonage of Wolhusen.<sup>145</sup> But the court rolls show us that, more often, it was the residential houses of *Sonderbund* protagonists (like Siegwart-Müller) which were looted. Even more frequently targeted were inns, for the soldiers were hungry and thirsty and they wanted to celebrate their victory with wine rather than humiliate the defeated believers.

The judges had to decide on five homicides, two of which had a religious context. In the canton of Fribourg, the chaplain Duc who wore civilian clothing was arrested during a domiciliary visitation because he was

132 Segesser, *Beiträge*, pp. 95–6; see also Segesser, *Briefwechsel*, p. 463 (20 December 1847, to Andreas Heusler-Ryhiner).

133 Bänziger, Johann Jakob Wiget, p. 93; Christen, 'Sonderbunds-Feldzug', pp. 59, 15; Alioth, 'Briefe', p. 234; see for example Streiff, *Bataillon Schindler*, pp. 12–3, for gestures of simple humanity like giving bread to starving enemies.

134 Remak, *Civil War*, pp. 145–48.

135 Zelger, *Journal*, pp. 61–8; Henseler, *Erlebnisse*, p. 17.

136 Bucher, 'Schochs Tagebuch', p. 117.

137 Besides the aforementioned Heiz see also Helfenstein, 'Feldprediger', p. 102.

138 Züst, 'Tagebuch', p. 16; Bänziger, Johann Jakob Wiget, p. 93.

139 Kaiser, 'Briefe', p. 182 (4 December 1847).

140 *Erinnerungen aus dem Feldzuge*, p. 36.

141 See the detailed study by Steiner, *Militärjustiz*; the original documents ('Bericht des Oherauditors über die Justizverwaltung im Sonderbunds-feldzug. 12. April 1848') are in the *Bundesarchiv* in Berne, (shelf-mark BAR D 1624).

142 Steiner, *Militärjustiz*, pp. 259–60.

143 See Gassner, 'Erinnerungen', where he says that 'am wenigsten schonten sie die Pfarrhäuser, da die Geistlichen im Freischarenzug am eifrigsten gegen die Radikalen gehetzt hatten' (p. 93).

144 Kaiser, 'Briefe', p. 177 (15 November 1847) and the comments that 'ja sogar die Kirche blieb nicht verschont'.

145 Steiner, *Militärjustiz*, pp. 265, 285–86, 310–11, 316, 322.

suspected of being a *Landstürmer*. When drunken soldiers immediately started to manhandle and insult him, Duc fled to some officers who at first managed to protect him. But when a lieutenant lifted his cap and discovered the tonsure, the escort could not save Duc any longer even though it used force; a major outlawed the 'clerical' and 'Jesuit', he was untied, ran away and was immediately stabbed. The Bernese mob massacred the miserable Duc and in court they were all acquitted.<sup>146</sup>

Only one case of murder committed by Conservatives was submitted to the court-martials because such a trial did not enter into their jurisdiction; consequently, the verdict against Nikolaus Glanzmann was later to be rescinded.<sup>147</sup> In Escholzmatt, a village in the Lucernese Entlebuch, the *Landsturm* killed two Bernese stragglers while a third, Johann Wenger, surrendered and was interrogated. He was the father of two children, but claimed that he had five, probably to save his life. During their trial, the Lucernese later all agreed that Wenger had been treated correctly until they found in his sack albs and purificatories which he must have stolen in a church. Members of the *Landsturm* wanted to execute him immediately, but their leader Glanzmann took Wenger along on a patrol; while walking, two members of the *Landsturm* decided to kill the Bernese and shot him in the back. As they managed to flee, Glanzmann was sued and first sentenced to three years; after the cassation, a court-martial from Lucerne acquitted him for lack of evidence.

The two cases are similar in different aspects: Duc had committed no crime, Wenger a sacrilege that in normal times would not have had serious consequences. Both were already in an uncomfortable situation when religious aspects became fatal and both were murdered without trial although some superiors tried to defend them. Duc's case shows that an – even imagined – mixture of *Landsturm* membership and 'jesuitism' could be fatal among intoxicated soldiers and irresponsible superiors. Radical Federals became fanatical and violent when they thought they were carrying on the *Freischarenzug* against clerical obscurantism and the malice of irregular militias. Like Duc among the Liberals, Wenger corresponded exactly, among the Conservatives, to the profile of the enemy: a sacrilegious and lawless

146 Steiner, *Militärjustiz*, pp. 260–61; Hitz-Droz, 'Prozess', p. 95.

147 For Glanzmann see the detailed study by Hitz-Droz, 'Prozess'; also Dahinden, *Schicksal der Landschaft Entlebuch*, pp. 35–8.

marauder, like the partisans. After all, a Lucernese law of 1845 ordered the execution of captured partisans.<sup>148</sup>

It is highly characteristic that the witnesses in Glanzmann's trial accused priest Joseph Burckhard from Escholzmatt of inciting them. In a separate lawsuit, Burckhard was sentenced to three months in prison for having intervened in political questions and neglected the care of souls; he lost his job in Escholzmatt, too.<sup>149</sup> Burckhard told his citizens that God would reward their martyrdom if they defended their most holy goods against the Diet, which according to him was just a new *Freischarenzug* of 'bandits, traitors to the country, and perjurers who have conspired to eradicate the Catholic religion'.<sup>150</sup> If the partisans won, they would 'kill every member of the government and cruelly murder the Catholic priests [...] and decree the Protestant religion as the religion of the state and force the people at the point of a sword under the yoke of Protestantism.'<sup>151</sup> Other Lucernese priests predicted similar satanic horrors: altars would be torn down, crucifixes thrown away, paganism introduced, true believers massacred – the Federals were fighting against the true religion, and anyone who did not believe that was himself not a Catholic Christian.<sup>152</sup> Johann Nef, a Catholic from the Toggenburg in St. Gall, strongly opposed the war his home canton had entered into; he writes 'Calvinists' where he means the Diet and asks desperately: 'Will God make us slaves of the Protestants?' Nef was convinced that the fury of the fanaticised Protestants would commit atrocities seldom heard of in history.<sup>153</sup>

148 Hitz-Droz, 'Prozess', p. 13, quotes § 3 of the law of 4 January 1845 according to which 'sollten fremde Freischärler in den Kanton eindringen, so ist Jedermann verpflichtet, auf dieselben loszuziehen und sie als Gebietsverletzer, Räuber und Mörder zu vertilgen. Gefangene fremde Freischärler sollen mit dem Tod mittelst Erschiessen bestraft werden.'

149 For Burckhard's trial see also Franz Hurni, *Luzerner Geistliche im Spiegel politischer Prozesse in der Regenerations- und Sonderbundszeit*, Historische Schriften der Universität Freiburg Schweiz, 8 (Fribourg, 1980), pp. 158–75.

150 Hitz-Droz, 'Prozess', pp. 79–81.

151 Hitz-Droz, 'Prozess', pp. 84–5, 41.

152 Hurni, *Luzerner Geistliche*, p. 108 (Franz Xaver Estermann from Grosswangen), p. 142 (Johann Baptist Keller from Zell), p. 182 (Franz Süess from Hasle).

153 Nef, 'Tagebuch', pp. 9–15.



It is important to see this continuity from the antagonistic political language of the 1840s and especially of the *Freischarenzüge* to the perception of the *Sonderbund* campaign; in the cases cited, it is even the language of the confessional wars during the *Ancien Régime*. It is important because, on a higher level than that of poor devils like Wenger and Duc, it implies a fundamental error on the part of the *Sonderbund* that was fighting on the wrong front because it was, in psychological terms, the victim of a projection: just because the *Sonderbund* defended Catholicism it did not mean that the Diet attacked Catholicism, let alone religion. Dufour and his Conservative fellows would never do that; they wanted to establish order. The Liberal Catholics would not do that either; they wanted to get rid of the Jesuits.<sup>154</sup>

One can condemn the aggressive rhetoric of the priests, as the new Liberal government of Lucerne did in several trials. One can, like the Conservative army chaplain Heiz, deplore the 'blind zealots' who preached against the reformed church, because they rendered an alliance of both confessions' Conservatives impossible.<sup>155</sup> But to understand the obsession of many Catholic priests and their flock in its historical perspective, one must look at the double threat that had formed their imagination: not only Protestantism which in many aspects had dominated for centuries in Switzerland, but also the state church in the Liberal conception which had caused so much unrest and many martyrs since 1789. These dangers were combined in crusade-like rhetoric which was probably sincere and emotionally effective, but had become archaic.

The language of the Liberals was quite different: they did not fight against religion or Catholicism, but against the Jesuits who were actually a symbol for everything that was archaic and alien. The opposed modernity consisted of secular duties, of sacrifice not for one's faith and a particular canton, but for one's country, the entire nation and its rights.<sup>156</sup> The

154 See for example the anonymous poem 'Von einer Anzahl aufgeklärter Katholiken in der Schweiz', in Jürg Frey, *Troubadour der Freiheit: Geschichte der politischen Lyrik in der Schweiz 1830–1848*, Zürcher germanistische Studien, Bd. 39, (Bern et al., 1994), pp. 208–09.

155 Heiz, *Erlebnisse*, p. 121.

156 Thus the federal soldier Peter Kunz from Catholic Solothurn said, after being hit at Gislikon by a cannon-ball, 'I have lost my leg, but the confederates have won, my country ('Vaterland') is saved'; quoted in Joseph Propst, *Leichenrede gehalten bei der Todtenfeier eines tapferen Eidgenossen* (Basel, 1848), p. 7.

*Sonderbund* opposed 'us' and 'them', two fundamentally different, irreconcilable principles: the true and the wrong religion. The Liberals used modern metaphors of alterity: an infection, a cancer, which had to be cut out of the sane, uniform body of the nation – *Sonderbund* and Jesuits were 'tares among the wheat' and the source of discord among the Swiss.<sup>157</sup>

While such arguments and metaphors differed considerably, we have already seen that the whole traditional set of Swiss values was claimed by both parties. Freedom, right, justice, honour, duty, the heritage of the mythical founding fathers were decisive elements in both the political languages which were consistent within themselves, but had little in common besides words. Both Liberals and Conservatives defended freedom and right: in the case of the former, the freedoms and rights of the individual within the nation, in the case of the latter those of the corporation within the canton. Thus, although the antagonists pronounced the same words, they no longer understood one other. The product of these misunderstandings was the crisis leading to the *Sonderbund*, a crisis that started in 1841 with the suppression of the Argovian monasteries. As there came to be fewer and fewer institutions, myths and values which unquestionably were common to all Confederates, so confusion about the sources of intellectual truth and political unity grew ever more and conflicts could no longer be settled on the level of discourse. That experience led to fatalist insight, which the Conservative Nef from St. Gall formulated – in his way – on 26 October 1847 saying that 'the sword will resolve the question whether the Catholics in Switzerland will be the equal of the Protestants or their subjects.'<sup>158</sup> Thus, the metaphor of the Gordian knot started ruling the minds of most Swiss and became one of the few concepts they still shared – war is unavoidable because alternatives are no longer conceivable.<sup>159</sup>

157 Christen, 'Sonderbunds-Feldzug', pp. 14–15; see also the impressive series of metaphors used to insult the Jesuits in Bucher, *Sonderbundskrieg*. On p. 39 he details 'Bandwurm der Niederträchtigkeit [...] Borkenkäfer am Kernholze der Staatsgebäude [...] Grünspan an der St. Peters Glocke [...] Wurmstich am Reichsapfel der Fürsten'.

158 Nef, 'Tagebuch', p. 9.

159 Most typical of this fatalism is Segesser, *Briefwechsel*, for example p. 446 (5 June 1847, to the Conservative Protestant Andreas Heusler in Basel) where he says that 'die Ereignisse gehen ihren nothwenigen Gang [...]; es giebt kein Mittel aus diesem Zustand herauszukommen als das Schwert, das den alten Bund der Eidgenossen der ein Gordischer Knoten geworden ist, zerschneidet. [...] Alles andere ist nur



Under these circumstances and compared to the Conservatives, the political language of the Liberals had an important advantage since it was offensive. After all, it was scarcely a miracle for an army of 100,000 soldiers to beat one with only 50,000 fighters. But only a short time before, as Matthias Henseler recalled in Gislikon, many of the attackers 'would not have been thought capable of crossing their cantonal border'.<sup>160</sup> The legitimisation for a civil war was not evident, especially to the moderate Liberals and the Conservative Protestants. It was decisive that they both finally joined the Radicals, because Dufour's campaign thus became the execution of a federal decision ('Bundesexecution') and not the third *Freischarenzug* the members of the Sonderbund claimed it to be. The language of patriotic duty and of national rights not only legitimated military interference, but also assured the participation of those Conservative officers whose skills were indispensable. The martial qualities of many of the Diet's soldiers were not highly developed and the motivation at least of the mutinous Catholic troops left much to be desired.<sup>161</sup> Hence the role of the officers can barely be overestimated:<sup>162</sup> in the decisive battle of Gislikon it was Colonel Eduard Ziegler, the commander of the Fourth Division, who placed himself at the head of his troops when they had already started retreating; he contributed considerably to the Federal victory. Yet, Ziegler was not a convinced Liberal, but a notorious Conservative. But even he – and all the more the Radical superiors – adhered to a rhetoric of intervention in the name of national, nay universal principles and of order that, to be finally

Aufschub.' Similarly, Josef Maria Büntner says in Nidwalden on 10 October 1847, as quoted in Aschwanden, *Nidwalden und der Sonderbund*, (p. 84) that 'wahren Frieden giebt es erst dann, wenn [...] oder aber, wenn es nicht anders sein kann, das Schwert entscheidet.' See also Karl S. Bader, 'Der Sonderbundskrieg im Urteil eines Schwaben: Briefe des Joseph von Lassberg an Hermann von Liebenau 1847–1849', *Der Geschichtsfreund* 104, (1951), 5–70. On p. 25 (7 November 1847) he says that 'macht dem langweiligen handel einmal ein kurzweiliges ende. Schill hatte wol recht zu sagen: besser ein ende mit schrecken als ein schrecken ohne ende.' The reference concerning the Conservative Lassberg is to Ferdinand von Schill, a Prussian officer during the Napoleonic wars.

160 Henseler, *Erlebnisse*, p. 5.

161 See Steiner, *Militärjustiz*. On p. 43 he declares that 'mit der Motivation des einfachen Soldaten konnte es nicht weit her sein.' This judgement is too general if we think of texts by ordinary soldiers such as Christen who displayed deep national convictions.

162 Steiner, *Militärjustiz*, pp. 36–45.

stable, had to have its origins in the entire people and not in separatist cantons. The Diet was attacking in the name of the modern nation state and its secular virtue: patriotic sense of duty. We have seen that religious devotion was recommended by some army chaplains, but there is no sign of anti-Catholic rhetoric. The Jesuits and ultramontane clerics were condemned as a fifth column within the nation, but not as prophets of a wrong persuasion. The soldiers we got acquainted with did not need religious hatred to motivate their attack.

As to the *Sonderbund*, it was defending the true faith and accordingly, its rhetoric was not only religious, but consequently also defensive and particularist: what it called right was either local custom, which varied already a great deal among the different members of the *Sonderbund* and which nobody thought of spreading throughout Switzerland, or divine right, which in its vagueness could not form the nucleus of a concrete political programme or ideology. It is characteristic that in the best case some 'Ultras' like Siegwart-Müller had an idea about what to change in Switzerland if they won; and that they kept such plans secret, because the majority in the Catholic cantons was Conservative in the true sense, which meant that it did not want any structural or constitutional change in the Confederation, even if such change had been in favour of the Catholic religion.<sup>163</sup> The rhetoric of religious threat may support an attack in an age of crusade and mission; but in nineteenth century Switzerland, it only provoked precautionary measures. Actually, the *Sonderbund* troops shrank from leaving their own cantons;<sup>164</sup> Louis Wyrsh's troops even insisted on getting back from Zug to Lucernese soil immediately after the former canton had surrendered. When the *Sonderbund* attacked an area on the territory of the enemy Aargau, the soldiers from Obwalden shouted, 'Back, back, we swore to resist only within our frontiers.'<sup>165</sup> The *Sonderbund* had nothing to conquer outside its home which were the seven cantons; whereas the Diet had to win

163 For Siegwart-Müller's plan to split up some cantons and create a confessionally balanced Confederation see Bucher, *Sonderbundskrieg*, pp. 17–28. The members of the *Sonderbund*'s war council later declared that they did not know anything about Siegwart's plans; even if they were lying, as Bucher supposes, it is evident that only a very restricted number of political leaders were informed.

164 For the defensive orientation of the *Sonderbund* soldiers see also Bucher, *Sonderbundskrieg*, pp. 78–9.

165 Wyrsh, 'Tagebuchaufzeichnungen', 2nd part.

back precisely that, its home, the historical heart of the Confederation infected with a seditious virus. On a symbolic level, many of our authors express this – in their eyes fully legitimate – *reconquista* of the birthplace of Swiss freedom. They are all eager to visit Lucerne and the already ‘classical’, though rather recent ‘places of pilgrimage’, as they call them themselves: the places of the partisans’ defeat, the cannons they abandoned, the Jesuit church where they were imprisoned and suffered, the red tower, from where their leader Robert Steiger managed to escape.<sup>166</sup> But these secular pilgrimages can also include – besides the romantic landscape and mountains like Pilatus or Rigi<sup>167</sup> – the mythical places of ancient Swiss virtue, the lion’s monument to the Swiss guards who died in the French Revolution, the house of Stauffacher, one of the original three confederates,<sup>168</sup> and a ‘patriotic visit’ to the ‘dear Grutli, where the three men once stood’.<sup>169</sup> We are in a century with no mass tourism and in a year when the first railway had just been established between Zurich and Baden. To bring thousands of Swiss to the heart of their country was under these circumstances a highly patriotic side-effect of Dufour’s campaign. Most of them saw and touched for the only time in their lives what they had learnt was no longer the property of some cantons or a particular confession, but the common heritage of the united nation they had forged during the *Sonderbund* campaign. On the other hand, the losers started their march into the ‘ghetto’, as Urs Altermatt has called it with an appropriate metaphor:<sup>170</sup> they felt excluded from their own home and built themselves the walls that kept the Liberal invaders at a distance. But by repeating, from Nef to Segesser and Altermatt, that the war of 1847 was a Protestant attack against Catholicism, they continued to misunderstand the new Liberal rhetoric that could ignore religious faith when justifying intervention with universal principles.

166 *Erlebnisse des Bataillons Bänziger*, p. 25; Bucher, ‘Schochs Tagebuch’, pp. 118–19; Christen, ‘Sonderbunds-Feldzug’, p. 46; Boesch, ‘Tagebuch’, p. 56; Heiz, *Erlebnisse*, pp. 126, 92, 125.

167 *Erlebnisse des Bataillons Bänziger*, p. 26; Christen, ‘Sonderbunds-Feldzug’, p. 48; Kaiser, ‘Briefe’, p. 181 (30 November 1847).

168 *Erlebnisse des Bataillons Bänziger*, p. 27; Boesch, ‘Tagebuch’, p. 62.

169 Züst, ‘Tagebuch’, p. 24; Bänziger, Johann Jakob Wiget, p. 92.

170 Urs Altermatt, *Der Weg der Schweizer Katholiken ins Ghetto. Die Entstehungsgeschichte der nationalen Volksorganisationen im Schweizer Katholizismus 1848–1919* (Zurich/Einsiedeln/Köln, 1972).