



**University of
Zurich** ^{UZH}

**Zurich Open Repository and
Archive**

University of Zurich
Main Library
Strickhofstrasse 39
CH-8057 Zurich
www.zora.uzh.ch

Year: 2015

Labour, Labour Movements, Trade Unions and Strikes (Switzerland)

Koller, Christian

DOI: 10.15463/ie1418.10754

Posted at the Zurich Open Repository and Archive, University of Zurich
ZORA URL: <https://doi.org/10.5167/uzh-119298>
Published Version

Originally published at:
Koller, Christian (2015). Labour, Labour Movements, Trade Unions and Strikes (Switzerland). Berlin:
Freie Universität Berlin.
DOI: 10.15463/ie1418.10754

Labour, Labour Movements, Trade Unions and Strikes (Switzerland)

By [Christian Koller](#)

This article analyses the development of the Swiss labour movement and working-class protest climaxing in the National General Strike in November 1918. Subsequent sections discuss the war's social impact; the structure and development of the Swiss labour movement; pre-war strike activities and strike discourses; various forms of labour protest on the road to the general strike; and eventually the latter's outcome and aftermath. It is argued that the most serious crisis of the modern Swiss Confederation allows for no simplistic explanation, but resulted from a complex combination of local, national and transnational factors, some of which are still under-researched.

Table of Contents

- [1 Introduction](#)
- [2 The Social Impact of the War](#)
- [3 Structure and Development of the Labour Movement](#)
- [4 Pre-1914 Strike Activities and Strike Discourses](#)
- [5 Labour Protest and the Build-Up to the General Strike](#)
- [6 Failure and Aftermath of the General Strike](#)
- [7 Conclusion](#)

[Notes](#)

[Selected Bibliography](#)

[Citation](#)

Introduction

The 1918 National General Strike was the climax of class tensions that had built up for decades and quickly accelerated during the second half of World War I, and would shape the political landscape of interwar Switzerland. Despite its pivotal role in modern Swiss history, the only

comprehensive study, the standard work by Willi Gautschi (1920–2004), dates back to 1968.^[1] Since then, complementing regional studies have provided additional knowledge of the crucial events in November 1918.^[2] Yet, more recent historiographical approaches and perspectives, most notably the gender concept and the transnational, linguistic,^[3] spatial and performative turns, have hardly been integrated into the analysis of these developments so far. Furthermore, the general strike's transitional role from wartime to post-war society and politics should be further elaborated upon.

The Social Impact of the War

Although Switzerland was spared direct involvement in the war, both the belligerents' economic warfare and insufficient preparations for a situation of long-lasting mobilisation of the army resulted in tremendous economic and social impact. Imports of vital foodstuffs and fuel collapsed especially in the second half of the war.^[4] Imported cereals between 1916 and 1918 declined by 68 percent and the import of coal dropped by more than a third from 1915 to 1918.^[5] These developments boosted wartime inflation for basic consumer goods. The bread price would double and the sugar price even treble between March 1914 and December 1918. Overall inflation from 1914 to 1918 reached 195.8 percent, including 187.6 percent for foodstuffs and 234.5 percent for fuel.^[6]

Industrial workers' real wages, despite moderate nominal pay rises, between 1914 and 1918 on average dropped by about a quarter, relapsing to the 1890 level.^[7] Long-standing military mobilisation made the situation even worse, as common soldiers' daily pay accounted for the equivalent of the rates for two hours for an average male industrial worker. Many working-class families therefore became increasingly dependent on female income that on average only reached between 55 and 60 percent of male wages. These developments were even more resented as they sharply contrasted with an (at least nominal) explosion of corporate profits in some economic sectors, and the government rescinded several crucial principles of pre-war labour legislation, allowing entrepreneurs to expand working hours as well as night and Sunday work, reduce wages and employ minors cheaply.

Attempts by the authorities to moderate supply problems started relatively late and were a limited success. From 1915 onwards the government instituted state monopolies for the import of most vital foodstuffs and fuel. At the same time, administrative measures trying to boost domestic agricultural production had only modest impact.^[8] Rationing of basic foodstuffs did not start before 1917. In April 1917, a federal agency for poor relief (*Kriegsfürsorgeamt*) was instituted, co-ordinating relief schemes that included discounted meals as well as extra rations and price reductions for bread, milk, potatoes and fuel. During the last year of the war, more than 17 percent of the Swiss population (and a much higher percentage of the urban working classes) depended on discounted bread.

Hunger was the central wartime experience of the working-class population in the cities,^[9] creating resentment against the allegedly privileged peasants. Furthermore, common soldiers were confronted with often vexatious, Prussian-style training and leadership methods introduced by the pro-German commander of the Swiss army General Ulrich Wille (1848–1925) and with monotonous service at the borders. Eventually, the [Spanish influenza](#) at the war's end would cause about 22,000 deaths, making 1918 the only year in the history of the modern Swiss Confederation in which the number of deaths exceeded the number of births.^[10] The combination of all these factors and experiences resulted in increasing working-class protest from about 1916 on that was dynamically related to a partial radicalisation of the Swiss labour movement.

Structure and Development of the Labour Movement

By the outbreak of war the Swiss labour movement had gained considerable strength and possessed a highly differentiated structure. Membership of the socialist Swiss Confederation of Trade Unions (founded in 1880) had more than trebled during the last decade before 1914 from 25,000 in 1904 to 78,000 in 1913. During the war it would first drop to 65,000 in 1914/15, only to soar again in the following years: 88,000 in 1916, 145,000 in 1917, 177,000 in 1918 and 223,000 in 1919/20.^[11] The percentage of industrial workers organised in socialist trade unions thus rose from 8.4 percent in 1913 to 18.7 percent in 1920. Most trade unions showed a strong male domination. Although nearly 40 percent of Swiss industrial workers before 1914 were female, women only accounted for between 7 and 10 percent of trade union members. During the war, the proportion of female members would soar to nearly 20 percent by 1919, but it dropped again to below 10 percent until 1924.^[12]

The much smaller catholic Christian Social Federation of Trade Unions (founded in 1907) that for ideological reasons would disapprove of the 1918 general strike mustered 3,300 members in 1913.^[13] During the war, its membership, as with the socialist trade unions, dropped to 1,500 in 1914/15, to 2,700 in 1916 and then soared to 4,600 in 1917 and 8,100 in 1918.^[14] By 1920 its membership had risen to 17,000, of which, typical of catholic unions, no less than 40 percent was female. Smaller workers' organisations included protestant unions and "yellow" associations.

On the political stage, the labour movement was represented by the Social Democratic Party. Founded in 1888, the party had merged with the reformist *Grütliverein* in 1901, but adopted a Marxist agenda in 1904. By 1911 its share of the vote had risen to 20 percent with the membership soaring from 11,600 in 1904 to 33,200 in 1914. In the last year of the war, then, the party would muster more than 39,000 comrades and in 1920 it counted nearly 54,000 members.^[15]

The Swiss labour movement of this period was characterised by a considerable degree of transnationality. Due to the high proportion of immigrant workers (up to a third in the industrial centres in the immediate pre-war years) many trade union members were foreigners. Several

early party and trade union leaders were of foreign, especially German extraction: most prominently "daddy" Herman Greulich (1842–1923). A considerable number of socialist and anarchist expatriates in Swiss exile, including Vladimir Ilyich Lenin (1870–1924), impacted on the labour movement, too. Switzerland also hosted several international socialist conferences. Some of them were immediately linked to World War I: after the Peace Congress of the Second (Socialist) International in Basel in November 1912, came the two international conferences of left-wing socialists in Zimmerwald (September 1915) and Kiental (April 1916), organised by Social Democratic MP Robert Grimm (1881–1958); furthermore there was the International Socialist Women's Conference against war, in Bern (March 1915), organised by Clara Zetkin (1857–1933), and the international conference of the Socialist Youth in Bern in April 1915. The latter resulted in a move of the Youth International's headquarters to Zurich.

In 1914 the Swiss Social Democrats like most of their fellow organisations in the belligerent countries pursued a policy of truce ("Burgfrieden"). This stance would soon be criticised by several far-left groups, including the Socialist Youth that was successively influenced by anarchist workers doctor Fritz Brupbacher (1874–1945), religious socialist and pacifist theologian Leonhard Ragaz (1868–1945) and eventually by Lenin.^[16] The Zimmerwald conference, then, would result in a general shift of the Swiss labour movement to the left. As early as November 1915, a convention of the Social Democratic Party expressed support for the Zimmerwald manifesto and in June 1917 another party convention overwhelmingly backed a motion by the Grimmite left calling for an intensified fight against militarism and asking socialist MPs to reject all credits for the Swiss army. Several MPs from the right wing openly criticised this decision, the *Grütliverein* having split again from the party already in 1916. Robert Grimm, who was positioned centrally to the radical far left and the reformist right, would now more and more become the leading figure of the Swiss labour movement.^[17]

Pre-1914 Strike Activities and Strike Discourses

After the first big strikes in the late 1860s, Switzerland's strike rate had increased massively decade on decade until the outbreak of the war. Between 1880 and 1914, no fewer than 2,426 strikes were counted.^[18] In line with the European trend, the country witnessed a big strike wave from 1905 to 1907: in 1905, 23,110 persons participated in 167 strikes, followed by 24,636 persons in 264 strikes in 1906 and 31,927 persons in 276 strikes in 1907. This intensification of strike activities, which went together with the aforementioned rise of trade unions, called for counter-measures from the employers, who in this period founded several branch-specific organisations (such as the Employers Association of the Swiss Machine and Metal Industries in 1905) specialising in dealing with industrial relations.^[19]

At the same time, international debates on theory and strategy of political mass strikes triggered by the [1905 revolution](#) in [Russia](#) reached Switzerland, with Robert Grimm in 1906 arguing in favour of mass strikes as a complementary means to parliamentary reformism on the road from capitalism

to socialism.^[20] Trade union elites, however, like their counterparts in Germany were rather sceptical about an instrument many associated with anarcho-syndicalism. Nevertheless, the period between 1900 and 1914 witnessed several local general strikes, most notably in Geneva in 1902 and in Zurich in 1912.^[21]

Recent research on strike activities of this period has emphasised various elements of transnationality.^[22] Not only did these activities follow international strike cycles, but there were also many individual strikes characterised by manifold transnational entanglements, including border-crossing recruitment of strike-breakers, transnational donation campaigns on behalf of striking and locked-out workers, and international co-operation agreements of both trade unions and employers' organisations. This transnationality was (albeit asymmetrically and distortedly) reflected in anti-strike discourses, which brought forward numerous conspiracy theories that attributed strikes to socialist and anarchist revolutionaries operating from abroad, Jewish speculators trying to manipulate stock markets or foreign capitalists attempting to damage their Swiss competitors.^[23] The notion of the 1918 general strike being staged by foreign revolutionaries that became popular during the event was thus rooted in discourses that had been spreading for several decades.

Labour Protest and the Build-Up to the General Strike

Growing social issues in the second half of the war, as in the belligerent countries, resulted in a variety of protests that addressed both living and working conditions and the question of war and peace: it was characterised by a dynamic relationship between grassroots activities and actions by local and national labour organisations. The strike rate that had hit a thirty-year low in 1915 with only twelve strikes involving 1,547 workers bounced back: in 1916, 3,330 workers were involved in thirty-five strikes, in 1917 13,459 workers were involved in 140 strikes, and in 1918, 24,382 workers (excluding participants of the general strike) were involved in 269 strikes. How far female participation in these strikes, as in other countries, was more substantial than pre-1914 is yet to be explored.

Strikes and go-slows comprised just one of several types of working-class protest: after the publication of the Zimmerwald manifesto socialist anti-war demonstrations took place in sixty Swiss towns in October 1915. From summer 1916 on, market riots occurred in several cities.^[24] Furthermore, female hunger demonstrations, such as the one on 10 July 1918 in Zurich organised by socialist Rosa Bloch-Bollag (1880–1922) and joined by about 2,000 women, tried to alert the authorities to the disastrous food shortages.^[25] The year 1917 witnessed a peak in [conscientious objection](#) by socialists. The protest movements first climaxed in autumn 1917, when on 15 November several hundred people in Zurich, including many members of the Socialist Youth, celebrated the [Russian revolution](#) and then joined a demonstration march led by radical pacifist Max Daetwyler (1886–1976) trying to take action against two ammunition factories. This

demonstration was followed by riots lasting for two more days, in which four protesters were killed by military troops.^[26]

On several more occasions the army was called to suppress labour protest:^[27] in 1916 striking typographers in Lausanne were forced back to work by military order and troops dispersed a demonstration in La Chaux-de-Fonds. In 1917, striking metal workers in Chippis were forced back to work by military order; planned supra-regional demonstrations meant the summoning of military units; and troops intervened against a crowd in La Chaux-de-Fonds trying to liberate the prominent pacifist and socialist Ernest Paul Graber (1875–1956) from prison. In the same year, military troops were also mobilised against strikes and protest movements in Bodio, Biasca, Lausanne and Zurich. In 1918, military troops were summoned to monitor the May Day demonstrations in Zurich, and military interference during hunger riots in Bienne in July resulted in one dead and several wounded.

In February 1918, the so-called Action Committee of Olten, chaired by Robert Grimm, was established as a body to co-ordinate actions of the Social Democratic Party and the trade unions. This committee soon took on an active role in the protest movement. In April and again in July it threatened to call a general strike, first because of a rise of the milk price by the government, and then, when the rights of free association, assembly and demonstration were restricted. Additionally, in June the committee called for anti-inflation demonstrations. Thereupon the federal government on 9 August established an internal committee for dealing with a possible general strike.

With the anticipation of the war's end in autumn 1918 the situation, as in the previous year, started to escalate again. On 30 September, Zurich's bankers walked out for their first-ever strike, which was followed by a local general strike in support of the bankers' demand for pay rises and resulted in an outright success. In a referendum on 13 October, an overwhelming majority of the Swiss electorate approved of a popular initiative for the introduction of proportional representation. This made an end to the dominance of the Radicals foreseeable, who represented the liberal upper- and middle classes and had ruled Switzerland since 1848, and made a stronger parliamentary representation of the labour movement more than likely. In the last elections under the majority voting system in autumn 1917 the Social Democrats had scored a share of more than 30 percent of the votes, but only gained about 10 percent of the seats, whereas the Radicals' 40 percent had been good enough to win overall control.

In early November, the federal government ordered military occupation of the city of Zurich in order to prevent a planned celebration of the anniversary of the Russian revolution from taking place. The troops, originating from "reliable" rural areas, were commanded by Emil Sonderegger (1868–1934), later to become a prominent Swiss fascist, who staged a martial performance with his soldiers wearing steel helmets and carrying hand grenades. The Action Committee of Olten responded to what they perceived as a provocation with a twenty-four-hour protest strike in nineteen cities on 9 November. Zurich's labour organisations even proclaimed an unlimited general

strike. On 10 November, Sonderegger's troops forcibly dispersed the illegalised celebration, which was attended by 7,000 people, leaving one dead and several wounded. Representations of the Action Committee of Olten to the federal government were unsuccessful and the government event put more troops at its disposal.

Thereupon the Committee proclaimed a nationwide general strike on 11 November, two days after the proclamation of the German Republic and on the very same day that the armistice was signed and Charles I, Emperor of Austria (1887–1922), abdicated. Compared to the revolutions that were shaking [Germany](#) and terminated the [Austro-Hungarian Empire](#), the catalogue of claims issued by the Action Committee was relatively moderate. It included immediate new elections on the basis of proportional representation; the introduction of women's suffrage; a general duty to work; the forty-eight-hour working week; democratic reforms of the army; adequate food supply; state pensions for the elderly and invalids; state monopolies in export and import; as well as coverage of the national debt by the rich. Roughly a quarter of a million men and women went on strike in support of these claims. There were, however, considerable regional differences, with German-speaking workers supporting the strike much more strongly than their French-speaking colleagues.

Failure and Aftermath of the General Strike

On the 12 November, 95,000 troops were summoned, again mostly from rural areas. Furthermore, home guards (*Bürgerwehren*) proliferated in many towns. Strategically important buildings and railway lines were heavily guarded, accompanied by strong military presence in the streets and army support for the distribution of bourgeois newspapers. The strike mostly ran quietly. In Grenchen, however, troops killed three people on 14 November, after the strike had actually already terminated. The government refused any negotiations with the Action Committee and on 13 November issued an ultimatum. Thereupon the Action Committee, against the will of its chairman Grimm, on 14 November decided to end the general strike in order to prevent further escalation. In the immediate aftermath of the strike military tribunals sentenced 127 persons, mainly railway workers.

The military trial against the strike leaders in March 1919 resulted, inter alia, in Grimm being sent to prison for six months. The fate of the 1918 strike aims was diverse. Whilst some of them would never become reality, others, such as the re-election of parliament on the basis of proportional representation (1919) and the forty-eight-hour working week (1920), were swiftly realised. Others remained on the political agenda for decades to come: the state pension for the retired was only introduced in 1948, and Swiss women would not become enfranchised until 1971.

The outcome of the general strike would polarise the Swiss political landscape for years to come and impact on both the political left and the right. In 1919, the strike rate remained high with two local general strikes in Zurich and Basel seeing involvement of the newly founded home guards and the army killing another six protesters.^[28] In the early 1920s, then, strike rates dropped sharply. Industrial relations now were increasingly shaped by collective agreements, a process that

has been characterised as "farewell to class struggle".^[29] In 1921, the left wing of the Social Democratic Party would definitely leave and form the Communist Party, after the Social Democrats had rejected joining the Comintern. One of the leaders of the general strike, Fritz Platten (1883–1942), became secretary of the new party that however would never attract any notable electoral support. The overwhelming majority of members and left-wing voters would stay with the Social Democrats that in the interwar period would win overall majorities in most of the big cities, but only in 1943 were granted a representation in the federal government with their first-ever minister, Ernst Nobs (1886–1957), being another former leader of the general strike.^[30]

On the political right, the traumatising experience of the general strike triggered revolutionary fears that resulted in a closer co-operation of the bourgeois parties and their partial radicalisation. The home guards that had emerged during the general strike were expanded,^[31] partly funded by big corporations.^[32] In 1919, the Swiss Patriotic Association (Schweizerischer Vaterländischer Verband) was founded as a private umbrella organisation of the home guards that would, in co-operation with similar organisations abroad and the Swiss ministries of defence and of justice, organise anti-strike measures, co-ordinate anti-socialist electoral campaigns and run its own intelligence service to spy on left-wing parties and organisations.^[33] As early as in 1925, the first fascist organisation emerged, whose name, *Heimatwehr*, clearly referred to the anti-socialist movements of 1918.

Building on the aforementioned pre-1914 conspiracy theories and boosted by the revolutions in Russia, Germany and Austria-Hungary, the general strike had immediately sparked bourgeois fears of a revolutionary movement staged from abroad. Already on 12 November 1918 the federal government had expelled the members of the Soviet mission in Bern that was considered to be the revolutionary headquarters. The notion of the general strike as an attempted Bolshevik coup d'état would become a cornerstone of bourgeois anti-communism for decades to come. Ten years after the event, for example, the bourgeois newspaper *Gazette de Lausanne* claimed that in 1918 Bolshevik emissaries and Swiss socialist leaders had worked together in order to fanaticise the masses,^[34] and the infamous film *The Red Plague*, produced by Action against Communism in 1938, presented all social conflicts of the preceding two decades, including the Swiss general strike, as parts of an alleged global conspiracy of Jewish Bolsheviks.^[35]

The notion of alleged Russian origins of the general strike despite lacking primary source evidence even entered academic historiography. Edgar Bonjour (1898–1991) in his seminal history of [Swiss neutrality](#) in 1965 claimed that the principle *quod non est in actis non est in mundo* (what is not kept in records does not exist) was valid for lawyers only, but not for historians, and that a close relationship between the activities of the Soviet mission and the Swiss "revolutionaries" was extremely likely.^[36] Three years later, however, Gautschi refuted what he called a "conspiracy theory" based on insufficient evidence.^[37] The opening of Russian archives in the 1990s, then, would not produce any primary sources backing this theory, either.^[38]

Conclusion

On balance, the general strike of November 1918 was the climax of class tensions that had been building up for a long time with deteriorating living and working conditions during the war both strengthening labour organisations and escalating strategies of protest that had already been practised and theoretically reflected upon in the pre-war years. Whilst teleological interpretations and simplistic string puller theories interpreting the general strike either as the inevitable consequence of socioeconomic development or tracing it back to an international revolutionary conspiracy must be avoided, it is to be noted that wartime labour protest and the general strike should not only be related to domestic social, economic, political and cultural factors, but also to a variety of international contexts. The integration of recent historiographical approaches and perspectives into the analysis of the crucial events in November 1918, their preconditions and their aftermath, would be the task of a renewed labour history of Switzerland.^[39]

Christian Koller, Swiss Social Archives

Section Editors: [Roman Rossfeld](#); [Daniel Marc Segesser](#)

Notes

1. ↑ Gautschi, Willi: *Der Landesstreik 1918*, Zurich 1968.
2. ↑ See several contributions in Vuilleumier, Marc et al. (eds.): *La Grève générale de 1918 en Suisse*, Geneva 1977, as well as Bolle, Arnold: *Une page d'histoire. La Grève générale de 1918 et sa répercussion sur les troubles de La Chaux-de-Fonds*, La Chaux-de-Fonds 1968; Cerutti, Mauro: *Un tournant dans l'histoire du mouvement ouvrier genevois. La grève générale de novembre 1918. Les mouvements 'de gauche' à Genève, de 1914 à 1918*, Geneva 1974; Rey, Jacques: *La grève générale de 1918 à la Chaux-de-Fonds*, Lausanne et al. 1981; Rohr, Thomas: *Schaffhausen und der Landesstreik von 1918*, Schaffhausen 1972; Schelbert, Joe: *Der Landesstreik vom November 1918 in der Region Luzern. Seine Vorgeschichte, sein Verlauf und seine Wirkung*, Lucerne 1985; Frey, Daniel M.: *Vor der Revolution? Ordnungsdienst-Einsatz der Armee während des Landesstreiks in Zürich*, Zurich 1998; Vuilleumier, Marc: *La grève générale de 1918 à Lausanne. Une épisode légendaire, l'arrestation et le procès d'Ernest Gloor*, in: *Cahiers d'histoire du mouvement ouvrier*, 2 (1985), pp. 5-19; Bürgisser, Thomas: "Sturmesbrausen" in "sonst so stillen Gassen". *Landesstreik 1918 in Stadt und Bezirk Lenzburg*, in: *Lenzburger Neujahrsblätter*, 80 (2008), pp. 5–26; Hiltbrunner, Edith: *Generalstreik 1918 in der Region Grenchen-Solothurn*, Fribourg 2012; Hoegger, Rudolf: *Revolution – auch in der Kleinstadt. Der Generalstreik in Baden*, in: *Badener Neujahrsblatt*, 44 (1969), pp. 57–69; Holenstein, Dieter: *Extreme gesellschaftliche Polarisierung. Wirtschaftlich-soziale Entwicklung und Landesstreik*, in: *Historischer Verein des Kantons St. Gallen (ed.): 1914-1918/1919. Die Ostschweiz und der Grosse Krieg*, St. Gallen 2014, pp. 156-169; Meyer, Erich: *Der Generalstreik 1918 in Olten*, in: *Oltner Neujahrsblätter*, 27 (1969), pp. 44-51.

3. † See so far only Fenner, Martin: Partei und Parteisprache im politischen Konflikt. Studien zu Struktur und Funktion politischer Gruppensprachen zur Zeit des schweizerischen Landesstreiks (1917–1919), Bern 1981.
4. † See Munzinger, Heinrich: Die Kohlenbelieferung der Schweiz in und nach dem Kriege, Heidelberg 1924.
5. † Käppeli, Joseph/Riesen, Max: Die Lebensmittelversorgung der Schweiz unter dem Einfluss des Weltkrieges 1914–1922, Bern 1925, pp. 24-25.
6. † Ritzmann-Blickenstorfer, Heiner (ed.): Historical Statistics of Switzerland, Zurich 1996, p. 485.
7. † Reallöhne schweizerischer Industriearbeiter von 1890 bis 1921. Einführung und Hauptergebnisse, Zurich 1982, pp. 47 and 64-65.
8. † See Moser, Peter: Mehr als eine Übergangszeit. Die Neuordnung der Ernährungsfrage während des Ersten Weltkrieges, in: Rossfeld, Roman et al. (eds.): 14/18. Die Schweiz und der Grosse Krieg, Baden 2014, pp. 172-199; Auderset, Juri and Moser, Peter: Krisenerfahrungen, Lernprozesse und Bewältigungsstrategien. Die Ernährungskrise von 1917/18 als agrarpolitische "Lehrmeisterin", in: David, Thomas et al. (eds.): Krisen. Ursachen, Deutungen und Folgen, Zurich 2012, pp. 133–149.
9. † See Lüthi, Katharina: Sorglos bis überfordert. Die Brotversorgung der Schweiz im Ersten Weltkrieg, Bern 1997; Schneider, Salome: Die schweizerische Volksernährung vor und während dem Kriege, in: Zeitschrift für schweizerische Statistik und Volkswirtschaft, 55 (1919), pp. 7-20; Kühne, Josef: Untersuchungen über die Kost der Basler Arbeiter unter dem Einfluss des Krieges, Basel 1919.
10. † Ritzmann-Blickenstorfer, Statistics 1996, p. 190.
11. † Arbeitsgruppe für Geschichte der Arbeiterbewegung Zürich (ed.): Schweizerische Arbeiterbewegung. Dokumente zu Lage, Organisation und Kämpfen der Arbeiter von der Frühindustrialisierung bis zur Gegenwart, Zurich 1975, p. 396.
12. † Ragaz, Christine: Die Frau in der schweizerischen Gewerkschaftsbewegung, Stuttgart 1933, p. 150.
13. † See Holenstein, Dieter: Die Christlichsozialen der Schweiz im Ersten Weltkrieg. Entwicklung der christlichsozialen Organisationen und ihre Stellung in der schweizerischen Arbeiterbewegung und der katholischen Sondergesellschaft 1914-1920, Fribourg 1993.
14. † Arbeitsgruppe, Arbeiterbewegung 1975, p. 396.
15. † Ibid., p. 403.
16. † See Petersen, Andreas: Radikale Jugend. Die sozialistische Jugendbewegung der Schweiz 1900–1930 – Radikalisierungsanalyse und Generationentheorie, Zurich 2001; Gautschi, Willi: Lenin als Emigrant in der Schweiz, Zurich et al. 1973.
17. † See Voigt, Christian: Robert Grimm. Kämpfer – Arbeiterführer – Parlamentarier. Eine politische Biographie, Bern 1980; McCarthy, Alfred: Robert Grimm. Der schweizerische Revolutionär, Bern 1989; Degen, Bernard et al. (eds.): Robert Grimm. Marxist, Kämpfer, Politiker, Zurich 2012.
18. † See Hirter, Hans: Die Streiks in der Schweiz in den Jahren 1880–1914. Quantitative Streikanalyse, in: Gruner, Erich et al. (eds.): Arbeiterschaft und Wirtschaft in der Schweiz, 1880-1914, 3 volumes, volume 2, Zurich 1988, pp. 837-1008.

19. † See Gerster, Hans: Die Arbeitgeberorganisationen der Schweiz, Basel 1921; Gruner, Erich: Die Arbeitgeberorganisationen – Spiegelbild oder Überbietung der Gewerkschaften?, in: Gruner et al., Arbeiterschaft und Wirtschaft 1988, pp. 813-836; Eichenberger, Pierre: Le rôle des organisations patronales dans les variétés du capitalisme. L'exemple de l'industrie suisse des machines (1905-1913), in: Pierre, Lamard and Stoskopf, Nicolas (eds.): L'Entreprise rhénane. Mythe ou réalité?, Paris 2015, pp. 83-94.
20. † Grimm, Robert: Der politische Massenstreik. Ein Vortrag, Basel 1906.
21. † See Koller, Christian: Streikkultur. Performanzen und Diskurse des Arbeitskampfes im schweizerisch-österreichischen Vergleich (1860–1950), Münster et al. 2009, pp. 118-131; Lang, Karl: La grève générale de 1912 à Zurich, in: Cahiers Vilfredo Pareto, 42 (1977), pp. 129-141.
22. † See Casutt-Schneeberger, Julia: Der Einfluss des Konjunkturzyklus auf die Streikaktivität in Deutschland, Österreich und der Schweiz von 1901 bis 2004, in: Österreichische Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaften, 18 (2007), pp. 80-100; Koller, Christian: Local Strikes as Transnational Events. Migration, Donations, and Organizational Cooperation in the Context of Strikes in Switzerland (1860–1914), in: Labour History Review, 74/3 (2009), pp. 305-318; Zimmermann, Adrian: Die Niederlande und die Schweiz im November 1918, in: Schweizerische Zeitschrift für Geschichte, 63 (2013), pp. 453-478.
23. † See Koller, Christian: La grève comme phénomène 'anti-suisse'. Xénophobie et théories du complot dans les discours anti-grévistes (19e et 20e siècles), in: Cahiers d'histoire du mouvement ouvrier, 28 (2012), pp. 25-46, here 26-34.
24. † See Pfeifer, Regula: Frauen und Protest. Marktdemonstrationen in der deutschen Schweiz im Kriegsjahr 1916, in: Head-König, Anne-Lise/Tanner, Albert (eds.): Frauen in der Stadt, Zurich 1993, pp. 93-109.
25. † See Wottreng, Willi: Revolutionäre und Querköpfe. Zürcher Schicksale, Zurich 2005, pp. 12-17.
26. † See Turnherr, Bruno: Der Ordnungsdiensteneinsatz der Armee anlässlich der Zürcher Unruhen im November 1917, Bern 1978.
27. † See Schweri, Alain: La grève de 1917 aux usines d'aluminium de Chippis. Un exemple de traumatisme industriel en pays agricole, Geneva 1988; Perrenoud, Marc: Ernest Paul Graber, in: Historisches Lexikon der Schweiz, online: <http://www.hls-dhs-dss.ch/> version of 17/7/2007, (retrieved 20 October 2015); Conca-Pulli, Pälvi: Soldats au service de l'ordre public. La politique du maintien de l'ordre intérieur au moyen de l'armée en Suisse entre 1914 et 1949, Neuchâtel 2003; Turnherr, Ordnungseinsatz 1978; Berlincourt, Alain: Julikrawall und Generalstreik in Biel, in: Neues Bieler Jahrbuch, 7 (1968), pp. 89-101.
28. † See Schmid, Hanspeter: Generalstreik 1919. Krieg der Bürger, Zurich 1980.
29. † Degen, Bernard: Abschied vom Klassenkampf. Die partielle Integration der schweizerischen Gewerkschaftsbewegung zwischen Landesstreik und Weltwirtschaftskrise (1918–1929), Basel 1991.
30. † See Kästli, Tobias: Ernst Nobs. Vom Bürgerschreck zum Bundesrat. Ein politisches Leben, Zurich 1995.
31. † See e.g., Schneider, Oliver: Von Knüppelgardisten, Revolutionshelden und Radaubrüdern. Die Luzerner Bürgerwehren nach dem Landesstreik 1918, in: Historische Gesellschaft Luzern (ed.): Geschichte – Kultur – Gesellschaft, 31 (2013), pp. 63-84; Heimberg, Charles: La garde civique genevoise et la grève générale de 1918. Un sursaut disciplinaire et conservateur, in: Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine, 44 (1997), pp. 424-435.

32. † See Koller, Christian: Kriegs- oder Friedensgewinnler? Die Schweizerische Industrie-Gesellschaft Neuhausen, 1910–1925, in: Rossfeld, Roman/Straumann, Tobias (eds.): Der vergessene Wirtschaftskrieg. Schweizer Unternehmen im Ersten Weltkrieg, Zurich 2008, pp. 225-257, here 244.
33. † See Thürer, Andreas: Der Schweizerische Vaterländische Verband (SVV). Ein 'antisozialistischer Schutzwall' (1919–1930/31), in: Caillat, Michel et al. (eds.): Histoire(s) de l'anticommunisme en Suisse – Geschichte(n) des Antikommunismus in der Schweiz, Zurich 2009, pp. 133-146; Zimmermann, Dorothe: Den Landesstreik erinnern. Antikommunistische Aktivitäten des Schweizerischen Vaterländischen Verbandes 1919–1948, in: Schweizerische Zeitschrift für Geschichte, 63 (2013), pp. 479–504.
34. † Gazette de Lausanne, 23 October 1928.
35. † See Jaeggi, Bruno et al.: Die Rote Pest: Antikommunismus in der Schweiz, in: Film, 1 (1975), pp. 49-86.
36. † Bonjour, Edgar: Geschichte der schweizerischen Neutralität, volume 2, Basel 1965, p. 695.
37. † Gautschi, Landesstreik 1968, p. 171.
38. † See Collmer, Peter: Zwischen Selbstdefinition und internationaler Behauptung. Frühe bolschewistische Diplomatie am Beispiel der Sowjetmission in Bern (Mai bis November 1918), in: Thomas, Ludmilla / Knoll, Viktor (eds.): Zwischen Tradition und Revolution. Determinanten und Strukturen sowjetischer Aussenpolitik 1917–1941, Stuttgart 2000, pp. 225-283, here 281-282.
39. † See, on state-of-the-art Swiss labour history, Wyler, Rebekka: Das 'Proletariat' und die 'Anderen'. Sozialgeschichte der ArbeiterInnen und Unterschichten, in: Traverse, 17/1 (2011), pp. 137-172.

Selected Bibliography

Degen, Bernard / Schächli, Hans / Zimmermann, Adrian (eds.): **Robert Grimm: Marxist, Kämpfer, Politiker**, Zurich 2012: Chronos-Verlag.

Frey, Constant: **La grève générale de 1918: Légendes et réalités**, Geneva 1969: Ed. Générales.

Frey, Daniel M.: **Vor der Revolution? Der Ordnungsdienst-Einsatz der Armee während des Landesstreiks in Zürich**, Zurich 1998: Thesis Verlag.

Gautschi, Willi: **Der Landesstreik 1918**, Zurich 1968: Benziger.

Gautschi, Willi (ed.): **Dokumente zum Landesstreik 1918**, Zurich; Cologne 1971: Benziger.

Gruner, Erich (ed.): **Arbeiterschaft und Wirtschaft in der Schweiz 1880-1914. Soziale Lage, Organisation und Kämpfe von Arbeitern und Unternehmern, politische Organisation und Sozialpolitik**, 3 vols., Zurich 1987-1988: Chronos

Holenstein, Dieter: **Die Christlichsozialen der Schweiz im Ersten Weltkrieg. Entwicklung der christlichsozialen Organisationen und ihre Stellung in der schweizerischen Arbeiterbewegung und der katholischen Sondergesellschaft 1914-1920**, Fribourg 1993: Universitätsverlag.

Jost, Hans Ulrich: **Linksradikalismus in der deutschen Schweiz 1914-1918**, Bern 1973: Stämpfli.

Jost, Hans Ulrich: Der historische Stellenwert des Landesstreiks. Nachwort, in: Gautschi, Willi: Der Landesstreik 1918 (3 ed.), Zurich 1988: Benziger, pp. I-XV

Koller, Christian: **Ladehemmungen – Streiks in der schweizerischen Rüstungsindustrie in den beiden Weltkriegen**, in: Groebner, Valentin / Guex, Sébastien / Tanner, Jakob (eds.): Kriegswirtschaft und Wirtschaftskriege = Economie de guerre et guerres économiques, Zurich 2008: Chronos, pp. 213-229.

Koller, Christian: **Streikkultur: Performanzen und Diskurse des Arbeitskampfes im schweizerisch-österreichischen Vergleich (1860-1950)**, Vienna; Münster 2009: Lit.

Marbach, Fritz: **Der Generalstreik 1918. Fakten, Impressionen, Illusionen**, Bern 1969: Haupt.

Meier, Heinz K.: **The Swiss national general strike of November 1918** in: Schmitt, Hans A. (ed.): Neutral Europe between war and revolution, 1917-1923, Charlottesville 1988: University Press of Virginia, pp. 66-86.

Moser, Peter: **Mehr als eine Übergangszeit: Die Neuordnung der Ernährungsfrage während des Ersten Weltkrieges**, in: Rossfeld, Roman / Buomberger, Thomas / Kury, Patrick (eds.): 14/18. Die Schweiz und der Grosse Krieg, Baden 2014: hier + jetzt, pp. 172–199.

Pfeifer, Regula: **Frauen und Protest: Marktdemonstrationen in der deutschen Schweiz im Kriegsjahr 1916**, in: Head-König, Anne-Lise / Tanner, Albert (eds.): Frauen in der Stadt = Les femmes dans la ville, Zurich 1993: Chronos-Verlag, pp. 93-109.

Schmid-Ammann, Paul: **Die Wahrheit über den Generalstreik von 1918. Seine Ursachen, sein Verlauf, seine Folgen.**, Zurich 1968: Morgarten.

Schneider, Oliver: **Von Knüppelgardisten, Revolutionshelden und Radaubrüdern. Die Luzerner Bürgerwehren nach dem Landesstreik 1918**, in: Geschichte – Kultur – Gesellschaft 31, 2013, pp. 63-84.

Schweri, Alain: **La grève de 1917 aux usines d'aluminium de Chippis: un exemple de traumatisme industriel en pays agricole**, Geneva 1988: Université de Genève.

Streiff, Kaspar: **Aus Niederlagen lernen: Dokumente zum schweizerischen Landesgeneralstreik 1918**, Zurich 1974: Verlag Soldatenkomitee.

Thürer, Andreas: **Der Schweizerische Vaterländische Verband (SVV). Ein 'antisozialistischer Schutzwall' (1919–1930/31)**, in: Caillat, Michel / Cerutti, Mauro; Fayet, Jean-François et al. (eds.): Histoire(s) de l'anticommunisme en Suisse = Geschichte(n) des Antikommunismus in der Schweiz, Zurich 2009: Chronos-Verlag, pp. 133-146.

Turnherr, Bruno: **Der Ordnungsdiensteinsatz der Armee anlässlich der Zürcher Unruhen im November 1917**, Bern 1978: Lang.

Vuilleumier, Marc / Kohler, François / Ballif, Eliane et al. (eds.): **La Grève générale de 1918 en Suisse**, Geneva 1977: Grounaor.

Zimmermann, Adrian: **Die Niederlande und die Schweiz im November 1918**, in: Schweizerische Zeitschrift für Geschichte 63, 2013, pp. 453-478.

Zimmermann, Dorothe: **Den Landesstreik erinnern. Antikommunistische Aktivitäten des Schweizerischen Vaterländischen Verbandes 1919–1948**, in: Schweizerische Zeitschrift für Geschichte 63, 2013, pp. 479-504.

Article Last Modified

30 October 2015

Citation

Koller, Christian: Labour, Labour Movements, Trade Unions and Strikes (Switzerland), in: 1914-1918-online. International Encyclopedia of the First World War, ed. by Ute Daniel, Peter Gatrell, Oliver Janz, Heather Jones, Jennifer Keene, Alan Kramer, and Bill Nasson, issued by Freie Universität Berlin, Berlin 2015-10-29. **DOI:** <http://dx.doi.org/10.15463/ie1418.10754>.

License

© 2014 This text is licensed under: [CC by-NC-ND 3.0 Germany - Attribution, Non-commercial, No Derivative Works](#).