

Cette base de données reflète le contenu des **archives de la Société religieuse des Amis en Suisse (quakers)**.

**> Ces informations sont à usage interne. Veuillez passer par l'archiviste pour toute demande de transmission à des tiers.**

La description tente de suivre les "Directives suisses pour l'application de la norme générale internationale de description archivistique ISAD(G)", proposées par l'association des archivistes suisses (AAS).

---

This database reflects the content of the **archives of the Religious Society of Friends in Switzerland (Quakers)**.

**> This documentation is for internal use only. Ask the archivist for any demand of transmission to a third party.**

---

## First conference - Report, 1934 (Pièce)

---

### Contexte

Contexte de plan d'archivage **ASYM – Archives of Switzerland Yearly Meeting**  
S/ **Section Archives of Switzerland Yearly Meeting**, 1844-2014 (Section)  
S/ Fonds Switzerland Yearly Meeting (Fonds)  
S/A Minutes et rapports annuels (Série)  
S/A.1a Minutes des assemblées d'affaires - Annexes, 1934-1982 (Sous-série)  
S/A.1a-A First conference of Swiss Friends, 1934 (Dossier)

Producteur

Mode d'acquisition

Date versement

### Zone d'identification

Cote S/A.1a-A.1  
Intitulé First conference - Report  
Dates 1934  
Niveau Pièce  
Importance matérielle 8 p. dactylographiées, copie carbone.

### Zone du contenu

Contenu Report on « The First Conference of Swiss Friends and friends of Quakerism held at Berne, Saturday and Sunday, November 10th and 11th, 1934 ». Annotations, one paragraph striked out.

### Zone des conditions d'accès et d'utilisation

Conditions d'accès Autorisation de l'archiviste ou du clerk de GMM nécessaire  
Langue Anglais

### Descripteurs

Entrées Minute

### Sources complémentaires

En ligne <http://www.swiss-quakers.ch/archives/cat/edocs/4029-1stConferenceBern1934.pdf>  
Autres sources (Voir archiviste : Scan. Aussi Fonds M. Jéquier #4027.)

134

THE FIRST CONFERENCE OF SWISS FRIENDS AND FRIENDS  
OF QUAKERISM

held at Berne, Saturday and Sunday  
November 10th and 11th, 1934

---

It seemed fitting that the Friends of Quakerism from many parts of Switzerland should meet for the first time at Berne. That old city with its background of snowy Alps; the deep gorge of the river running through the centre of the town, spanned by enormous but graceful bridges; the crowded and picturesque red roofs rising up the steep banks to the Cathedral whose grey tower is a landmark for many miles, and whose quiet close and square were the scene in ancient times of many a struggle and sacrifice for the right of freedom, political and religious.

In one of the main ancient cobbled streets with gay fountains and curious arcaded shops, is found the Gasthaus zur Heimat, a solid rambling old house with endless corridors and steps, but pleasant rooms clean as only the German Swiss can keep them! Here the majority of the members of the Conference were housed, with the large diningroom as a Meeting room, and a useful ante-room where the large table of French, German and English literature was the centre of attraction and discussion.

In spite of the language difficulty - (some of the French-speaking members spoke no German, several German-speaking members understood no French, and a good number understood no English!) -

and the fact that the majority were strangers to each other, a gay and friendly atmosphere and an almost immediate sense of spiritual kinship made everyone feel at home. For the Swiss the Conference was as much a voyage of discovery as it was for the American, English, French and German Friends present. Thirty-nine were present on Saturday and forty-eight on Sunday.

The first session opened with a self introduction from each one present, and the varied daily occupations and interests of the group were revealed. The largest proportion of those present were teachers, and professors, there were also social workers, business men, gardeners, farmers, a mechanicien, an engineer, a telegraphist, office workers and at least three mothers of young children. They came from every part of Switzerland - the risons, Bâle, Zurich, Bienne, Neuchâtel, Geneva, and several tiny villages. Over this very varied company Hélène Monastier, of Lausanne, presided with a simplicity, directness and effectiveness which helped to create and direct the spirit of harmony and deepening unity which characterised the week-end.

Discoveries multiplied. During Sunday dinner some were startled by a burst of song rising from one table and taken up all over the room. A very beautiful Swiss melody sung spontaneously with excellent harmonies (something almost impossible in Anglo-Saxon countries) - and the words were the special song of the Service Civil. It had been discovered that twenty-two of those present had served with Pierre Ceresole at one time or

another. A further enquiry revealed that nine of the young men present had been in prison as Conscientious Objectors to Military Service. There were eight Swiss Friends, of whom four belonged to the Geneva Meeting.

During the sessions of the Conference we were able to avoid the inadequate and time-wasting translations by simultaneous whispered translations in different parts of the room, which were so quiet as not to disturb the speaker. For the most part the English and Americans made their contributions in approximate French and German, otherwise each spoke in their own tongue.

After the preliminary introduction on Saturday afternoon the first session was occupied by contributions from Swiss members of the Conference. Several spoke, but perhaps Dr. Brenner of Zurich gave the most weighty and comprehensive account of what he felt were the spiritual needs of his country today. Dr. Carl Brenner has been a missionary in China under the Bâle Mission. He is the leader of a group of some eighteen people in Zurich who have been holding for some time past a fortnightly Meeting for Worship after the manner of Friends. It was the help and inspiration gained from this Meeting on a basis of silence which drove him to <sup>seek</sup> ~~seek~~ for closer contacts with the Society. Dr. Brenner deplored the national and local limitation of much of the religious life and work in Switzerland, felt that they needed a deeper realisation of organised community life extending beyond frontiers and classes. He remarked that the Church sent

missions to the yellow and the brown and the black peoples, but so far the Church had no message or concern for the "reds"! Dr. Brenner wanted to feel that Community as a living organisation, centering round the authority of Christ, but reaching across frontiers, so that wherever he went he could feel he belonged. Long ago he had faced the problem of trying to serve a god of war and Christ. He had found it impossible, and had chosen Christ. He believed not in a kingdom of Heaven in a life beyond, but practically here on earth. So he looked towards Quakerism to find help and strength in developing these ideas.

After the evening meal on Saturday evening, the Friends from other countries made their contributions. A message of greeting from Carl Heath on behalf of the Friends Service Council was read, and Bertram Pickard spoke to this and gave a brief account of the development of Quakerism in Europe during and after the war. Hans Albrecht, Gilbert MacMaster and Henri van Etten followed, and their united presentations gave a very vivid picture of contemporary Quakerism in Europe today, with a clear exposition of Quaker fundamentals, and yet illustrating the freedom and variety of national groupings. The day closed with some beautiful songs from Madelaine J<sup>u</sup>acquier, and a period of silence.

On Sunday morning the Conference opened with a personal testimony of Quaker faith from Bertram Pickard, and then the discussion turned to the situation in Switzerland and some immediate difficulties which had arisen in connection with the holding of this Conference.

It should be explained that the progressive religious forces outside the organised Churches have chiefly found expression through the Service Civil under Pierre Ceresole, and the Christian Socialist Movement centering round Professor Ragaz of Zurich, a strong and inspiring personality. It is quite evident that in their spirit, their fellowship, their activities these movements are very closely allied to Quakerism. But it is also apparent that the Religious Socialists tend to express themselves, as far as politics is concerned, through one political party - the Socialist Party. It is claimed that this is by no means essential to the Movement, and in Le Locle (Neuchâtel) for example, action is consciously directed by the movement of the Spirit, and guidance for action is sought in quiet group meetings with prayer and discussion.

The organisation of this Conference of Friends of the Friends in Switzerland had provoked from Professor Ragaz strong opposition to any form of organised Quaker Movement in Switzerland. The opposition was expressed in private letters, in personal talks - with Hans Albrecht and the Zurich Group, and in a letter sent to be read in the Conference, as various causes prevented his attendance.

This was the problem brought before the Conference on Sunday morning. Before reading the letter Hélène Monastier, as a personal friend of Ragaz, gave a sympathetic introduction and spoke beautifully of Professor Ragaz and his work as an inspiration and a religious force which had meant, and still means so much for the progressive forces in Switzerland. Several present in subsequent discussions referred to themselves as "sons" and "daughters" of Ragaz. The opposition of Ragaz is based on the belief that such a Quaker Movement would divide and scatter the religious forces already at work, and add one more "activity" to the many forms of service. He would like to see the Service Civil, the Christian Socialists, the F.O.R. etc. all joined - not under the banner of Quakerism, but within the framework of "Die Neue Gemeinde" (The New Community) on which idea he has just been writing and working. He would like to collaborate with Friends in this larger movement.

Swiss Friends themselves were not backward in pointing out various fallacies on which Professor Ragaz' opposition rested. Some of the points brought out were (1) that Quakerism rested on a more profound basis than any one of the activities above-mentioned in their organisational grouping; (2) that there was necessarily no question of "a group" or "groups" joining the Quaker Movement, but that each individual must be faithful to the guidance and impulsion of his own Inner Light; (3) that collaboration with Friends in the way Professor Ragaz wished was



not easy without a Swiss Quaker Movement. Many who were present, of course, were not connected with the Religious Socialists, and felt that such a connection would in no wise meet their need. But for many Professor Kagaz is a much loved friend and leader, and all present felt that such opposition should not lightly set aside, but quietly and prayerfully considered.

It was not surprising that the Meeting for Worship which followed, lasting a full hour, should have led the Conference to a very deep place, while the vocal contributions, from Swiss and non-Swiss alike, reflected the sense of unity, assurance and joy in the truths of the spiritual life.

Sunday afternoon the discussion was resumed on the practical outcomes of the Conference. The non-Swiss present felt very privileged to be present - at the express wish of the Swiss members - but refrained from taking active part in the discussion, except when questioned on specific points. On one such occasion Hans Albrecht did good service in answering the question as to what membership in the Society of Friends involved especially in relation to other religious or social groupings. The discussion was very varied and there were many contributions made from Swiss who had not hitherto spoken in the Conference.

The feeling in the meeting was very clear that no immediate steps should be taken; that all wished to think over this Conference and allow its meaning to grow upon them; and all were

equally clear that they wished to meet again in a further Conference in some few months time. A continuation Committee was formed of Swiss members from different parts of Switzerland, with Hélène Monastier as Convener, whose duty it should be to help the members to keep in touch with each other, and follow up any developments, and to call the next Conference when the right time came.

The Conference ended with music from Madelaine Jacquier, and a period of silent worship.