

It happened in the Cantons of Fribourg and Neuchâtel

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are really anxious to represent their country well should be given all the support. It was suggested that the presentation of Switzerland should be the theme of the next Assembly in August 1965. It was hoped to have this in Solothurn, but unfortunately, there is not enough hotel accommodation, and another venue will have to be found.

Another subject discussed was the anticipated "withholding tax". There, too, the Commission's Executive and the Secretariat are taking steps to safeguard the interest of the Swiss abroad, and ways and means are being investigated to get an improvement. They will also defend the "savings book privilege".

It was announced that the book for the young Swiss was ready — please see last issue of the "Swiss Observer" for details — and that there was now a special badge for the Swiss abroad.

The Swiss schools abroad were mentioned, and it was stated that there were new schools in several parts of the world, and that it was hoped to improve them now that

the Confederation had made special provisions under the new vocational training Bill. Building grants could now be as much as 100%. In this connection it might be interesting to mention an announcement which was in "The Times" on 24th September that there were plans to open a German school in London for about eighty to a hundred children, financed by the German government. "Its chief purpose will be to serve the needs of the growing German community in London, but Austrian and Swiss children will also be admitted."

The meeting of the Commission of the Swiss Abroad showed once again that its members take their mandate seriously. The Organisation of the Swiss Abroad under the patronage of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique has achieved a status of importance, all the more weighty because it is a private organisation and can consequently represent our interests with more emphasis and success than an official organisation. We owe it our full support and gratitude.

Mariann.

IT HAPPENED IN THE CANTONS OF FRIBOURG AND NEUCHÂTEL

FRIBOURG

Fribourg is the chief centre of Catholic culture in French-speaking Switzerland. "The Times", in an article on 1st August, says that Ruskin described it as the most picturesque town in all Switzerland.

"It is on the language (French-German) frontier but it is always claimed by the Suisse Romande. The cathedral of St. Nicolas has a world-famous organ. The ancient Bourg surrounds the cathedral; it is still the seat of the authorities and there are quaint, gabled buildings and beautiful Patrician houses which are the traditional living quarters of the old aristocracy of Fribourg. The Ville-Basse is the lower town on the green slopes by the river, where live the craftsmen and the small traders. The people here are mainly German-speaking.

"There are many magnificent things to be seen in this city standing on its rocky bluff, surrounded on three sides by the river Sarine. But to the people of Fribourg there is nothing more famous than the great lime tree standing in front of the City Hall, supported by stone pillars. Tradition says that this tree sprang from a twig planted after the battle of Morat. A young Fribourg soldier arrived in the city straight from the battlefield carrying a twig, and with his last breath cried 'Victory'. He fell dead from loss of blood and the lime tree blossomed where he fell."

This old town is to be preserved. A new movement "Pro Fribourg" under the chairmanship of the historian and writer Gonzague de Reynold, has undertaken to study the problems, and it is hoped to integrate the old parts of the town into modern life without spoiling what is valuable.

At the same time, modern buildings are going up, too. There is to be a large new hotel on the Grands-Places, new administrative buildings near the station, subsidised flats, a new staff house for the estate of Grangeneuve and an agricultural domestic science college.

In the spring of 1963, the cantonal Parliament rejected an Initiative against land speculation. The citizens complained to the Federal Tribunal and won their case. A parliamentary commission has been working out measures which will help to prevent land speculation and allow the Initiative to be withdrawn.

In February there was an "Open Factory" week which enabled school children and members of the public to see twenty-five Fribourg factories. There has been a gratifying economic development in the Canton. The Commune of St. Aubin in the Broye valley (where the chief crop is tobacco) has agreed to sell a large area of land to Geigy A.G. of Basle, who intend to construct a research farm and laboratories, and the citizens of St. Aubin are assured of economic development of their Commune.

There is to be a temporary tax to pay for a water purification plant over the next twenty years. In spring, the traditional sale of wine of the "Staatskellerei" took place — they had recently received a gold medal in the competition arranged by the EXPO. The International Federation of Tobacco Producers and Planters chose Fribourg for their ninth congress.

The University of Fribourg now has a students' council for which the students elected the members for the first time in June. There are forty-one members, amongst them eight foreigners. In all the R.C. churches in Switzerland, there is a collection for Fribourg University on the Federal Day of Prayer, which amounts to over one million francs. At the end of May, the University celebrated the 600th anniversary of the University of Cracow with whom there are many bonds. In July, there was an international pedagogical seminar, organised by the UNESCO Institute on Educational Science in Hamburg, in collaboration with the Swiss UNESCO Commission and the "Fraternité Mondiale" in Geneva. At the Collège St. Michel, it will now be possible to follow a course of modern languages and Latin (hitherto only Latin/natural sciences or Latin/Greek). Co-operation between the German- and the French-speaking communities in the Canton has been intensified.

"The Times" in the above-mentioned article said:

"Those who love little things will take Morat straight to their hearts. It is small and enchanting: a real fairy story city enclosed by battlements and turrets. Morat is very precious to the Swiss; it was here that in 1476 their tiny forces defeated the immense armies of Charles the Bold of Burgundy. Red water lilies grow on the lake to this day and are still called "Burgundy Blood".

"Morat really consists of one long and lovely street. One passes through the thirteenth-century gateways at either end and finds oneself in another world. Cobble pavements, carved shutters, arcades and oriel windows, and a wealth of flowers cascading from every balcony — the kind of thing every traveller dreams about and never expects to see."

But Murten, too, is faced with problems: water supply modernisation, construction of a harbour, renovation of the Town Hall and of the District Court, erection of a communal aerial in order to protect the old town, road construction and school building, traffic. All advertising is prohibited in the inner town. Owing to the severe frost damage of the winter 1962/3, Murten was not in a position to hold its usual wine auction this spring. As regards area, that of Wistenlach (Vully) was hit by frost and hail more severely than any other part of Switzerland.

In June, the traditional "Murtenschiesen" took place. On 18th September, the power station of Schiffenen was opened. The Schiffenen lake is the twenty-ninth of Switzerland's artificial lakes used for the storage of water. It is on the Sarine between Fribourg and Laupen. Finally, on 23rd September, the congress of the Economic Youth Parliament of Switzerland took place at Murten and in Fribourg.

To continue with "The Times":

"A famous writer has said that the motorist who would leave this district without paying a visit to Gruyères would think nothing of leaving Athens without seeing the Acropolis, Gruyères is a medieval gem; a city set on a rocky crag crowned by a curtain wall. The steep street enters the city through a massive stone gateway and leads to the castle and the Salle des Chevaliers with its remarkable collection of armour.

"No less delightful than the village is the Gruyère countryside: a lonely, pastoral district where cheese-makers and cowherds are part of the everyday scene."

It is not surprising, therefore, with so many visitors coming to Gruyères, most of them motorised, that there is great traffic congestion. For the time being, cars have been prohibited in the main street and no parking is allowed on Sunday from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Bulle has further increased its inhabitants to 6,744, amongst whom are 646 foreigners. The district hospital of Saanen will have to be enlarged. The Reformed school of Flamatt will be put on an equal footing with the R.C. school of Wuennwil to whose political Commune Flamatt belongs.

Unfortunately, there is also bad news of the Canton of Fribourg. After a murder at Tafers in 1962 and one at Murten last year, there was another one in Fribourg in February. There were several bad fires, a Piper aeroplane crashed near Gruyères, and there was an explosion at Marly.

There is no news to hand from Romont, but let us finish with "The Times" description: "Romont is a soothing, sleepy little town, composed of two parallel streets. It looks down in safe seclusion from its ramparts on to the busy road running by beneath." *Bon voyage!*

NEUCHÂTEL

On 11th September, Neuchâtel celebrated a double jubilee. 150 years ago the Canton joined the Confederation, and 750 years ago, the citizens of the city of Neuchâtel received the freedom charter from Count Ulrich who ruled over Neuchâtel and its surroundings. For this double

jubilee as well as for the Neuchâtel Day at the EXPO, a special cantata called "Les Voix de la Forêt", with words by Marc Eigeldinger, Professor at Neuchâtel University, and music by Samuel Ducommun, music teacher and organist. The festivities were due to be held in spring, but on account of the EXPO they were postponed to coincide with the Neuchâtel Day.

A new Bill concerning the organisation of the communes was presented by the cantonal government to Parliament in May. The old one dated from March 1888 and needed revising. Three Communes Brot-Dessous (152 inhabitants), Vaumarcus-Vernéaz (157) and Engollon (76 inhabitants) are to be dissolved and incorporated in neighbouring communities. A number of village names are to be simplified: Marin for Marin-Epagnier, Wavre for Thielle-Wavre, Le Landeron for Landeron-Combes, Corcelles for Corcelles-Cormondrèche, Saint-Aubin for Saint-Aubin-Sauges and Vaumarcus-Vernéaz, Chézard for Chézard-Saint-Martin and Fenin for Fenin-Vilars-Saules-Engollon. The Commune President called "Syndic" in Vaud and Fribourg, is in future to be called "Maire".

The administration of Neuchâtel has introduced the five-day week. There will be tax reliefs for old people over 65. There are now five women members in the cantonal Parliament. There is a new political Party in the Canton, the "Parti d'Opposition Vérisane". This brings the total again to six, the Socialist "Nouvevle Gauche" had recently been dissolved.

In July, a PDA (Communist) Initiative regarding family allowances was defeated by the electorate and a counter-proposal by the Council of State accepted. The latter was declared void, however, as the absolute majority was not reached.

Tourism increased in the Canton in 1963, though there was a very slight decrease over the whole of Switzerland in the same period. The number of motor cars has increased to 30,980 in 1963, whereas motor cycles and bicycles have considerably gone down in numbers. Neuchâtel is to have traffic lights at major crossings. The question of a new theatre and a possible renovation of the Casino de la Rotonde will have to wait, as under the measures to curb the excessive economic boom these projects would not be considered.

Over one hundred chamois live in the district of Creux-du-Van. The grape harvest this year will result in an estimated total of 4 to 4.5 million litres of wine in the Canton of Neuchâtel.

Unfortunately, the lake of Neuchâtel was found to be polluted to such a degree that bathing had to be prohibited between Auvernier and the centre of the town. Young people and children are transported free of charge to the bathing establishment of Monruz.

The school building needs of Neuchâtel will require 66 million francs. Neuchâtel has also a shortage of teachers — several dozen jobs are open. All university and higher school fees have been dropped, and Neuchâtel's example is praised highly in other parts of the country. The only condition is that the students' parents are domiciled on cantonal territory. There is still a great shortage of students' digs and homes. In April, there was an international students' camp on the Chaumont, and about two hundred Swiss students of all denominations met at Vaumarcus in May.

There were "Quinzaines Culturelles" organised by La Chaux-de-Fonds and Le Locle, this year dedicated to Italy. There is a new committee for the protection of the mountains of the Neuchâtel Jura. La Chaux-de-Fonds is to have a new vocational training centre at a cost of five

million francs. The Natural-History Museum has been enlarged, and there will be an industrial centre for invalids. A tunnel has been constructed so that cattle may pass easily under the road. The art museum has celebrated its hundredth anniversary.

La Chaux-de-Fonds and Le Locle have now technical courses in nuclear science. The only other news from Le Locle is that thieves got away with over 1.2 million francs worth of watches after a raid on a factory in July.

From other Communes came the following news: at Cornaux a cement factory is being built. Savagnier (Val-de-Ruz) is to have a woman at the head of the Commune administration — the first Neuchâtel Commune in which a woman holds this office. The Val-de-Travers wants the Clusette road improved and has handed in a petition to that effect.

In a wood near Les Verrières a mushroom has been found measuring 50 cm. in diameter and weighing ten kilos. *Bon appétit!*

(Compiled from news received by courtesy of the Agence Télégraphique Suisse.)

AIRCRAFT ORDER CUT BY SWISS

M.P.s DEBATE "MIRAGE AFFAIR"

The Lower House of the Swiss Federal Parliament today approved the report of a committee which had inquired into the cost of buying French Mirage III fighter aircraft and had recommended that the number should be reduced from 100 to 57.

The House refused an additional credit of £48m. which had been sought for the purchase, and approved only a provisional credit of about £16,750,000 for completing the construction of the 57.

The affair of the Mirage fighters had its origin in 1961, when Parliament approved a credit of about £74m. for the purchase of 100. In April last, Parliament was asked for a new grant of £48m. as construction costs had increased and the electronic equipment of the fighters had to be brought up to date.

This additional amount caused some irritation throughout the country. The federal services concerned were openly accused of inefficiency, and the special committee was formed by both Houses of Parliament to inquire into the matter.

The committee's report said that the expenses involved had been miscalculated in 1961, that the additional expenses were inaccurate, and that all the costs of construction had increased. The report asserted that Parliament had been deliberately misled. The committee, therefore, suggested that the purchase of Mirage fighters be limited to 57 and that all the officials responsible for the errors should be dismissed.

In the debate on the report Mr. Paul Chaudet, Chief of the Military Department, did not deny mistakes, but insisted on the necessity of the Swiss Air Force having a sufficient number of modern fighters. He opposed the proposal to reduce the number of fighters.

(“The Times”, 24th September 1964.)

EXPO 1964

The following extracts are from a report reprinted from the German paper “Die Welt”.

Die Schweiz präsentiert ihre Visitenkarte “Expo 64”

... Die “Expo 64”, die alle 25 Jahre stattfindende Landesausstellung der Schweiz, zeigt wie der Schweizer geworden ist, wie er heute lebt und besonders, wie er sich seine Zukunft vorstellt.

Vier Jahre lang hat man an dieser Ausstellung gearbeitet. Die halbe Stadt Lausanne wurde umgegartnet und umgebaut. Den Genfer See hat man an einigen Ecken und Kanten zugeschüttet und an anderen ausgebuchtet.

... Eine unbeschreiblich schöne und bunte Landschaft zwischen dem Genfer See und den Weinbergen, gesprenkelt mit ein paar hundert bunten Hallen, mit Blumenfeldern und Seen, mit 43 Restaurants und Gaststätten, mit Lunapark, Kinderspielplätzen, “angenehm verrückten” Monumenten, einem Zirkus und einer Einschienenbahn, die über das ganze Gelände fährt und manchmal auch durch die Ausstellungshallen.

Die Schau kann nicht — und will nicht — mit irgendwelchen Weltausstellungen und internationalen Messen konkurrieren; sie ist eine sehr ernsthafte wie herrlich verspielte Demonstration eines Landes von Individualisten ...

Ich muss gestehen, dass meine Erwartungen weit übertroffen wurden. Zwei- bis dreimal die gesamte Einwohnerzahl des Landes erwartet man als Besucher. Was man sieht, ist eine typische Schweizer Mischung: reizende, zum Teil wohlthuend ironisierte Darstellungen folkloristischer Tradition; eine faszinierende Kunststoffarchitektur; sehr viel kybernetische Spielerei; kein nationales Protzertum — sondern, im Gegenteil, mancherlei Selbstkritik.

Was die Ausstellung von allen anderen, die ich je gesehen habe, unterscheidet, ist der Individualismus, der sich immer wieder durchsetzt, obgleich nirgendwo eine einzelne Industrie, eine einzelne Firma ausstellt.

Im “Weg der Schweiz” führt ein Zickzackweg unter unbearbeiteten Holzpfeilern, die wie uralte Kapellen wirken, durch die Geschichte des Landes, zeigt die Entwicklung von Kultur, Staatswesen, Kirche, Industrie bis zu einer skurrilen Landschaft, in der ein einziger bunter Gulliver den Alltag der Schweiz von heute sehr kritisch und vergnügt untersucht.

Und schon muss der Besucher mittun, wie überall auf der Ausstellung. Uniformierte Hostessen verteilen Fragebogen, die, in ein elektronisches Gehirn gesteckt, in zwei Minuten eine Charakterstudie des Besuchers ausspucken.

In dem Sektor “Lart de vivre”, was man nach der Besichtigung am besten übersetzen würde als “Die Kunst, sich sein Leben ernst und heiter, erfolgreich und bunt zu gestalten”, in diesem Sektor befindet sich das eigentliche Kulturzentrum. Es wurde zum grossen Teil von dem Architekten Max Bill entworfen. In zwölf Hallen kann man sich über Schulung und Forschung, über Kunst und Leben, Mensch und Haus, Information und Wissen unterrichten, aber auch über verblüffend neuartige Methoden der Freizeitgestaltung.