

Zeitschrift: The Swiss observer : the journal of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK

Herausgeber: Federation of Swiss Societies in the United Kingdom

Band: - (1969)

Heft: 1576

Artikel: "Self-introduction" by the editor

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-696277>

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Download PDF: 23.02.2026

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The Swiss Observer

PUBLISHED TWICE MONTHLY AT
63/67 TABERNACLE STREET
LONDON E.C.2
Tel.: 01 - 253 2321

Telegrams: Paperwyse Stock London

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Postcheck-Konto Basle 40—5718

“SELF-INTRODUCTION” BY THE EDITOR

Dear readers,

I have both the pleasure and honour of succeeding Mrs. Meier as editor of the “Swiss Observer”. This is the opportunity for me to thank her for the kindness with which she has shown me into the secrets of running such a publication. If in future I manage to run it nearly as well as she did, I should have every reason of being satisfied with myself. Furthermore, I am looking forward to receiving contributions from her in the future.

As was stated in her farewell address in the last issue, I am “a young journalist”. Young, I am, being 27, but being a freshman in the trade with still a lot to learn, the term “journalist” is almost too much honour, as far as I am concerned. The fact that I have lived 12 years in this country has made me a bi-cultural animal, strongly anglicised, but with enough swisshood to be attached to the “Swiss Observer”, with which I have been acquainted for many years.

The aim of this paper, it seems to me, is both to act as a binding cement to our expatriate community and to maintain its ties with Switzerland. In this spirit, it seeks to present its readers with reports of organised community events, with personal news, and attempts to give a picture of life in Switzerland.

The interest and need for such information are linked with what meaning the idea of a “Swiss Community” still has in the minds of the bulk

of Swiss residents who form the legal Colony, as well as with their remaining ties to the homeland.

It is well known that our organised community life has been diminishing, as it has in other foreign communities here. There are far fewer national societies today as there were, say, twenty years ago. The average age of their regular participants is constantly rising. This is also true of the broader and disseminate Swiss population of Great Britain because hardly anyone emigrates here nowadays. Those who have, in the good days before the war, now form the backbone of the Community. But in the majority of cases, their children have opted for British nationality and have become assimilated to this country. To this must be added the influence of modern communications, which in shrinking the world have had the effect of bringing Switzerland to our doorsteps and of unifying our cultures, so that the “expatriate” aspect of our life abroad and the distinctness of our Swiss identity cannot be felt today as strongly as in the past.

These are irreversible historical trends which, in the long run, make life more difficult for a patriotic paper such as the “Swiss Observer”. Fortunately, history still has a lot to move. Swiss residents in England are still well alive and interested in what other fellow residents are doing. I have ample evidence that a great many people have a keen interest on what is happening back home and on the organised activities of the Community. These still attract newcomers as well as older residents, and as such deserve to be reported in a communal paper. I know of a solid core of elderly and poorer Swiss for whom the “Swiss Observer” is the most important remaining link with what was once home, and even though its news is usually outdated (a technical inevitability), they do not complain because they get the picture and evocation of Swiss life which they need. Another important feature is the growing commercial, financial and industrial importance of our country, which arouses increasing interest among the British. There is therefore a real prospect of enlarging the circle of English readers which the “Swiss Observer” already enjoys.

I therefore strongly believe, that in spite of historical trends which tend to loosen our Community, the purpose for which this paper was founded — serving it by keeping it bound together and tied to home by the information presented — is still meaningful. This is a task worth working for and which I will do my best to accomplish. If, perchance, I also manage to afford some entertainment, the job will be all the more rewarding.

Pierre-Michel Béguin

THE ARMY

1969

The military budget for 1968 was 1.942 billion francs, that for this year, 1.935 billion, the first decrease in the military budget since 1960. In 1968 it accounted for 30% of confederal expenditure. This year it will only account for 27%. Expenditure on defence has increased by about 60% since 1961, when the military budget was 1.1 billion, but has risen slower than the national income. Out of the 1969 figure, 153 millions were devoted to civil defense (a rising post) and 1.770 for the army proper. Of this latter figure, 195 million were devoted to military installations, 22 on new training grounds, 145 million for anti-aircraft weaponry, 86 million for 60 new helicopters, 84 million for continued mechanisation of the army, 360 million for the pay of professional officers, instructors and arsenal personnel. Total expenditure on defence amounted to a little less than 2.9% of national income. If one includes voluntary work done by instructors and officers of all ranks in off-service training, instructing and organising as well as the unpaid work done by all troops in up-keeping their equipment, then the value of effort devoted to defence is worth 2.1 billion francs 3.6% of national income but no more than 2.9% of social product.

The comparison with defence spending in other countries is of interest. In 1966, Russia spent 250 billion francs (22% of national income), U.S.A. spent 274 billion (10.3%), Germany spent 24 billion (6.2%). Sweden devoted 4.5% of its national income on defence, Belgium 3.6%. The only country to make a smaller effort on defence than Switzerland is Austria, which spends 600 million francs, or 1.7% of its national income.

“Mirages” and Copters

In February of this year, 33 “Mirages 111 2” built in Switzerland under licence had already been delivered to the airforce. 17 others, of the reconnaissance type, were about to be handed over and were nearing their acceptance trials. The cost of our Mirages has not exceeded the estimate figuring in the Mirage Report of July 1968. Their cost will be 1,185 million francs.

These planes have given good results and had flown over 5400 hours by the end of last year.

The formation of pilots has been made very much cheaper thanks to the new simulator at Payerne, a mock cockpit in which every conceivable situation encountered in flight can be reproduced — with no risk to human life and to hardware. The Swiss-built