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The Swiss Observer

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NUCLEAR WEAPONS - THE SWISS ELECTORATE DECIDES

It is well known that Switzerland is keenly interested in the peaceful utilisation of atomic energy. It is the home of CERN (European Centre for Nuclear Research) at Meyrin (Geneva), it has its own atomic research establishment at Lucens, and there is a reactor research station at Wuerenlingen near Winterthur. Switzerland is a member of the International Atomic Energy organisation of the European Nuclear Energy Agency.

Last October there was a conference in Zurich for the study of the use of nuclear power. It was held by the Swiss Association for Atomic Energy and it discussed the present state of nuclear power and its future, as well as the utilisation of other sources of energy.

In January, the Bernese Power Works organised an exhibition on nuclear physics and their use in chemistry, biology, medicine, agriculture and engineering, as well as in the production of fuel.

In February an agreement was signed in Berne between the National Society for the Furtherance of Industrial Atomic Production of Switzerland and the U.K. Atomic Energy Authority. According to this agreement a general exchange of information on the peaceful use of atomic energy as well as of specific information will take place. Sir Roger Makins signed for Great Britain and the former Federal Councillor Dr. h.c. Streuli for the Confederation.

In March the Federal Council in its message to Parliament asked it — to sanction $\frac{3}{4}$ million Francs as the Swiss contribution to the institute for atomic energy in Norway, a communal effort;

to ratify the revised agreement of 19th November of the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) regarding the communal project of a gas-cooled, high-temperature reactor ("Dragon") in Great Britain (Switzerland is involved to the amount of about four million Francs);

to empower the Federal Council to purchase eight new shares of "Eurochemic" to the value of Fr.1.72 millions.

"Suisatom" is the name of the organisation formed by the Swiss electricity works. They had a general meeting in March at which the progress of atomic research in Switzerland was discussed. With the rising demand for power, nuclear energy will play an important part in meeting the need.

Finally, the "Therm-Atom", an association formed by twenty-one Swiss firms interested in nuclear energy development, held its general meeting at Wuerenlingen on 9th May. It was stated that 160 qualified scientists were employed by "Therm-Atom" at the end of 1962, not counting auxiliary staff.

All this goes to show that Switzerland is well aware of the importance of nuclear development. There is concern about atomic warfare and it goes without saying that Switzerland does not want "the bomb". On 24th April, the world première took place of a full-length film, "Wähle das Leben" ("Choose Life"), which is an impressive documentary about the horrible effects of atomic warfare and the disastrous consequences of radioactive fall-out. The film is an independent Swiss venture and shows not only Erich Leiser's and his team's own pictures, but includes historic film strips from the archives of UNO, from the USA, Japan, France, etc. At the film première an appeal was launched urging disarmament. The producer maintains that it is not the first time that a small country asks a big question — perhaps it is the task of the small countries to call the big ones to a sense of proportion when it is a question of human life.

There is a pacifist organisation in Switzerland, the so-called "Council for Peace", and a movement against nuclear armament. As in other countries, there are marches and demonstrations. On Good Friday some 500 demonstrators started an Easter March on Geneva. It ended in a mass rally on the Place des Nations.

On 1st April 1962 the Swiss electorate rejected an Initiative, launched by the Socialists, which proposed that an article be added to the Federal Constitution prohibiting the use of nuclear weapons. The Federal Government and Parliament opposed that proposal. "At the time there was no question of adopting such weapons", "The Times" stated on 25th May this year, "but they did not want to be tied in the event of an emergency." The Swiss citizens upheld this by voting 537,138 against and 286,895 for it, with 15 Cantons and 6 Half-Cantons rejecting it.

Now the Socialists in Western Switzerland launched another Initiative: that in the case of atomic armaments it should be compulsory for Parliament's decision to be subjected to the popular vote (Referendum). This modification would fundamentally alter the responsibilities of Government, Parliament and electors. The motion was backed by 474 protestant pastors whose attitude to nuclear weapons was no doubt motivated by different reasons from those of the Socialist Party.

The Federal Council recommended rejection of this Initiative and there were extensive debates in Parliament before the end of the year. The Federal Council maintained that the question whether the Swiss army would ever have to be issued with atomic weapons was a highly technical military question and it was not compatible with the responsibility of the country's defence to leave it to a general vote, apart from the fact that the supply of atomic weapons might possibly be a question of vital secrecy.

On Sunday, 26th May, the electorate had to vote on this Initiative. The proposal was decisively defeated by 450,488 against and 273,355 for.

"The Times" said on the morning after polling day that "Switzerland is thought to be the only country in which the people are given a chance to decide directly whether they believe their armed forces should have nuclear arms". The people decided in 1962 that they should, and they have now left the final decision to Parliament.

		RESULT	Yes	No	Participation
Zurich	...	...	58,103	99,707	—
Berne	...	...	44,304	60,901	41%
Lucerne	...	...	4,805	26,029	43.3%
Uri	...	...	1,241	5,129	74.4%
Schwyz	...	...	1,598	7,372	40%
Obwalden	...	...	168	2,454	40.11%
Nidwalden	...	...	455	2,630	50.7%
Glarus	...	...	1,529	3,920	52%
Zug	...	...	1,104	4,276	—
Fribourg	...	...	5,229	8,916	30.2%
Solothurn (Provisional)	...	...	7,622	18,098	47.2%
Baselstadt	...	...	11,717	10,829	33.5%
Baselland	...	...	7,789	9,831	42%
Schaffhausen	...	...	5,505	7,878	—
Appenzell Ar	...	...	1,894	6,262	—
Appenzell Ir	...	...	122	1,274	37.7%
St. Gall	...	...	13,319	37,304	52%
Grisons (2 small communes missing)	...	...	3,781	14,593	—
Aargau	...	...	23,024	46,392	74.6%
Thurgau	...	...	6,895	20,783	66%
Ticino	...	...	9,569	7,553	36%
Vaud (3 small communes missing)	...	...	22,531	15,532	31%
Valais	...	...	8,423	16,444	50%
Neuchâtel	...	...	13,346	5,859	46%
Geneva	...	...	19,282	10,522	—
Total	...	273,355	450,488		

Accepting Cantons: 41
Rejecting Cantons: 17½
Participation: 47.75%

(Based on reports received by courtesy of the Agence Télégraphique Suisse.)

MUSIC AT MONTREUX

Montreux and Vevey on the lovely shores of Lake Geneva rank among the leading music festival towns in Europe. This year's programme for the "September Musical" (1st to 26th September) is all set and features twelve symphony concerts by the National Philharmonic Orchestra of Warsaw, the Orchestre de la Suisse Romande and the Orchestre National de Paris. Besides a Polish and a Swiss chorus, music lovers will be able to hear famous soloists such as Alexander Brailowsky, Zino Francescatti, Arthur Rubinstein, Isaac Stern, Nathan Milstein, Pierre Fournier, Robert Casadesus and Leonid Kogan. Leading the orchestras will be Witwold Rowicki, Paul Klecki, William Steinberg, Ernest Ansermet, Istvan Kertesz, Antal Dorati, Dean Dixon, Wolfgang Sawallisch and Stanislaw Skrowaczewski.

[S.N.T.O.]

IT HAPPENED IN CENTRAL SWITZERLAND

URI

The accounts for 1962 of the Canton of Uri showed an increase of income over expenditure of Fr.87,139.— (total income Fr.15,009,987.—). The Cantonal authorities have asked for a thorough examination of all water supplies of drinking water, all reservoirs and watermains, so that no mishap similar to the catastrophe of Zermatt would surprise Uri.

The Uri electorate had to vote on the programme of road building and it accepted a credit of 22 million francs by 4,534 to 943 votes. Three weeks later the citizens accepted the proposed fire-police bill and elected a new Cantonal Councillor in the person of Landrat Anton Arnold, Buerglen, who will replace the resigning Councillor Alois Mueller.

According to the Cantonal Constitution the Uri Parliament consists of one representative for every 500 Swiss inhabitants. Based on the census of 1950, the number amounted to 54 "Landräte". According to the last census of 1960 the population has increased and seven new representatives will have to be elected when the Cantonal Parliament is renewed in 1964.

From 5th to 21st May the Diocesan Bishop of Chur was on visit in Uri to give the sacrament of confirmation all over the Canton.

The last week-end in May the Swiss retail traders met at Altdorf and Fluelen for their annual meeting.

When digging near the mouth of the Seewern (Lauerzersee) a workman found a well-preserved sword which is believed to date back to the Battle of Morgarten in 1315. [A.T.S.]

Beautifully hand-carved neck and wrist rings in pure gold featuring intricate relief images of semi-animal heads are now on exhibit at the Swiss National Museum in Zurich. These masterpieces of Celtic goldsmiths dating back some 2,300 years had been founded at Erstfeld, on the St. Gotthard rail line in Uri, and are described as Europe's most precious archaeological discovery in the last three decades. It is believed that a merchant using the ancient North-South Alpine mule-trail either lost or buried the treasure here. Two Italian construction workers, who received a rich finder's reward, had unearthed it from a depth of thirty feet while operating a dredger on the site of a barrage which is being built at Erstfeld to protect the Reuss valley against the threat of the avalanches from the steep mountainside. The treasure — the most important of its kind found in Switzerland since 1906 — consists of four neck-rings and three bracelets, all unused, which may indicate that the Celtic merchant fell victim to one of the prehistoric earthslides or avalanches.

[S.N.T.O.]

SCHWYZ

The Cantonal Council of Schwyz consists today of 105 members, but proportionately to the number of citizens it should be increased to 119. This is considered too high and the Council have proposed to limit the Cantonal Parliament to 100. The Council decided to agree to the proposed increase in the Canton's subsidy to the Technical College of Lucerne. This will mean Fr.30,000.— p.a. (Fr.8,000.— more than hitherto).