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AS OTHERS SEE US

On 1st April, the "*Christian Science Monitor*" devoted some twelve pages to Switzerland. In a number of articles, staff correspondents of the international daily which is now rated as one of the top five in the world, deal with subjects of special interest, such as inflation, "Mirage" fighters, civic works and the foreign worker issue. "Space Age Airport at Geneva", "Diplomat assess British bid for EEC bid on EFTA" and "Women Suffrage Leaders say it won't be long" are the headings of other articles. There is a message from President Bonvin, and each page carries a number of advertisements. The general theme, perhaps, is that "despite the natural isolation their mountains provide, the Swiss, urbane, aware, face a battery of 20th-century problems". One of the writers says that "the mountains slow down the effect of world change on Switzerland" and "The Swiss are not so much glad to be hemmed away from the rest of the nations by their mountains as they are thankful for a protected base from which Swiss interests can probe into all sorts of distant regions".

In the "*Financial Times*" there appeared an article on the *Swiss Centre* in London called "A Helvetian invasion of the West End". It describes the new landmark of London's West End with the offices of Swissair, Swiss National Tourist Office and Swiss Bank Corporation and the many Swiss firms in the tower block. It says that "despite Helvetia's proverbial punctuality, the "Swiss Fair" shopping and dining complex and the new information centre of the Swiss Economic Council will not be opening in the imposing building until this winter, or a good year later than was originally planned. Whether the "Swiss Forum" foreseen for the Centre's third-floor dome will open at all is by no means certain". The article describes the various projects and closes with the statement that "the scheme has the makings of a solid financial success".

Early in the year, the *Brazilian Weekly "Manchete"* (circulation 350,000) published a 30-page coloured report on the Swiss Confederation. It gives a comprehensive picture of historic and present-day Switzerland, well documented and well presented. The publishers were advised by "Pro Helvetia", the Swiss National Tourist Office and the Information and Press Service of the Federal Political Department in Berne.

In "*Prospects*", the business news survey of the Swiss Bank Corporation (July 1967), an article was reproduced from the "*Financial Times*" in which Harold Wincott commented on "*The Three Worries of Swiss Bankers*": the charge one banker at least met in USA "to the effect that Switzerland, as one of the leading financial markets in Europe, is not pulling its weight in international financing operations", a rather upsetting statement considering that Switzerland thought she had "done rather well in this capacity". The writer defends Switzerland and says that "if the other European capital markets did as well proportionately to their populations and resources, there would be no problems in the international lending field". Mr. Wincott describes the second worry as "the business about the "gnomes of Zurich", not the term or the joke, but the implication that they should live by currency speculation. The third worry, the writer says, is the allegation that their system of "numbered accounts" is abused. The article ends with a paragraph "A responsible democracy", talking about the militia army and putting the question as to what the

British Police would say to the suggestion that rifles, machine guns and ammunition should be kept at home like in Switzerland.

"*Britain and Switzerland 1845-60*" is the title of a book by the American historian Ann G. Imlah (published by Longmans, London 1966). It was reviewed on 4th July in "*Schweizer Monatshefte*" by the Cultural Attaché at the Swiss Embassy in London, Dr. Paul Stauffer. He comments favourably on the fair account of the special relationship between Great Britain and Switzerland, of British diplomacy during the *Sonderbundskrise*, the foundation of the Confederate State and the Neuchâtel conflict. Dr. Stauffer praises the author for considering the British position in each case in the light of the existing political constellation at the time but deplores the fact that her research was confined to unpublished material and left out all published accounts. This led to unfortunate mistakes and statements such as that the Swiss electorate rejected by public vote the proposal that Switzerland should join the United Nations.

On the other hand, nothing but praise was shown in a book published in 1965 and reviewed in the *Swiss Review of World Affairs* (a copy of this has only just come to hand). The author is Kenneth D. McRae, Professor of Political Science in Carleton University, and the book "*Switzerland, Example of Cultural Coexistence*" was published by the Canadian Institute of International Affairs in Toronto. Prof. McRae shows extensive knowledge of Switzerland and its languages and "succeeds in condensing a large and unwieldy body of historical and constitutional data into an outline that is as precise as it is readable". The reviewer (Miss Melanie Staerk) recommends the essay as "a must on any good reading list on Switzerland today."

Great praise is heaped on Switzerland in two articles published by *Reader's Digest*. One was called "*The Land that runs like a Watch*" by Frank Taylor, which could be described by the prefacing paragraph "With efficiency, expertise and sheer hard work, Switzerland more than holds her own among her larger neighbours". The writer calls the country a "man-made miracle". He describes the National Exhibition, geography and economics, the "Military Might" and the Voter who is Boss. Quite some humour comes into the account, such as what a Basler likes best about Zurich — A ticket back to Basle!

Another story is told in a second *Reader's Digest* article entitled "*Switzerland, the Oasis of Europe*". It is the one about the Allied planes flying over Swiss territory in the war with the airmen answering that they knew it when challenged by Swiss anti-aircraft men. "If you don't leave, we must shoot". "We know it", was the answer. The Swiss opened fire and the airmen radioed "You're firing too high". The Swiss replied "We know it". The writer, Max Eastman, called it a plausible story and says that Swiss neutrality was political only. The article must have appeared in the *Reader's Digest* some time ago, but was reprinted in the "Pocket Companion" this year only. Practical intelligence is what the writer attributes to the Swiss, be it politically, economically or socially. "Citizenship was never taken so seriously since the Age of Pericles. Civic responsibility was never so deeply felt. Of course, practical intelligence gets tiresome after a while like any other virtue. It does not leave much room for whim and abandon. Young people are apt to find life in Switzerland awfully dull". But the writer says that there is also physical courage and tolerance.

Finally, there was an article in the "Times" on 29th April, in which Andrew Graham writes on "A Taste of Swiss Wines". He says that the Swiss are great wine people and that Swiss wines reminded him of "happy holidays, of railway stations as clean as clinics, efficient hotels, sparkle of sunshine on snow, dream views of lakes, and wild flowers". The writer referred to a wine tasting organised by the Swiss Wine Growers Association in London and mentioned such tasty wines as the *Fendant* made from the Chasselas grape, the *Johannisberg*, the *petillant* Neuchâtel wine and the famous *Dôle*.

THE NEW CENTRE LE CORBUSIER

According to the prominent daily "Neue Zürcher Zeitung", on 1st February, 1912, the Board of Directors of the *Ecole d'Art* at La Chaux-de-Fonds decided to reimburse 25-year old Charles Edouard Jeanneret, *Professeur au cours supérieur*, the sum of 20 francs for a trip he had made to Zurich to visit the director of that city's Museum of Applied Arts. Fifteen years later, the same man from the Swiss Jura — now known as architect Le Corbusier — left Paris for Zurich to deliver a series of lectures there and in subsequent years made frequent appearances in that city on the occasion of exhibitions and other events connected with his work. Two years ago the world-famous architect and artist died and now, thanks to the tireless efforts of Swiss interior decorator Heidi Weber, an impressive memorial to him has been erected on the grounds of the beautiful lakeside Zurichhorn Park — a memorial which is also Le Corbusier's last architectural creation. Recently dedicated before prominent personalities from throughout the world, the *Centre le Corbusier* will house collections and exhibitions of the master's work, including paintings, sculptures and tapestries, and also has facilities for lectures and film showings. The structure features a "free-floating" roof, which offers protection from both rain and sun, and represents the first realisation of a project which Le Corbusier conceived and developed in the course of several decades.

[S.N.T.O.]

GENEVA—FROM CEZANNE TO PICASSO

Artistic activity in Geneva grows more intensive from one year to the next. Such is the pace that most of the important European galleries seek a place where they can put up their signs or, more precisely, their paintings with easy access to one of the streets of Geneva where the art business is remarkably in vogue. When one speaks of business one implies exhibitions. With its more than thirty private galleries, its museums and permanent exhibits, Geneva has now moved to the forefront of the international art movement. Last year, Geneva presented a superlative exhibition of ancient Iranian art organised by a scholar with an international reputation, Mr. Nicolas Durr, Curator of the city's museums. He succeeded in assembling within the walls of the Rath Museum a collection of extraordinary sumptuousness. This year, the directors of the major galleries are preparing a number of exhibitions bound to attract large numbers of art-lovers. Among the most remarkable of these will undoubtedly be the one which opened its doors on 5th July, at the Athenée Museum and which will be dedicated to drawings and graphics from Cézanne to Picasso. The recent sale in London of an *aquarelle* by Cézanne for the price of 1.400.000 francs and

of a Picasso for more than two and a half million Swiss francs—a price never before obtained by a living artist—speaks eloquently of the standard of the exhibition which, during the whole of this coming summer, will draw connoisseurs of modern art to the Athenée.

[S.N.T.O.]

"RENCONTRES INTERNATIONALES" IN GENEVA

Created after the last war in the interests of better understanding among nations, the *Recontres Internationales* of Geneva are held during the first half of September. In the past 20 years, highly topical themes have been discussed, such as: "The European Spirit" — "For a New Humanity" — "Technical Progress and Moral Progress" — "Man and Science", etc. This year, the Organising Committee selected the subject "Art in Today's Society". This is a theme very much in the public eye these days, which deals with the social obligations of the writer and artist; art and culture; the transformation of forms in modern art, etc. Architecture and the film will take a prominent place in the discussions to be held in Geneva by leading personalities from all spheres of the arts.

[S.N.T.O.]

UNIFORMS WERE FIRST SEEN IN SWITZERLAND

Books of reference give the second half of the fourteenth century as the time when uniforms were first used. The Turkish Janissary force, a noted corps of foot soldiers who acted as the Sultan's body guard — the earliest standing army in Europe — was fully organised by Amurath I, in 1362. The formation of standing armies among the Western powers, which may be said to have introduced the modern military system, dates from the establishment of "compagnies d'ordonnance" by Charles VII. of France in 1422.

In England, the Yeomen of the Guard constituted by Henry VII. and at whose coronation they made their first appearance, on 30th October, 1485, is the oldest corps in the British service. The Honourable Corps of Gentlemen-at-Arms, formerly called the Gentlemen Pensioners, was instituted in 1509 by Henry VIII and formed the Sovereign's bodyguard.

The Beefeaters or Warders of the Tower, whose Tudor uniform has had much to do with their attractiveness to sightseers, wear the Yeoman's uniform, without the shoulder-belt, and had their origin in the reign of Edward VI in 1547.

France is generally believed the first country to adopt uniforms for soldiers, in 1422; now in Switzerland this custom is much more ancient. At the battle of Morgarten in 1315, the troops of Zurich were all dressed in white and blue. A corps of Bernese Troops, in 1365, wore a white costume with a bear of black cloth sewed on the breast. Troops from St. Gallen were all clad in red at Grandson in 1476, etc., etc.

It is thus fully established that Switzerland already had uniforms more than a century earlier than France and long before the Janissaries existed.

P.S.

("Swiss Observer", 19th June 1937.)