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The Swiss Observer

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1965



*Klewenalp
with view to
Pilatus
(S.N.T.O.)*

THE PATH OF SWITZERLAND

1965 will be the "Year of the Alps". This suggests a beautifully sunny picture of one of the glorious Swiss alpine peaks. Yet, somehow I felt that there would be plenty of time to show the Swiss Alps in all their splendour in the course of the year, and that today, at the end of 1964, a picture which induces a more pensive mood would be more appropriate. We are on the point of leaving the EXPO year behind. Whether we were lucky enough to see the Swiss National Exhibition or not, most of us realize that its primary object was to present the country in its reality, as a whole in the exhibition in general and in "The Swiss Way" in particular. It was essential both for the individual and the community to take stock of the situation, to consider what we are, what we wish to become, and to define the ends that we want to attain. Switzerland's present position, recent happenings and certain

social and economic conditions have shown all too clearly that the picture painted by the sector "Path of Switzerland" at the EXPO was by no means too pessimistic. If we took the lesson to heart, which it was meant to teach us, we cannot but pause on the threshold of the new year and recapitulate.

"The sector 'Swiss Way' — 'Path of Switzerland' seems to be the better translation" — was the exhibition's backbone, at once an introduction and a conclusion. The first three subdivisions were based on three fundamental premises (nature, ideas and geography). In the next part, the visitor was asked to actively participate, and the last three subdivisions were reserved to self-examination and to looking towards the future.

A land that is rugged and unprofitable, for all its grandeur and variety, has shaped the people living in

what, today, is Switzerland. Thus, when we entered the first pavilion "THE COUNTRY AND ITS PEOPLE", we were not confronted with some serenely beautiful landscape. The ground was formed of stones and slabs. Water flowed in a *bisse* that came from the architectural structure. Struggle between man and nature, nature by which man has been formed and which, in his turn, he has transformed. The natural feature of a country determines man's destiny. The valleys with their shortage of arable land and harsh living conditions had to join forces in order to survive. Then tourism opened up the mountains and changed the lives of the people by providing them with new opportunities of earning a livelihood. Finally, the great dams came with their accumulated hydraulic power to make up for the country's lack of coal and minerals. This is how "The Path of Switzerland" made us aware of our destiny through nature. We saw the lower regions and their towns. They, too, in history, struggled, though jealously, for survival. Sheer economic and military necessity obliged the first Cantons and towns to form alliances. Yet the peasant has remained the guardian of our national heritage. We were shown that the towns agreed to proclaim their individual character and their autonomy, but also that life in the Commune has become increasingly difficult. We may justly be proud of our willingness to work and to use our natural and human resources to the fullest possible extent, enhanced by professional training, specialisation, ready enterprise and technical precision. Unity in Diversity — that is Switzerland as nature has predestined her.

The second subdivision was called "MAN AND HIS FREEDOM". It matters little whether William Tell actually existed or not; the legend is truer and deeper than mere historical truth — it is the expression of the country's soul. The individual liberty is inevitably bound up with that of others; it also demands respect for the liberty of all. Walking on in this pavilion, we were made aware of Switzerland's determination to remain independent which inspired her in her march through the centuries. But liberties which are rights also imply obligations and are of necessity a compromise. We were also reminded that our conception of man and the citizen is essentially marked by Christianity. We Swiss cannot claim to have invented democracy and liberty; our conception of man and State goes back to a more ancient tradition — from Aristotle to Zwingli or Calvin, from Locke to Rousseau, from Pestalozzi to Burckhardt, von Haller or Gottfried Keller. Many are the liberties we enjoy, civic liberty, liberty of opinion and belief, social and economic freedom (peace on the labour front), political freedom. Remember the machine which symbolised the citizen's participation in public affairs? The Swiss regime is the outstanding example of direct democracy, yet how come that the civic rights of women should still be a matter of dispute? The right of Initiative and Referendum are always held up as an obvious sign of our democratic superiority — but why does such a strikingly large number of citizens fail to use it? Yes, a country of contradictions.

"A LITTLE STATE IN THE WORLD" was the subdivision we reached next on our tour of "The Path of Switzerland". Switzerland, organically grown up round the St. Gotthard, lies in the heart of Europe. Fundamentally, she is European by reason of her belonging to three different cultural areas of which she achieves a synthesis, in spite of her diversity, thanks to her federalistic structure. Her peculiar situation implies cultural exchanges, and the Swiss have become creators and have contributed to the vitality of western civilization. Switzerland has

also produced a large number of great works and eminent personalities — we were reminded that in the award of the Nobel Prizes she takes the first place in proportion to the number of inhabitants. This particular subdivision on Switzerland's place in the world also called to our minds her national defence, her neutrality and the intense international participation.

Who are we? That was the question put to us in the next subdivision "A DAY IN SWITZERLAND", made up from documentary evidence collected in a nationwide inquiry over two years. This was one of the first ethno-sociological investigations to be analysed by means of an electronic computer. We were shown as a serious, thrifty, orderly, realistically-minded people, attached to all that is concrete. We are supposed to be hard-working, devoted to our families, living resolutely in the present, mistrusting generalizations and abstractions. Looking back, we recall Gulliver, the famous giant, trying to gauge the typical Swiss. We remember the steps in a Swiss citizen's life between birth and death: the Savings book, the cap and the drum which fairy Helvetia puts in his cradle; school preparing the boy for a professional life, the girl for the haven of marriage; education, the tunnel through which the boys and girls go and from which they emerge on the roads leading to various careers; the next period that of awkwardly growing up, the transition from the civilian to the soldier citizen; the gilt cage of social conventions before and during marriage; then work, the *raison d'être* of the Swiss, a real institution in our country, with the holidays being a mere parenthesis in the working life; and what of the woman's world? Children and Kitchen, with the husband briefly at home between work and recreation, viz. committee work, military service, politics and *Jass*; the perpetuation of male supremacy which keeps society running smoothly, the political cake which is shared out between the men — the woman locked out and going empty-handed. We were invited to fill in the questionnaire — a game they said, but much of what was portrayed and some of the questions asked were uncomfortable and made us realise some of our weaknesses, and we could not just dismiss it lightheartedly as a caricature.

"SWITZERLAND EXAMINES HERSELF", the next subdivision, was perhaps the most impressive. Five realistic films, each in a different stone-vaulted hall, asked us "Have we solved all our problems?" The first sequence showed us the beautiful, reassuring country according to the conventional idea which people have of her. "Is it really true that all is well?" And already the answer came in the next picture: the uncertain fate of the vast foreign labour force, the housing shortage which severely hits people with a modest income, the problem of old people in a society obsessed with production and efficiency, the shortage of teachers, professors, doctors, engineers, research workers, technicians and responsible officials. Then the third film painting the pathetic picture of the little boy caught in the high-pressure life with its greed for more money and more material assets. What is the use of prosperity if we only pass it on to our children, devoid of any spiritual content?

The fourth sequence asked us whether Switzerland was really still as beautiful as she used to be, what with building expansion threatening to disfigure the countryside, with increasingly polluted air and water and our towns developing in chaotic fashion.

Finally, the fifth film showed us that Switzerland, *nolens volens* participates in the adventure of humanity. The interdependence of all our activities has become so great that we can no longer think and act alone. We can

no longer ignore the fact that half the people in the world are hungry, the threatening existence of the atom bomb, that civilization is becoming a worldwide affair — we are all part of the anxious, unstable and agitated universe, and, on leaving "Switzerland Examines Herself", the face of Christ reminded us of the permanence of the Christian message, but at the same time it also represented a searching question which concerns all of us.

"A LOOK INTO THE FUTURE", the last subdivision, was an act of faith in the country's future. Through frank self-examination, loyal to ourselves, we shall be able to create the Switzerland of tomorrow. We must foresee and prepare with individual sense of joint responsibility. *"Let us forge ahead, loyal to ourselves, our country and our tradition. Forge ahead in the development of our national territory, in education, instruction and economics, in the service of our country's defence. Forge ahead towards ever-vaster horizons — neutrality, solidarity, participation. Forge ahead through clear reflec-*

tion and thought and break away from the confusion of contradictory opinions and discover, experience and proclaim the truth."

That, briefly then, is a recapitulation of "The Path of Switzerland". Much there is of a tremendous and priceless heritage. What are we going to add to it in the future? The picture overleaf seems to represent something of what we are feeling at the beginning of this new year. We have to go forward into unknown space of time. We shall be struggling along like the men in the picture, uphill for all of us in one way or another. We shall need patience, courage, a lot of honest goodwill and undaunted determination to reach the summit. Even then the sky may not be clear and fog may cover parts of the landscape. But the promise is there. The reward will be ours if we let our courage be tempered with concern, our good will with unselfishness and our determination with charity, our hopes and endeavours with faith.

IT HAPPENED IN THE CANTONS OF GRISONS AND TICINO

GRISONS

The Grisons are called the "Country of 150 Valleys". The man from the lowlands who only knows the beauties of the Grisons as a holiday paradise hardly realises the problems and difficulties this, the largest but sparsely populated Swiss Canton, has to cope with. The sacrifices needed by the mountain Communes to stop their young citizens from emigrating and to build alpine roads and tunnels, viaducts and avalanche protection dams are not generally known in other parts of Switzerland. A quarter of the Swiss road network and half all the alpine roads are situated in the Grisons. Equally difficult are the problems the 395 km. Rhaetian Railways has to contend with. Its inclusion in the Swiss Federal Railways is becoming more and more urgent. Another seven million francs were voted by the Grand Council in November to make improvements. In addition, the economic boom has reached the Grisons less spectacularly than other more accessible parts of Switzerland. It is vital that the Grisons communications should be joined to the international rail and road networks.

Ninety years ago, the small people of 90,000 inhabitants managed to build a road network which was three times the size of that of the rest of the Confederation. It cost the Grisons 16.7 million francs of which only one million was paid for by the Confederation. After the opening of the Gotthard and the Brenner, it was no longer used for transit traffic, but the Grisons used it in their effort to develop tourism. In 1940, the Julier Pass road was opened, and the Grisons had the first dual carriage way in Switzerland, without level crossings.

At a cost of over a milliard of francs, the national highway, all main roads and most of the subsidiaries are to be extended over a period of fourteen years.

The most important project today is the construction of the thirteenth national highway from St. Margarethen, via Sargans and Chur, to Bellinzona through the Bernharden (tunnel of 6.6 km.). There has been much disappointment that owing to the measures to curb the excessive boom, this project is being delayed, and it is feared that the full use of the road will only be possible in about ten years. In addition the "Evangelisch-Rhaetische Synode" sent an "Open Letter" to the Swiss Home Office and the Federal Department of Communica-

tions and Energy, in which the Confederation is asked to keep its promise regarding the "Ostalpenbahn Project". There has been much dissatisfaction and protest which were not allayed by the answers sent by the two respective Federal Councillors.

In September, the Parliamentary Press was invited to visit the Grisons and see for themselves what the problems are. As a typical example, the journalists were shown the village of Guarda which had 266 inhabitants in 1880 and only 163 in the last census. Much progress has been made in rationalising and mechanising farmsteads; milking machines replace the missing manpower on the "Maien-sässen", and milk is being sent to the valleys in pipelines. The 229 cattle breeding co-operatives in the Grisons count 8,087 members who own 33,000 head of cattle. Over 90% of the cows are under integral milk production control, a percentage which is believed to be the highest in Europe, if not in the world.

A very expensive venture for the relatively poor Canton are the power works. For a time it looked as if the Engadine works (Zernez) would not be completed for lack of capital, but a solution has been found, and work will continue. There has been opposition at Grabs to the planned thermal power station in the Rhine Valley. The first transmission of electric energy of 380 kV. in Switzerland became operational on 20th November. It connects the two Grisons power works Tavanasa and Sils with the new station Breite between Zurich and Winterthur. Up to now only transmission of 220 kV., have been made.

In September, the Swiss National Park celebrated its Golden Jubilee. During the last hunting season of 1967, the game hunted numbered 24,000, among which were 678 stags, 824 does, 2,756 chamois, 5,909 marmots, 568 roebucks, 2,118 brown and 1,066 white hares, 1,707 foxes, and 237 badgers.

Building, too, is going on in the Grisons, and the Grand Council granted a credit of 20.7 million francs for a new building and the extension of the present one of the Cantonal School in Chur. The cantonal electorate however, at the end of October, rejected an 8 million credit for an administration building for the cantonal police and vehicle control office, though all Parties had recommended acceptance.

The budget for 1965 estimates a deficit of 3.6 million francs with an income of 242.2 million francs.