

HISTORY

The French occupation

The French Revolution preached new ideas of liberty, fraternity and equality which were enthusiastically welcomed in many parts of Switzerland, particularly in the **subject territories**, and there was sporadic unrest against the authorities in different parts of Switzerland in the early part of the 1790s.

However, it was not until 1797 that the changes in France made a serious impact on Switzerland.

By that time France was anxious to surround itself with a buffer against the European monarchies who wanted to restore the old order. As a neighbour, Switzerland naturally found itself drawn into French plans.

The French first took over some of the peripheral regions allied to the Confederation. Part of the bishopric of Basel was absorbed into France in 1793, and in 1797 Napoleon incorporated Graubünden's subject territory of **Valtellina** into the new Cisalpine Republic he had just created (in what is now part of northern Italy).

In January 1798 **Vaud**, led by **Frédéric César de la Harpe**, appealed for French help to drive out the reactionaries in Bern who ruled them. This was the pretext for the French to enter Confederate territory. Bern was the only canton to put up effective armed resistance to the French invasion, but after initial success its troops were finally defeated in March at the Battle of Grauholz.

The fall of Bern marked the end of the old Confederation.

"Wealth, enlightenment, luxury and idleness have so changed conditions in the areas where manufacturing takes place, that the educational institutions, the legislation and the professional restrictions with which the old shepherd folk of these areas were content, no longer suit the present needs of this land... We can no longer live in the simplicity of the old type of government. It was indeed a blessed time when this was possible, but it is now over and gone."

Heinrich Pestalozzi (1746-1827), Note on the nature of the popular movement taking place around Zurich, 1795



The bear that was behind. When the French entered Bern they took the three adult bears from the city's treasury and sent them back to Paris (also money from the treasury). Without their mother the cub survived and was then stuffed. Its motto on its shield means: "The old times are over."

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