

**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:** - (1970)  
**Heft:** 1604  
  
**Rubrik:** Swiss news

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enjoy a general amnesty at home. This contrasts with a majority of the Poles who, after 20 years of British life, still yearn to return to the homeland. Also, whereas the great majority of Hungarians in this country are now naturalised British, a significant proportion of the Slavs are still without any nationality. The Hungarians have no publication, save a Hungarian-Jewish organ.

Finally, the Spaniards are also without any colony organisation, although there are over 30,000 of them. This may be due to their different social extraction. They are mainly poor and working people—and one doesn't usually associate black-tie dinners or cultural society exposés with labourers earning £15 a week.

All these findings lead to a few simple conclusions. The first is that the viability of a colony paper such as the "Swiss Observer" is related in a direct way to the cohesion of this colony. The existence of an "expatriate colony" depends on three factors. They are: Awayness from home, national characteristics and social class. The second factor seems to be by far the most important in the present day. It is illustrated by the fact that the Slavs stick together, and not the Hungarians, for example. This factor could in fact be equalled to the *"tendency to hold to one's national and cultural identity multiplied by one's gregarious character and readiness to play a part in an organised group"*.

The success of a paper like the "Swiss Observer" depends on just how high this crazy factor is. Starting with the winner, I'll venture the following order: The Slavs, the French, the Jews, the Swiss, the Germans, the Spaniards, the Swedes and the Dutch. This may explain the "miracle" of the "Swiss Observer".

"Awayness from home" must also be considered as an important element, so that foreigners living very far from home will be more likely to seek their own mutual company than the others who know they can return home whenever they want. There is no reason—apart from cultural and nationalistic ones—why Parisians in London should be particularly keen to meet one another, because Paris is nearer to London than Newcastle. For the Swiss of Great Britain, "awayness from home" is measured directly by the physical and financial ability to return to their cantons and homes. We are all geographically separated from Switzerland by a few hundred miles, but for the disabled and the less fortunate Swiss of this country, this distance becomes vastly greater. For those who have lost all ties in Switzerland it becomes infinite and cannot even be measured in miles. I know that some faithful readers fall into this category. If the S.O. can bring Switzerland a little nearer to them, it will not have failed in its purpose.

# SWISS NEWS

## THE TRANSHELVETIC CANAL AGAIN IN THE NEWS

Three years ago, the Federal Council commissioned a group of experts to examine the profitability of harnessing the upper Rhine and the Aar for navigation. They came out with their report in January and estimated that the traffic through the port of Basle would increase four-fold during the next thirty years. This justified a development of the upper Rhine, which would service the industrial region of Winterthur and Zurich. However they saw no future in making the Aar navigable as the regions through which it flowed were not particularly industrialised and would not benefit appreciably by the addition of the Aar to the already existing means of communication.

The Federal Council consulted each individual canton following the publication of this report and asked them to make their respective positions on the issue of inland navigation known by the end of October.

Two cantons particularly concerned by navigation on the Rhine and Aar were Basle and Aargau. Basle supported the idea of stretching the navigability of the Rhine up to Klingnau, although cantonal experts disagreed with the findings of the federal report, which foresaw an inevitable saturation of the port facilities of Basle. Basle handles a fluvial traffic of 9 million tons a year at present and is prepared to invest the necessary funds to meet the needs of future traffic.

Aargau had no direct interest in fluvial navigation but supported the principle of developing the Aar for navigation in a spirit of solidarity with the cantons of western Switzerland, which are attached to the concept of a Transhelvetic Canal.

None of the cantons sounded and none of the borderers of the upper Rhine and the Aar would naturally like to be burdened with the cost of making these rivers navigable. Navigation, they say rightly, is a matter for the Confederation.

The issue of a Transhelvetic waterway never fails to raise controversy. The President of the Association for Swiss Waterways, Mr. Willy Rohner, who is also a councillor of State, urged the speedy creation of these additional means of transport, which will be appreciated as the volume of trade continues to expand. Speaking at the 59th Assembly of this Association, he expressed his hope that Lake Maggiore would one day be linked to the Po.

On the other hand, all ideas of shipping on our rivers raised the strongest opposition of Swiss conservationists. "Acqua Viva", a Swiss Society devoted to the protection of inland waters, claimed that allowing ships and barges to sail on the Aar would be

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one more way of polluting this river.

The Federal Council and Parliament are bound to return to this problem in the near future.

### WHY OJUKWU WAS REFUSED ASYLUM

General Ojukwu the leader of the ill-fated Biafran state who fled into Ivory Coast three days before the final debacle, has been refused political asylum by the Federal Council. He had been asked to leave the Ivory Coast (but so far not forced to do so) and his wish had been to settle in Vaud. Spokesmen for the Chancery and the Federal Police explained that Switzerland granted political asylum to those who really had no other possibility of refuge. There were no reasons to believe that this was the case with General Ojukwu and that Switzerland was the only country where he could live in security. Mr. Ernesto Thalmann, Head of the Division for International Organisations, added that the Nigerian Government had threatened to expel Swiss nationals out of Nigeria if Switzerland accepted to harbour General Ojukwu. Besides, the General didn't appear to have abandoned his political intentions and it was much wiser to refuse him asylum in these circumstances.

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### THE PLAN FOR A VOLUNTARY CORPS

The Federal Council is reviewing ways of realising a motion tabled by National Councillor Furgler back in 1967. It is to create a force of voluntary helpers who could be summoned at any time and sent to any part of the world struck by a national disaster. This Swiss "peace corps" would serve under the International Red Cross. It would involve about a thousand young men. The problems which are now to be solved are the technicalities of transport, the qualifications required, the question of professional re-integration after service and its conciliation with military service.

### SCHWARZENBACH RETIRES FROM THE "NATIONAL AKTION"

Mr. James Schwarzenbach has resigned from the presidency of the "National Aktion", the movement against "over-foreignisation" which had campaigned for the 7th June referendum. Mr. Schwarzenbach stressed that this step was not due to any internal party strife. Having presented his initiative to Parliament and the people, he had felt that his task had been accomplished. He now plans to revert to his journalistic occupation, taking the editorship of "Der Republikaner", and will eventually consider creating a party of the same name, totally independent of the "National Aktion". For the time being, the "National Aktion's" central committee has unanimously

approved Schwarzenbach's second initiative, aiming to introduce a special tax on all employers of foreign labour.

### SCHOOL CO-ORDINATION IN SIGHT

An inter-cantonal agreement on school co-ordination has been definitely adopted by the conference of heads of educational departments in Montreux. The President of the Confederation, Mr. H. P. Tschudi, was present at this historic event. Among the decisions of the conference, the possibility of changing schools without difficulty and a common school year starting in Autumn will be those with the greatest impact on daily life. This agreement has been partly forced upon negotiators by an initiative launched by a wide assortment of citizens to deprive the cantons of their individual educational prerogatives. There was a strong "centralising" pressure and the cantonal education chiefs who had met in Zurich before assembling in Montreux were aware that a failure to reach an agreement on the serious problem of school co-ordination would have jeopardised one of the last remaining cantonal preserves. As it is, the agreement passed between the cantons resembles a treaty signed by several independent and sovereign states. It remains to be seen whether the initiative will gather the necessary support and lead to anywhere.

(ATS)

### A WIG STOPS INTERNATIONAL TRAFFIC

The engine driver of a goods train heading from Chiasso to Milano suddenly halted his train when he saw a large parcel in the middle of the track. Believing it to be a bomb, he immediately gave the alert, causing the immediate halt of all traffic between Chiasso and Como. The experts arrived on the spot and took all the required precautions when opening the mysterious packet. They had no small surprise in discovering that the parcel contained a blond wig. It had delayed two international express trains for 70 minutes.

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### THE "LAUSANNE PLAN"

The Swiss Federation of Student Associations recently proposed the "Lausanne Plan", a system of financing advanced studies without any financial assistance by parents.

Short-term objectives are:

— to increase the number of students from lower economic income groups by offering equal opportunities to all students;

— to improve the living conditions of all students by eliminating conflicts due to financial worries;

— to achieve mature thinking by all students; and

— to open any and all institutions of higher learning to all students, re-

gardless of economic and social background, provided that the respective student be of legal age.

Long-term objectives are:

— to remove sociological, cultural and psychological barriers, so as to offer equal opportunities to all students.

Under the plan, a public foundation is to be established by the Swiss Confederation and the Cantons. Every pupil or student of legal age and Swiss nationality (as well as foreigners, who have lived in Switzerland for a period of at least four years) enrolled at a Federally recognised institution of higher learning is to receive a grant amounting to 3,300 Swiss Francs per term to cover his/her tuition as well as living expenses. The total grant for the duration of his/her studies would be limited to 45,000 Francs.

A civil law contract would stipulate repayments to begin fifteen years after the commencement of his/her studies. Such annual repayments would vary according to income and property, but total repayments would not exceed 45,000 Francs. No repayments would be due before the former student's annual taxable income amounts to at least 24,000 Francs. The annual rate of repayments would vary from a minimum of 0.1 per cent to a high of 17.65 per cent in the case of a taxable income of 50,000 Francs.

Assuming that 40,000 students will receive 6,000 Francs annually, the foundation would have to disburse 240 million Francs each year. The average length of studies is five years. One generation of students will thus entail a disbursement of 1.2 billion Francs. Since repayments become due fifteen years after the commencement of studies, a total amount of 3.6 billion Francs will have to be disbursed before any repayments would be made. Disbursements and repayment would result in administrative expenses estimated at 1 per cent of total disbursements or about 2.4 million Francs annually.

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