

How do the British see the Swiss?

Autor(en): **Drayton, Martin**

Objekttyp: **Article**

Zeitschrift: **The Swiss observer : the journal of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK**

Band (Jahr): - **(1971)**

Heft 1610-1611

PDF erstellt am: **19.05.2024**

Persistenter Link: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-686608>

Nutzungsbedingungen

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Inhalten der Zeitschriften. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern.

Die auf der Plattform e-periodica veröffentlichten Dokumente stehen für nicht-kommerzielle Zwecke in Lehre und Forschung sowie für die private Nutzung frei zur Verfügung. Einzelne Dateien oder Ausdrucke aus diesem Angebot können zusammen mit diesen Nutzungsbedingungen und den korrekten Herkunftsbezeichnungen weitergegeben werden.

Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. Die systematische Speicherung von Teilen des elektronischen Angebots auf anderen Servern bedarf ebenfalls des schriftlichen Einverständnisses der Rechteinhaber.

Haftungsausschluss

Alle Angaben erfolgen ohne Gewähr für Vollständigkeit oder Richtigkeit. Es wird keine Haftung übernommen für Schäden durch die Verwendung von Informationen aus diesem Online-Angebot oder durch das Fehlen von Informationen. Dies gilt auch für Inhalte Dritter, die über dieses Angebot zugänglich sind.

scientific career. He would like to receive from them brief biographical notes, which include present address and date of birth.

TEST YOUR SKILL IN SOLVING THE FOLLOWING ANAGRAMS OF WELL-KNOWN SWISS TOWNS

1. ANTI PERSON
2. "BLUE, ANN TURNER?"
3. BONDED ALE
4. e.g. WIGS!
5. GREEK STAND
6. "I'M IN GREEN!"
7. "RING LEW LADD"
8. SAD, TAG
9. "STORK, LES?"
10. ZIM'S TROT

ANSWERS

1. PONTRESINA
2. LAUTERBRUNNEN
3. ADELBODEN
4. WEGGIS
5. KANDERSTEG
6. MEIRINGEN
7. GRINDELWALD
8. GSTAAD
9. KLOSTERS
10. ST. MORITZ

(Anagrams devised by Mr. Jack Kosky)

(continued from page 6)

movements who have launched the initiatives on this subject are in effect trying to free the individual citizen from the responsibility of caring for his old days. The guaranteed comfort of Old Age was very much a question of wisdom and foresight. At least for those who could afford to practise such wisdom. For the others, there were days when children took their old parents in their care. Now this role is incumbent upon the State. But for those who are trying to improve the welfare of old people, the home of rest is just not good enough.

(PMB)

WELFARE OFFICE

for

SWISS GIRLS IN GREAT BRITAIN

(For Information, Advice or Help)

31 Conway Street, London W.1.

(Nearest Underground Station:
Warren Street)

Telephone: 01-387-3608

RECEPTION HOURS

Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday
2 p.m. to 5 p.m. or by appointment.

HOW DO THE BRITISH SEE THE SWISS?

by Martin Drayton

What do the British think of the Swiss? In the following article a young English journalist reports on his interviews with the "man in the street" on this topic.

For good or ill, people think of foreign countries in terms of images. And in no case is the image more predictable—or more potentially misleading—than in the case of Switzerland.

"It's a postcard country—it looks like something off a calendar". "All I can remember is mountains covered in snow and those funny little houses that look like cuckoo clocks". Ask any Englishman what he remembers about Switzerland and he will invariably come out with something of this sort.

Part of the reason is, of course, that the only motive the average Briton has for going to Switzerland is to take a holiday. He goes here expecting it to look like a postcard, and he is not disappointed. The ski resorts are, after all, postcard country nulli secundus.

But the "picture postcard" image goes deeper than that. Switzerland has been a neutral country for centuries—it has none of the outward-looking force of the politically committed countries around it. It has none of the evangelical hysteria of America, none of the long-established colonial interests of Britain. It has no propaganda drum to beat; it has never been a hotbed of insurrection or the target of invasion like many of its neighbours.

The result of this is that its image is very much a passive one. It is a setting, a place where people go to convalesce or to ski, to hold conferences or deposit their money or, if they are rich enough, to build their third houses for tax purposes. To the English at least it is a country of hosts, and what limelight it enjoys is reflected from its more important guests—it has many—and from its dramatic scenery.

It is not surprising, then, that the British Press did not devote much attention to the news that the women of what is in fact one of the oldest democracies have for the first time gained the right to vote. And the news raised correspondingly little interest among the British people.

The British are, after all, remarkably complacent about their own democratic structure, and they tend to take their own rights and freedoms for granted. Women have had the vote in this country for as long as most of its inhabitants can remember, and it comes as no great surprise to them that women are allowed to vote elsewhere.

But now that Britain is seeing the beginning of what promises to be a noisy (if ineffectual) revolt of second-generation Emily Pankhursts in the

form of the Women's Liberation Movement, they at least profess to a certain sense of triumph at the enfranchisement of the women of Switzerland.

"I think it's about time Swiss women got the vote—it's a very good thing", said one British housewife. "I think it's awful that they were given only second-class citizenship for so long".

But the same lady, who had spent some time in Switzerland on holiday, was far from flattering about their political awareness: "The mentality of the Swiss women I met seemed to be restricted to their homes and families. I didn't get the impression that they were at all interested in outside power, and I doubt that many of them will use it now they've got it".

Many people were surprised to learn that Swiss women did not have the right to vote—which is a reflection of British insularity as much as anything. But several suggested very coherent reasons for the absence of the franchise. One woman felt that the reason lay in Switzerland's neutrality: "In a neutral country which has been at peace for such a long time you wouldn't expect women to be a significant force politically. It's only when a country goes to war that it realises the potential of its female population—or that the women themselves realise it. As soon as women are obliged to work in munitions factories and do what in peacetime are regarded as men's jobs they start demanding men's rights".

The effects of Swiss neutrality—and its accompanying social stability—were touched upon by an English student who had lived in Switzerland for a short time:

"Switzerland seems to me to be a very regulated country with a very well-oiled social and political system. And in a country where you have this stability, coupled with a high standard of living and an apparently total absence of real poverty and unemployment you don't need to give women the vote. I don't think Swiss women felt the need for the right to vote because they were very comfortably installed in a well-regulated social structure".

One English woman sounded a note of warning on the subject with typical feminine insight: "It's great that they have been given the right. But once you've given it to them, you'll have the devil's own job if you want to take it away from them again".

Her opinion of the Swiss in general was unusually articulate: "They are a fairly passive race. They are very serious—I think they are very high-principled too. Their standard of living is

high—but then so are their incomes—and I think they're very socially aware".

Most people find the Swiss surprisingly friendly. Said one young Englishman: "They're really friendly once you break through the initial barrier—and I must say they're great drinkers". But in spite of their friendliness he felt that they were "sometimes rather inhibited and cold. They seem to be the products of their own high standard of living—the material comforts they enjoy seem to have given rise to a lack of imagination. If you look around everything seems very clean—the people included—there's no dirt, no slums, none of the unpleasantness that you find here

(in England) that gives a place real character".

Almost everyone who had spent any length of time in Switzerland remarked upon the cleanliness there. "Even the snow seems whiter". But many people agreed that the total lack of squalor gave the whole place a rather characterless, picture-book appearance—although few went so far as one occasional visitor who described it as being "like a ruddy hospital ward".

It is significant that most people—those who have visited Switzerland and those who have not—think of it first and foremost as a pastoral country. One young secretary spoke with par-

ticular affection of "those little men herding goats up the hillsides". When asked exactly where she had witnessed this charming scene she admitted that she had never actually been to Switzerland—but was adamant that she had seen "lots of pictures of it".

In many ways, this sums up the attitude of the English to Switzerland. To them, Switzerland means postcards of the alps, hillsides covered in Spring flowers, snow, ski-ing, more ski-ing and après-ski-ing. If the English are ignorant of what it is really like, they are at least prepared to be taken in by charming ideas of what they want it to be.

THESE VEHICLES



TRAVEL TWICE MONTHLY TO AND FROM SWITZERLAND AND ENGLAND

Providing DOOR TO DOOR SERVICES
with vans specially equipped to carry

- Household Removals. — Exhibition Goods.
- Works of Art. — Machinery.

For full information contact

In Switzerland

Kerhli + Oeler,
3001 Berne,
Nachf. A. Oeler,
Bubenberplatz 9.
Tel. 031 22 00 22.

In England

Neale & Wilkinson Ltd.,
1 and 2 Rangoon Street,
London, E.C.3.

Tel. 01-480 6351. Ext. 54 or 58.



Swiss Life

INSURANCE AND PENSION COMPANY
(Incorporated with limited liability in Zurich Switzerland)

Mutual Company—Established 1857

**ASSETS EXCEED
£500 MILLIONS**

24 Cheapside, London E.C.2.
Telephone: 01-236 3171

Head Office: SCHWEIZERISCHE LEBENSVERSICHERUNGS-UND RENTENANSTALT, ZURICH.

RENTENANSTALT

specialises in Pension Plans for
International Companies with the

MASTER COVER CONTRACT

and offers in Great Britain all types of
life assurance and annuities.

30 Exchange Street East, Liverpool L2 3QB
Telephone: 051-236 6712