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News from Switzerland

IS EMIGRATION A LOSS OR A GAIN?

Present-day emigration often is described in Switzerland as a modern version of the oldtime search for greener pastures. At the 1969 Convention of Swiss People Living Abroad, Federal Councillor Dr Hans Schaffner (who, incidentally, is leaving the government at the end of 1969 at his own request) discussed the subject whether emigration meant a gain or a loss for Switzerland's general wellbeing. Our economy, according to the speaker, was grateful for every opportunity afforded young Swiss people by a temporary stay abroad for work or education. These experiences gathered abroad could only be of benefit. Switzerland's prosperity was to a large extent due to our worldwide connections and the Swiss living abroad were an important base.

In spite of her small territory Switzerland today was one of the wealthiest countries on this earth. Since the end of World War II no Swiss citizen had been forced to leave his country for economic reasons. Nowadays the decisive reasons for emigration were the urge to broaden one's professional knowledge, to improve one's command of foreign languages and to widen one's spiritual horizons by gaining personal experiences of foreign countries, foreign customs and manners. (snto)

"FORUM OF SWITZERLAND" — A MEETING PLACE IN LONDON

The message of the Federal Council to the Swiss Federal Parliament regarding a federal subsidy toward the "Forum of Switzerland" in London mentions among other points that it is located in the heart of London, at Leicester Square, in the 17-floor building of the Swiss Centre which owes its existence to the undaunted efforts of private industry as well as to the members of the remarkable Swiss colony. In the basement there are four restaurants with Swiss ambience which are daily visited by about 3000 guests while at street level we have information halls and offices of the Swiss Bank Corporation, the Swiss National Tourist Office and Swissair. Next to them are shops which sell Swiss merchandise such as shoes, watches, cheese, chocolate, wines, canned goods, textiles, etc.

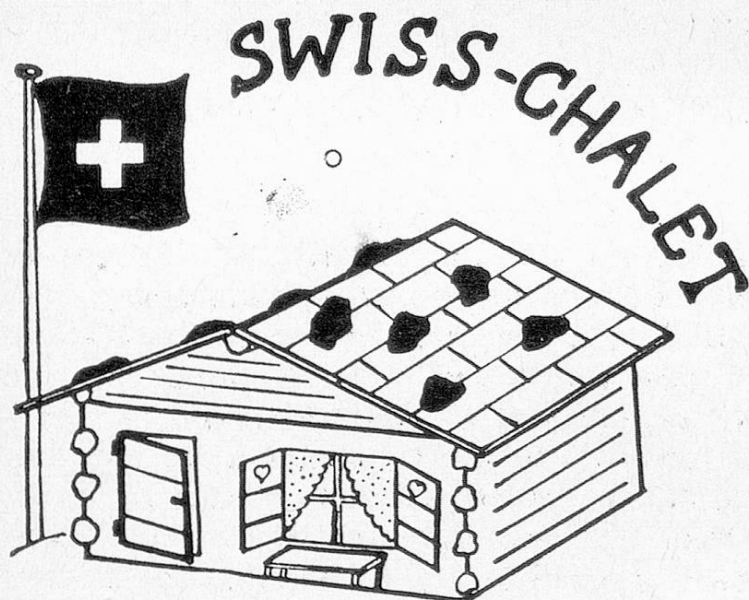
In order that the Swiss Centre may truly live up to its name the cultural sphere should also take its proper place. Thus a "Forum of Switzerland" is envisaged which should make possible the arrangement of cultural, social and economic events so that these various fields may harmoniously complement each other.

A BIG NEW FOODSTUFFS FIRM IN EUROPE

In order to cope with the ever-growing competition on the world foodstuffs market, two Swiss firms, Ursina Co. Ltd. and Interfranck Co. Ltd., have just formed a merger. It is a question of multinational reorganisation within Europe, on a Swiss base. With a turnover of 1 billion Swiss francs (US\$232.5 million), Ursina was 25th in the world ranking for foodstuffs firms. This company has production centres and sales companies in several European countries, as well as in North Africa, Australia, Venezuela and Siam. In addition to traditional products (butter, cheeses, fresh produce), the Ursina range comprises baby-foods, confectionery, canned fruits and vegetables as well as wines.

Interfranck's manufacturing programme (turnover: S.Fr. 450 million, i.e. US\$104 million) comprises coffee based products, quality groceries, mineral waters and fruit juices, paints, dyes, etc. Interfranck's activity also includes banking institutes, in particular the Commercial Bank in Zurich.

The merger between Ursina and Interfranck was made simpler by the fact that the two companies ideally complete each other with regard to their products and the various national markets to which they cater. Ursina-Franck Co. Ltd., with its main office in Berne and a turnover of 1.45 billion francs (US\$337.2 million) will be the fifth biggest European food concern. (osec)



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SWITZERLANDS GNP: + 7.6% IN 1968

Switzerland's nominal gross national product, at market price, amounts to 70,400 million francs (US\$16,370 million) for 1968, which represents an increase of 7.6% compared with the previous year. The rate of growth was slightly lower in 1967: 6.5%. Generally speaking, the results for 1968 confirm that the Swiss economy is going through a new stage of expansion, the fifth in fact since the end of the second world war. The fourth post-war cycle, which started in 1959, came to an end in 1967, a year marked by the biggest slowing up of the situation since 1958.

The new speeding up of the growth is to a large extent due to the evolution on foreign markets. Owing to the marked improvement in international trade, the rate of increase in sales of goods and services abroad has almost doubled. The same is true of the revenues from abroad. On the other hand, domestic demand remaining moderate at first, imports have advanced only slightly compared with 1967. (osec)

"SUMMER BIRDS" IN WINTERTIME

After having been guests at the "Corn House" in Baden, during the month of February thousands of the most beautiful butterflies and beetles from five continents will be shown in Davos in the full splendor of their colours and shapes. Among them are winged butterflies with birdlike wings and rare beetles from New Guinea, shimmering butterflies from the Brazilian bush, picturesque cicadas from the jungles of Malaya, colourful giant locust from South America and the most beautiful butterflies — or "summer birds" as they are called in dialect — from our region as well as the world's largest butterflies with a wingspan of 24 cm (about 9½ inches). These specimens in magnificent colours come from the private collection of Mr Clemens Rimoldi of Stäfa (Zurich) and are exhibited in more than 130 showcases. (snto)

NEW BANKING SERVICE: THE SWISS CHEQUE

With a view to developing payments trade without resorting to cash, Swiss banks have proceeded with the creation of a standard credit card known as the Swiss Cheque. The new credit card is both proof of identity and a guarantee; possession of one signifies that the bank guarantees the payment of cheques (made out on the official bank forms) up to a maximum of Fr. 300. Such cheques will be honoured without any enquiries having to be made.

This means of replacing cash is not limited to Switzerland. In fact, the banks of certain European countries, like Germany, Austria, the Benelux and Italy, have also introduced the credit card system and set up a joint organisation known as the Euro-cheque system, which places the credit card on a European scale; the Swiss Cheque also forms part of this scheme. (osec)

CARNIVAL IN SWITZERLAND

The year's shortest month has to resist two attacks by carnival revelers. First they boisterously play in those regions where once upon a time Carnival Night used to precede a period of strict fasting. Thus a frolicsome carnival romp is announced in Central Switzerland (in Lucerne, Zug, Brunnen and elsewhere) as well as at the hot spring resort of Baden, at Solothurn and other places fond of gaiety. In the Italian-speaking Southern Swiss Canton of Ticino hot risotto and local wine are served free to allcomers on the outdoor squares of Bellinzona, Lugano, Locarno and Ascona, a particularly inviting custom.

One should not forget to mention those regions where Carnival is celebrated according to the "old calendar". First of all we are attracted by the magnificent four-hour processions at Basle on February 16 and 18. In Zurich at the two Artists' Masked Balls on February 14 and 16 at the splendidly decorated Congress House one may meet the largest assembly of fantastically masked figures, what with prizes for the greatest originality as an added incentive. And something else: Is it a sheer coincidence that an African ballet visited Switzerland just at this time of the year when everybody is pleasure-minded and looking for variety? These guest performances took place in Baden on February 4, in Langenthal on February 5, on February 11 in Aarau and on February 12 in La Chaux-de-Fonds. (snto)

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SWISS FIRM PROVIDES LOAN FOR NEW SPORTS RESORT IN THE FRENCH PYRENEES

Willy Buhler SA, a Swiss firm based in Berne, has provided the equipment and a loan of 5 million N.F. (US\$872,600) for a new winter sports resort in Saint-Pierre-del-Forcats, in the French Pyrenees. The resort will have nearly 5000 beds, parking space for 800 cars and 11 km. of ski runs with three ski-lifts being prepared for the enjoyment of skiers and tourists. (osec)

★ NEWS IN BRIEF

The Bernina Pass Road will again be kept open this winter for motorised traffic by the communities of Poschiavo and Brusio. Several critical spots on this road were improved last summer. The snow removal services improved their old snow ploughs and added new equipment.

For the first time a combined special offer will be made by the Hotel Berninahospiz and the Lagalp Aerial Cableway. It will be called "Skiing Week Bernina January-February 1970".

Just as in 1929 the traditional International Automobile Show 1970 in Geneva will take place in two parts. The first, from January 31 to February 8, 1970, presented motor vehicles for various uses and demonstrated the latest methods of moving materials, while from March 12 to 22, 1970, passenger cars and chassis will be shown.

The Cantonal Art Museum at Lausanne will show from January 26 to March 8 a programmed exhibition called "Structures et techniques modernes" as a second event of an experimental museum which aims at reaching the latest trends in artistic creativeness.

In Locarno an indoor swimming pool is now under construction at the Lido beach. It is due to be opened in June, 1970. At the same time the Lido's green lawn area will be increased by 3000 m² (about 32,295 square feet) and a new restaurant is being added. After the inauguration of the new indoor swimming pool the Lido is to remain open all year round.

Zofingen, the romantic town in the canton of Aargau which has given its name to an ancient honorable students' fraternity will next August be host to the convention of Swiss Living Abroad.

For the first time since its inception Zurich's Wine Exhibition aboard seven ships at the Bürkliplatz pier was visited by more than 50,000 people, 50,951 to be exact.

Berne's movie fans may during their lunch hour pre-taste a special "film menu". One of the city's cinemas shows free of charge about a dozen previews of the moving pictures currently shown as well as those to come. (snto)

FABULOUS CREATURES DANCING ON THE RHINE

On January 20 it is worthwhile to witness the unique custom of the "Bird Griffin". Although it breathes the spirit of Basle, it belongs to the right bank of the river, a section of the city called Kleinbasel which is proud of this tradition. The three "signs of honour of Kleinbasel" present themselves with almost mythological splendor. They are the bearers of the coat of arms of Kleinbasel's oldest guilds, called "Zur Hären" ("The Herring"), "Zum Rebhaus" ("The Wine House") and "Zum Greifen" ("The Griffin"). They appear on this occasion in supernatural dimensions as "The Wild Man" with an uprooted fir tree, as an equally fierce "Lion" and as the "Bird Griffin" with a metallic bird's mask.

The festival starts before lunchtime as "The Wild Man" takes a trip on the Rhine and later is welcomed by the two other figures after a proper twirling of drums and cracking of mortars. On the middle one of the Rhine Bridges and in the roads and streets of Kleinbasel these three powerful figures perform their characteristic dances to the special rhythm of drums, accompanied by people soliciting alms. (snto)

GROUP TRAVEL

The Society is organising TWO Group Travels each for the years 1970 and 1971. Persons interested in taking part are asked to contact the Secretary, Mrs R. Messmer, 15 Fortification Road, Wellington, to whom **ALL applications must be addressed**. Tour No. 1 leaves around May and Tour No. 2 around August. Each tour lasts approximately 3 months.

Tour No. 1 (leaving approx. May each year): **Go to Switzerland the quick and cheap way!** (Use your money in Switzerland!)
Route: Auckland - Sydney - Bangkok (2 days) - Beirut - Athens Zurich; 8-12 weeks in Switzerland. Zurich - Karachi - Bombay Bangkok - Hong Kong (stopover) - Brisbane - Sydney - Auckland.
Cost: Approx. \$899.00

Tour No. 2: For those that wish to see more and have more time and want to spend more on the trip (leaving around August).
Route: Auckland - Tahiti - Honolulu - San Francisco - Vancouver Toronto (Niagara Falls) - New York - Zurich.
Zurich - Athens - Bangkok - Hong Kong - Auckland.
Cost: Approx. \$1100.00

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