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RISE IN SWISS LIVING COSTS CONTINUE TO DROP

SWISS EVENTS

According to the Swiss Economic Research Commission, several signs would seem to suggest that the slowing up in the rise in consumer prices in Switzerland might continue during the next few months. These signs are visible in particular in the past and future evolution of the foodstuffs and raw materials markets, from the answers to a questionnaire sent out to retailers concerning prospects with regard to purchase prices, as well as from the fact that several plans to increase prices have been abandoned. The Commission considers that, between now and the end of the present year, the rate of rise in the cost of living calculated according to the consumer price index will be reduced to about 5%. (SODT)

Fuel and medical costs

The Swiss index of consumer prices (September 1966 = 100) rose by 0.4 per cent to 164.5 points in September due mainly to higher prices for heat, electricity as well as medical and personal care. This raised the consumer price level in late September 1975 5.4 per cent above the level registered one year earlier (August 1975: + 6.7 per cent). Excluding last year's drop in the price of heating oil and gasoline, the advance came to 5.8 per cent over the past 12 months.

The wholesale price index, which reflects the price trends of raw materials, semi-manufactured goods and consumer goods at the intermediate level, dropped in September by 0.7 per cent to 146.8 points (1963 = 100). This means that the price index for imported goods has edged off by 0.4 per cent since the end of August 1975, while wholesale prices for domestically produced goods moved down 1.5 per cent. The price level measured in terms of the wholesale price index has declined by 5.5 per cent since late September 1974; in the period from August 1974 through August 1975 it went down 3.6 per cent. The wholesale price index for domestic goods dropped by 2.1 per cent between September 1974 and September 1975, while prices for foreign goods fell 12.8 per cent in the same time span.

Swiss Price Indexes

Prices/Costs	Sept. 1974	Aug. 1975	Sept. 1975
Consumer Prices			
<i>Old Index: August 1939 = 100</i>	352.6	370.3	371.6
<i>New Index: Sept. 1966 = 100</i>	156.1	163.9	164.5
Food	147.5	152.3	151.6
Beverages and tobacco	147.0	149.4	149.4
Apparel	149.7	154.8	155.5
Rent	177.0	196.1	196.1
Heat and utilities	200.0	200.2	208.0
Household furnishings and household operation	133.9	139.1	140.6
Transportation	154.5	160.9	160.8
Medical and personal care	158.0	170.9	172.7
Education and recreation	141.8	151.2	151.2
Wholesale Prices			
<i>Overall index: 1963 = 100</i>	155.3	147.9	146.8
Domestic goods	150.7	148.1	147.5
Import goods	166.3	147.2	145.0
Construction Costs			
<i>Zürich construction cost</i>	1.10.1973 = 161.0	1.4.1974 = 175.0	
<i>index (10/1/1966 = 100)</i>	1.10.1974 = 172.2	1.4.1975 = 168.1	

DEBATE ON RADIO AND TV

The National Council has approved a draft Constitutional article on Radio and Television broadcasts. This draft will still have to be examined by the Council of States before it is ready to be submitted to the people. The idea is to establish all future legislation on broadcasting within the framework of an article in the Federal Constitution reasserting the principles of press freedom while containing the necessary safeguards to make sure that the beliefs and feelings of the public are respected.

The Article had been under discussion for several years. Two factors have increased its possible relevance: Technological progress allows for closed circuit television and the possibility of several local stations holding broadcasting licences. At present, only the Swiss Broadcasting Organisation (SSR) holds such a licence. Secondly, journalists working mainly for German-speaking television have come under increasing criticism for allegedly slanting the news

to the left. A constant debate is being pursued on this issue in Switzerland, and its importance was reflected by the prolonged discussions that took place in the National Council over a clause of the proposed Article stipulating that the licensed broadcasting organisation should be completely autonomous with regard to the authorities, but responsible for the content of their programmes.

The Socialists fought hard to vindicate total freedom for broadcasters and producers, claiming that they should be free from all the outside influence being exerted on the SSR. The two Socialist members of the Federal Council, Mr. Pierre Graber (Political Department) and Willy Ritschard (Transports and Communications) attempted in vain to make their party toe the Government line. But the Socialists were defeated at the end of a lengthy debate, and responsibility for the content of broadcasts will remain with the licensed organisation

WCC TAKES EMERGENCY ACTION TO BALANCE 1976 GENERAL BUDGET

The World Council of Churches has ordered "drastic and immediate" cuts in the organisation's General Budget to help meet an anticipated 1976 shortfall of Sw.Fr. 2,600,000.

WCC General Secretary, Dr. Philip A. Potter, revealed the extraordinary measures in a special letter to the 271 member churches, in which he urged delegates to the Assembly to give special attention to the relation between programme policies to be decided in Nairobi and their financing.

Full authorisation of the measures will have to come from the WCC Executive Committee, meeting immediately prior to the Assembly. Already approved are cuts in the budgets of the Departments of Communication and Faith and Order and the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs. In addition, a freeze of staff salary increases brings total fully approved cuts to Sw.Fr. 740,000.

Pending Executive Committee action are recommendations for finding alternative ways of financing the Ecumenical Institute at Bossey by 30th June, 1976, terminating contributions to the cost of the WCC's New York office,

and reducing the number of immediate post-Assembly meetings.

The total of the approved cuts in budgets and programmes together with recommended actions amounts to approximately Sw.Fr. 1,500,000. The balance of the Sw.Fr. 2.6 million will come from reserves, real estate sales, and a special grant.

The World Council's total financial transactions are spread over seven budgets. Six of these — in a reasonably healthy condition and not facing the same difficulties as the General Budget — cover the administration and programmes of Inter-Church Aid, World Mission, the office of Education, the Development Commission, the Christian Medical Commission and the Theological Education Fund. Their sources are primarily mission boards and service and other specialised agencies within the churches.

The General Budget which is financed with basic support from the central treasuries of member churches was to have been Sw.Fr. 8,200,000 in 1976, but foreseeable income was only Sw.Fr. 5,600,000. Dependent on the General Budget are the General Secretariat, the New York office, major

meetings, Faith and Order, Church and Society, Renewal, Laity, Bossey and various segments of other programmes and activities such as the Programme to Combat Racism, the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs, Communication, Finance and Central Services.

The WCC's financial difficulties have been caused by the continuous world monetary crisis and the attendant decline in the value of most currencies in terms of Swiss Francs as well as the increased rate of inflation.

Despite grave financial setbacks in their own operations, most member churches have increased their own contributions since 1968; those in countries other than the United States and West Germany increased by two-thirds; member churches in the United States gave 16 per cent more and the Evangelical Church in Germany 155 per cent between 1968 and 1974, bringing contributions from the latter up to almost as much as from the US member churches. But, while US contributions increased 16 per cent in dollar amount, the Swiss Franc value dropped by 32 per cent because of the fallen exchange rate.



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Separatists on the rampage in Jura

The Jura's worst ever demonstrations shook the town of Moutier at the beginning of September. Seventeen people were wounded, some of them seriously at the end of several hours of battle between Separatist demonstrators and Grenadiers from the Bernese police. Four hundred of the latter were deployed in the town and fought against a Separatist mob in key sectors of the town, namely at the Hotel de la Gare, which served as the Separatists Headquarters, and the Town Hall. The fighting started on a Sunday afternoon and continued until 3 am on Monday. Damages to cars and to property ran into tens of thousands of francs. The homes of two prominent pro-Bernese members of the "Force Démocratique" movement were ransacked. A journalist was dragged out of a car driven by a Separatist and beaten up by the Grenadiers.

In all 226 demonstrators were arrested. Only 47 of them came from Moutier, which decided recently to remain in Canton Berne by the barest majority. All the others came from the North of the Jura. The Police took a great many implements, such as petrol bombs, bicycle chains and stones from the Separatist Headquarters. One man was charged with possessing explosives.

The Separatists, who now refer to themselves as "autonomistes", the word used in French for the separatist movements in the Basque area of Spain and in Corsica, accused the Grenadiers of brutality.

"When the germanic grenadiers from the old canton enter into the Jura, they are considered as imperialist aggressors and treated accordingly. The events which led to the troubles in Moutier clearly show that the Bernese power was entirely responsible and that it should therefore pay for the consequences of this intervention".

The communiqué of the Rassemblement Jurassien also accused the Bernese police of having been passive in the face of anti-Separatist action by "Force Démocratique" militants at the village of Court. The Rassemblement claimed that the police had done nothing to prevent these activists from ransacking a restaurant owned by a Separatist and from damaging the cars of Separatists trying to drive to Moutier for the demonstration that was planned there.

These events, which took place on Sunday afternoon, greatly raised tempers among the Separatists assembled in Moutier. When the Grenadiers attacked the Hotel de la Gare, the situation had become beyond control.

The Rassemblement accused the Grenadiers of moving into the Hotel without provocation and without a warrant. The authorities claimed that the Separatists had already begun to cause

trouble by that time and thus justified the Grenadiers' action with or without a warrant.

These events stand out against the atmosphere of conformism and peaceful contentment which has been a hallmark of Switzerland. A growing part of the population has apparently seized on a cause, the Jura, to "break loose". It is to be hoped that the Moutier demonstration will activate the lengthy constitutional process by which Northern Jura will become a new Canton.

Plea from journalists

MOUTIER. Swiss journalists have appealed to police and public to allow them to "carry out their work with full freedom", following violent clashes involving newsmen, demonstrators and police in the French-speaking Jura region of the country.

A local branch of the Swiss Journalists' Association claims that some of its members were "attacked and maltreated" during demonstrations this month in the town of Moutier over the future of the Jura region — one of Switzerland's most explosive political issues.

The violence erupted within hours of the local electorate narrowly voting to remain part of the predominantly German-speaking Canton of Berne, in defiance of a call by separatists that they should join a new French-speaking Canton.

Jura journalists claim that although they wore Press armbands and produced official Press cards, they were maltreated by police, attacked by some demonstrators "and prevented from carrying out their activities".

One journalist, reporter Jean-Pierre Girod of the neutralist Jura newspaper *Le Democrate*, claims that while trying to return to his office on the evening of the demonstrations, he was ordered out of his car by police, hit by truncheons, injured in the eye when his glasses were broken and forced to lay face down on the ground while he was searched. He alleges that although he was able to produce his Press card he was detained by police until 7 o'clock the following morning.

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Call to end hunting

Eighty-two airlines have now announced their support for World Wildlife Fund resolutions on nature conservation.

The International Air Transport Association has recommended the resolutions to all its member-airlines and the International Air Carrier Association — representing charter airlines — has unanimously accepted them.

The Swiss-based Fund's resolutions call on airlines "to abjure the promotion of hunting of endangered species and to accept a commitment for the conservation of nature". They also call on carriers "not to transport wildlife of wildlife products as freight in contravention of national bans or of the provisions of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora".

INTERNATIONAL TREATIES

The National Council has voted a new law on the so-called optional referendum which can be called whenever Switzerland concludes an international treaty. It will henceforth be possible for the people to ratify an international treaty by a referendum when the treaty is valid for an indefinite period and cannot be renounced; or when such a treaty involves an alteration of Swiss laws.

HOTEL-KEEPERS FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD TRAINED IN LAUSANNE

Founded in 1893, the Lausanne Hotel School, the first institution of its kind in the world, has just moved into the new complex of buildings it had built for itself on the heights overlooking this town on the Lake of Geneva.

In the 3½ year course, combining theory and practice, the Lausanne Hotel School prepares its students to manage single-handed an establishment with a restaurant. So far, nearly eighteen thousand students, from some eighty countries, have passed through the school in Lausanne where they have been instructed in the most modern management methods and let into the secrets of Switzerland's renowned hotel-keeping tradition.

But the Lausanne Hotel School owes its reputation not only to the high standard of its graduates; for many years, it has assisted in the foundation of hotel-keeping schools all over the world and co-operated in the training of their teaching staff. In particular, it sponsors the hotel-keeping schools in Nairobi and Bandung.