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SWISS NEWS

BOUNTY AT THE MIGROS

True to the spirit of its founder, the *Migros* has introduced a highly original incentive scheme for the benefit of its employees. Gottlieb Duttweiler thought that the employees of the giant organisations of our present civilisation tended to be divorced from their life and purpose. Under the new "*M-Participation*" scheme introduced at the beginning of the year every *Migros* employee, from highest executive to the hoist-trolley driver, will be given an opportunity of feeling a responsible member of his company.

The *Migros* management issued one *M-Participation* share with a book value of 2,500 francs to every one of its employees on January 1st. Every new and stable employee will henceforth receive such a share—bearing the date of his employment. Part-timers working for *Migros* are not forgotten. They will receive *M-Participation* shares with book value depending on the amount of work performed for the *Migros*. The dividends offered at the end of every year will be equal to the growth rate of the company's turnover. Thus if *Migros* sell 12 per cent more in a particular year, its new gratuitous shareholders will receive a dividend of 12 per cent. The minimum dividend is fixed at 5 per cent. When the highly ambitious goals of the company are considered, there will be 100 million francs available for *M-Participation* shareholders in the next three years. If last year's 15 per cent growth in turnover is repeated, every employee will receive a bonus of 375 francs at the end of 1971—enough to induce many to apply for a job at *Migros*! The company aims at sales of 5.8 billion francs of foodstuffs in 1980, and 2 billion francs of durables.

The *ideal* behind this profit-sharing scheme is to *involve* workers and employees in the trials and successes of their company. They should feel a part of the enterprise. They should be made to experience joy when it forges ahead, and also feel concern over its setbacks. All told, they should feel as responsible for the fortunes of the *Migros* as its responsible officers. This is not to say that actual responsibility of management will change hands. Departmental managers remain technically responsible for their decisions, but every employee should acquire a sense of general responsibility for the undertaking. It has intentionally not been sought to reward individual stores for their yearly successes through the *M-Participation* scheme. This would have implied the injustices inherent in the varying degrees of development of the conurbations in which *Migros* has spread its network of supermarkets.

In order to inspire the payroll with the right productive and co-operative mentality, it will be necessary to keep

it informed at every level on the development of its company. The *M-Participation* scheme will involve the distribution of ample and detailed information on the progress of the *Migros* in turnover, profit, costs and management. Results will be compared with forecasts. Ideas and "brain-storming" will be welcome. Employees will be invited to put forward new ideas, any formula liable to increase productivity, to management at the Zurich headquarters. There will be group conferences between central planners and deputations from each individual store. *Migros* will be run like a vast family and will become a living embodiment of the social-capitalist ideals of its founder.

THE WORK OF THE CANTONAL CHEMIST

The legislation governing the handling of consumer goods was first introduced in Switzerland in 1909. It regulated the production, processing and sale of goods to the public. At the same time, the means of implementing these new rules were instituted, and "cantonal laboratories" were set up. Every canton with the exception of St. Gall and the original cantons (who share a single laboratory) were equipped with cantonal laboratories responsible for tracing any irregularities in the preparation of the goods on sale to the public. The responsibility and burden of consumer protection were, and still are, left to the cantons. It is a relatively minor department with total expenditures of 8 million francs only. This appears paradoxical at a time of growing concern for the human rape of the environment and the increased adulteration of natural life. Cantonal laboratories are directed by "cantonal doctors". They are independent of one another, but have grouped themselves in an association meeting several days every year and deciding on common procedures. It is thus an inter-cantonal institution working on a collegiate basis, not defined in any cantonal constitution.

For fifty years the cantonal chemist's main task was to trace the presence of an excess of starch in sausages and water in milk. With the fantastic increase in the range of commercial goods the cantonal chemist has had to widen drastically the field of his investigation. He now has to test chemicals as varied as nylon and deodorant spray in a laboratory which is usually under-equipped.

His job in the field of foodstuffs has also increased in technical complexity because of the industrial means by which so much of the food consumed today is produced. The chemist has primarily to check whether foodstuffs for sale satisfy hygienic specifications by testing them for voluntary or involuntary additions, some of which may be noxious, and for impurities. Voluntary additions are chemicals designed to improve conservation, colour

and taste. Involuntary additions are usually the traces of pesticides left over from harvest. Industrial production methods are no guarantee against contamination by impurities. The time between the moment a product leaves a factory and reaches a supermarket shelf and the distance it will have travelled are infinitely greater than in earlier days. This enhances the risks of contamination. Another factor making many products vulnerable is the fact that they are "ready to eat" and already cooked.

Cantonal laboratories now have to be equipped to test the presence of one part in a million of a foreign ingredient and this is becoming difficult to perform financially. Cantons are naturally tending to pool their operations in consumer-protection. This has already been achieved in French-speaking Switzerland where, for example, Vaud is responsible for checking soluble coffees without caffeine, and Geneva is responsible for testing cyclamates.

A problem generally encountered by cantonal laboratories is that of finding the necessary qualified personnel. Most chemistry graduates are attracted by the financially-rewarding opportunities of industry. Furthermore, the responsibilities of cantonal chemists require a special diploma and cantons are finding it increasingly difficult to find the people who possess it. The protection of the consumer appears to be one of the forgotten areas of the State's duties.

(*Tages Anzeiger*)

AN "AIR TRAM" FOR ZURICH?

Zurich is the only remaining Swiss City which has left its tramway system intact. But for all their efficiency and modernity, these trams are a considerable hindrance to the smooth flow of and already congested traffic. An underground joining Kloten and Alstetten is in the planning stage. An engineer from Schmerikon, in the Canton of St. Gall, has come up with the idea of an aerial tramway. Mr. Gerhard Muller, the managing director and owner of the firm of the same name, believes that such a thing is quite feasible. He has secured permission for building a 1.3 kilometre test line near the mouth of the Lindt on Lake Zurich after much bureaucratic wrangling. The train system suggested will have some definite advantages over the aerial tramway which has served Wuppertal, Germany, for the past 70 years. This particular example requires a heavy steel structure. The aerial tram proposed by Mr. Muller will rest on two parallel wires like a mountain ropeway, but will be self-propelled. The great innovation will be a method of preventing the sag of the supporting cables (submitted to tensions of 60 tons) by making them camber upwards in their unstressed position by means of ancillary supporting cables. The humped sections between each abutment will be "flattened" as the aerial

vehicle moves across them. Tensions will be compensated in such a way that the train will travel in a virtually horizontal plane. This system should theoretically be adaptable for 50 m.-long vehicles containing up to 200 passengers. Although their capacity would be less than that of normal underground trains, the system would cost a tenth to install. Its main disadvantage would lie in the unaesthetic necessity of erecting heavy pillars every 200 metres and of laying thick aerial cables along the main streets of a city like Zurich. The system is, however, attracting considerable interest. The firm of Gerhard Muller has built itself a reputation by holding many important patents in the field of ski-lifts, sliding cabins and aerial ropeways.

(ATS)

FOR OR AGAINST A SWISS FILM INDUSTRY?

By virtue of a law passed some four years ago, Switzerland's "film industry" is to be sponsored by the Confederation. In effect, this has amounted to a total grant of 1.3 million francs benefitting some 51 productions of an educational, cultural and documentary nature. It was decided in Parliament last year that this federal aid should also extend to entertainment films.

Swiss film festivals have been held in Solothurn since 1965 and the upshot of the first one was the vision of a "Swiss National Cinema Centre". A group of personalities devoted to the cause of Swiss Cinema formed an "*Arbeitsgemeinschaft*" for the creation of such a centre. The original idea was to create a foundation with an initial capital of 1.5 million francs. It was to permit playwrights to realise their ideas and to give generous grants to burgeoning producers. The "*Arbeitsgemeinschaft*" has since increased its membership. It now counts over 200 people and nearly every creator of mark of the "new Swiss cinema", but the National Swiss Cinema Centre is still far from realisation.

The fact is that the advisability of creating a Swiss film industry is questioned by many. Some may stress the importance of the film and television media and claim the necessity of keeping them in national hands, but others readily point out the impossibility of competing with the greats of the cinematographic world and to create a film centre equipped with the facilities of producing films for the international market.

The Government made an enquiry among 93 companies and institutions on the matter of a film centre. Of the 59 replies obtained, 15 were definitely in favour and 13 definitely against the creation of a national film centre. The "*Arbeitsgemeinschaft*" held a meeting in the castle of Lenzburg in November and decided to create a centre with a strongly reduced capital, and to rename it the "Swiss Cinema Centre". The "national" description was felt to carry

an ominous idea of state intervention and lack of freedom. Many other problems facing the Swiss cinema were also debated at Lenzburg, among them the ways in which Swiss films could be commercialised. Swiss films are almost amateur productions made on a shoe-string budget. This lends them the advantage of bearing the personal mark of their creator, but also carries the disadvantage of films not designed for a commercial circuit. They are often very good films, but not commercial films. Only one or two Swiss films have ever been shown abroad—mainly in France and Germany. The others may be seen at the Locarno and Solothurn Festivals, and other selected representations.

The cinemas that welcome these new and risky productions are very rare. One of them is the "Atelier" in Geneva. It is currently showing what may probably be the best full-length Swiss film ever made, "Le Fou", by Claude Goretta. Claude Goretta, one of a promising group of young Swiss producers, is known particularly for a sketch called "Nice Time" made in 1958 and for his highly successful adaptation of Ramuz's "*Jean Luc persécuté*".

"Le Fou" is the story of a faceless employee who has worked without reproach all his life. He is getting on and beginning to think about the delights of his future retirement: The small house and the life of leisure. One day all this is destroyed by a heart attack. He has to stop work. The house, the leisure and the dreams are broken. The money he has laid up with an investment trust also vanishes with the failure of the company. This man, who had led a staid and law-abiding life, suddenly decides to serve a vengeance on the society held responsible for his misfortune. He begins by pilfering and hits at the rich. His misdemeanors gradually get worse until he becomes a criminal and an alienated "madman". He is masterfully impersonated by François Simon, son of the French

actor Michel Simon, and locally famous for his creation of the *Théâtre de Carouge* in Geneva.

The particular rigid form of Swiss film censorship is another aspect of the cinema in Switzerland which will be called to change. Censorship is a cantonal reserve. As cantons vary in their severity, one film may be allowed in a particular canton and forbidden in another. The people of Lausanne have often had to drive the 40 miles to Geneva just to see a film banned in their own town. The degree of abridgement of "X" films also varies greatly from one city to another—as some are more puritanical than others.

The executive council of Basle Town will recommend to the Great Council a revision of the 1962 Cantonal law on public performances. This law lays down that only "*sittlich einand-freie Filme*" may be screened in public. The difficulty lay in the correct definition of what was "morally acceptable". No such description existed with any degree of universal validity. The notion of a moral acceptability had moreover developed significantly in the last few years. It was therefore felt that the public should be allowed to decide for itself what it was to see or not to see. The proposed revised law will not try to draw a line between morally acceptable and unacceptable films. All films will be acceptable as long as they conform to the "*Rechstordnung*". A blurred definition will be replaced by another—but the law will at least be keeping pace with the times.

Zurich was another town suffering from an oppressive film censorship. The people of the town have voted a new film law with a sizeable majority on Sunday, February 7th. Censorship as it existed in Zurich ever since the cinema existed will disappear. Films will no longer be arbitrarily cut by police censors. The Zurich public will now be able to see all the unabridged films it could wish to see as long as these films are not in breach of federal and cantonal regulations on obscenity.

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AN UNDERGROUND CINEMA?

One of the films most noticed at the Swiss Film Festival at Solothurn at the end of January was "*Nathalie Ciné-roman*" by Marcel Leiser. This freelance producer has already made himself locally renowned for a film called "*Une Fille et un Fusil*" which hit at military service. It had caused a small scandal at the time.

Leiser teamed up with a couple of other younger cineasts to create a distribution network for 16-mm films not acceptable for the commercial circuit, but films which could find an eventual audience in youth centres, theatres and pocket cinemas. In this way quasi-amateur films can now produce returns to some extent and permit some form of production. However, this kind of cinema will never reach the position of the American underground cinema, which enjoys a parallel and virtually self-sufficient circuit. Leiser believes that an outlet for these films could be found in television, although that was not possible in the present circumstances. Most of these small-scale and personal productions are too much of a political nature. They lack in respect towards certain Swiss taboos and are too audacious to please a TV audience. Leiser finds that there is in Switzerland a "marginal cinema", of which he is an unwilling representative, because the Confederation supports only those producers who have proven themselves. "There may well be a chance of winning funds after the completion of a film, such as premiums for quality, but the Federal Commission and Pro Helvetia are very traditional organs with very few members competent in the realm of the cinema. There are representatives of the Frauenverein, of the Police, all people with little knowledge of the cinema. They tend to support very classical films. Documentaries, for example, have been abundantly subsidised in Switzerland".

Leiser turned out his film "*Nathalie Ciné-Roman*" in 16 days only with the help of amateurs and half-professionals encountered in bars and cafés. This could naturally only lead to a rather raw expression attesting to the difficult conditions under which Swiss producers have to work.

THE TOLL OF SWISS ROADS LAST YEAR

Switzerland had a particularly macabre record in 1970. There were 75,500 accidents, wounding 35,600 and killing 1,694 people on Swiss roads. A stark increase on the previous year. The analysis of these accidents showed that 80 per cent of them involved cars. These accidents however produced only 691 fatal victims—that is, less than half of the total. The next contingent in the army of victims were the pedestrians, with 545 killed, 134 of whom were children. Two-wheel vehicles of every kind killed 445 people. A hundred and fifty-two people died in moped accidents, 123 cyclists were killed, 133 motor-cyclists and 37 scooterists found an untimely death on their machines. Further enquiries showed that a majority of car accidents were a result of speeds unadapted to road conditions. Other major causes were dangerous bends outside localities, inattention at zebra crossings and priority crossroads and miscalculated overtakings. Two hundred and thirty-two, or 13 per cent of all fatal accidents, could be attributed to drunkenness. Although 100 km of National Highways were opened to traffic last year, the death toll on the network has changed little with respect to the previous year and rose by six victims to 59 dead. The cost of these accidents to insurance companies amounted to 220 million francs.

(ATS)

A VERDICT FAVOURABLE TO RELATIONS WITH ALGERIA

The decision by a Geneva court to constrain the Geneva branch of the *Banque Commerciale Arabe* to surrender 39 million francs held in the name of a former leader of the National Liberation Front to Algeria will have a soothing effect on the relations between Switzerland and Algeria.

This fund was the "war treasure" of the National Liberation Front and was brought to the security of a Swiss-based bank by one of its former leaders, Mohammed Ben Khider, at a time when he had distanced himself from the other leaders of the revolution. The

Algerian Government had never ceased to claim this money since independence and the refusal to do so by a bank acting within Swiss banking law was a cause of tension between the two countries. The asylum granted by Switzerland to political enemies of the Algerian regime was another sore point. Switzerland had her own complaints against Algeria for the use of Bero-munster's wave band and the occasional interference with regular Swiss radio programmes. The Swiss Government was unsatisfied with the paltry compensation given to the many Swiss expropriated at independence and after. Also, Algeria refused to stage an exhibition at the Comptoir Suisse and Switzerland was not on show at the International Algiers Fair. A number of Swiss nationals have been jailed in Algeria. It is now hoped that the decision taken by a local court and independently of Berne to compel a Swiss Bank to remit funds deposited by a person who had died belonging to a defunct organisation to the country of origin will make the climate suitable for a resumption of negotiations between Berne and Algiers. A first lap of these negotiations had lasted from October 1968 to April 1969.

THE LIVELINESS OF POLITICAL LIFE IN A SWISS TOWN

The people of Geneva have had to vote credits of 48 million francs for the improvement of Cointrin airport on Sunday, 7th February. This was a local issue coming up simultaneously with the question of federal voting rights for women. It was known that the Municipal Council had earmarked this sum for the airport, but a number of parties in disagreement with such an expenditure called for a referendum.

It is typical of the fragmentation of Swiss political life that there should be such a spectrum of opinion on a relatively clear cut and financially minor issue. The "*Tribune de Genève*", Geneva's profuse evening paper, asked the seven parties of the city how they felt about the proposed expenditure a few days before the vote.

The *Radicals* accepted it. They believed that proposed improvements in

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the security and capacity of Geneva's intercontinental airport were not the prelude to a drastic increase in its surface and nuisance to the population of the area. The airport would be sufficient as such for Geneva for many years to come. The extensions had mainly been imposed by an outside factor against which the people of Geneva could do nothing: The introduction of a new generation of giant airliners. The advantages accruing to Geneva from the proposed changes would be great in comparison with their cost. Geneva absolutely needed to compensate its inadequate road and railway connections with the rest of the world. An airport was vital and it could indeed be adapted to modern circumstances without risking the sanity of a quarter of the canton.

The *Christian Social Party* agreed with the recommended expenditure because of the importance of the Airport to the improved social conditions of Geneva. The Party abided by the fundamental option that progress should be subordinated to man, but in the particular case, there was no serious danger that a development enforced by the conditions of modern travel should impede the life of Genevise people. The changes proposed only consisted in adapting the runway and landing facilities of the Airport to its new passenger terminal and would not have any bearing on its future size. The main concern of the Party was the disturbance of night flights. It had tabled a motion at the Great Council in favour of legislation banning such flights.

The *Vigilant Party* was opposed to the use of all but three million francs of the 48 million destined to the Airport. This marginal sum was originally intended for improved radar control. The Party, which was the first to ask for a referendum against the expenditure, maintained that the sole results of the works at Cointrin would have been to encourage yet a further surge of passenger and freight traffic. All this meant more infrastructure, more hotels, more job requirements and hence more foreigners and more economic bottlenecks. Making the airport bigger thus went straight against the federal policy of economic damping and labour stabilisation. The Vigilant Party will make demands at the Great Council for a precise determination of the zones of aircraft noise and permitted construction, and obtain a planning law similar to Zurich's and will ask the Geneva authorities to seek for an answer to the dangers to the environment brought about by a large airport. They believe that the proposed expenditure will automatically entail a drastic and unplanned enlargement of the Airport and are determined to withhold their support to all improvements until a detailed report on its planned future will have been worked out.

The *Socialist Party* is also concerned by the effects on health of the

noise, bustle and pollution of an airport which may be too large for a town like Geneva. It therefore rejects the expenditure in bulk because of the items specifically devoted to an enlargement of the Airport's capacity. The Socialists consider that man should know how to control economic development and not allow it to overwhelm him. A detailed study of the effects of airport noise and pollution on the neighbourhood is therefore asked for. The Socialists believe that the proposed works are intended as a first step to drastic developments of the Airport. A further credit of 160 million francs was known to be already in the minds of airport officials, and a third runway costing over a billion francs was already talked about. It was first necessary to clearly define the options concerning the Airport before engaging on investments that would have long term implications. The Socialist Party was not ready to sacrifice Geneva, with its housing and social problems, to its airport.

The *Labour Party* (Parti du Travail, a Communist movement) rejected a relatively small slice of the expenditure because it amounted to paving the way for a monstrous billion-franc runway that would cut through the villages of Collex and Bossy. The Party found that the Municipal Council was ready to sacrifice the tranquility and health of Geneva's population for an unbridled economic development—in which the Airport would play a dominant role—which would primarily benefit a minority of rich people. Geneva's social equipment was inadequate. It was impossible to find funds for cheap housing, but for a prestige project like Cointrin it was always possible to find money. The Labour Party considered Geneva Airport to be large enough as it was and found no reason why it should rival with the great airports of the world.

The *Liberal Party* accepted the expenditure while at the same time supporting every measure undertaken to fight against noise and pollution. It believed that the proposed works would not involve an enlargement of the surface of the Airport, but only increase its security and improve the smooth flow of passengers. It was a natural continuation of the extensive investments in the terminal accepted by the people of Geneva and it was a pity not to finish the job. The opponents to the expenditure, if they won, would carry the responsibility of having blocked investments improving the security of airline passengers. The Liberal Party had a pragmatic view on the problem of Geneva airport. Geneva didn't have to vie with the great capitals, it just needed an airport. This admitted, the airport had to be up to the standards of modern aviation. Geneva could not hope to sustain its vital role in international life and its economic standard without such an adequate airport.

The *Independent Alliance* was also in support of the improvement of the Airport. It was made in part necessary by the introduction of Jumbo jets and there was nothing one could do about that. The Airport would continue to be a boon to Geneva's economy. If it should be allowed to become inadequate, then the rival airport of Lyon would soon succeed in taking traffic away. If Geneva didn't have a decent airport, it would just be a small provincial town which the planes would be content to fly over.

The people of Geneva finally settled the issue by a pin-head majority: 34,583 were for the expenditure, 34,259 against.

SEQUEL TO THE CLOSURE OF THE LINDENHOF BUNKER

Since the closure of the Lindenhof Bunker on 7th January, the evicted "autonomous youth" of Zurich has taken to gathering in the vast underground shopping centre that now lies below the Bahnhofplatz and links the Railway Station to the Bahnhofstrasse. About a hundred of these young people usually met there in the evening to listen to the harangues of their leaders blaring through megaphones. Having turned "Shopville" into a kind of speakers corner, they pestered passers-by in convening them to their sessions. The police were soon swarmed with complaints and reacted by making a swoop in which 60 young people were brought to the police station for identity controls. Most of them were soon set free. A few foreigners were told to leave the town and minors were driven back to their parents. The Police announced that further swoops would be carried out if necessary. But the autonomous youth of Zurich showed no intention of relenting and was holding a meeting in the Bahnhof underground centre the day after the swoop. A drawn out trial of force between a fringe of the youth of Zurich and the Police may now well have begun.

THE PERSONAL TOUCH

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THE MISADVENTURE OF A SCOT IN GENEVA

An un-named Scot living in Geneva for the last ten years was shocked by the fact that the Swiss postal services were losing five million francs a year in the administrative cost of handling the prizes of fourth-rank winners on the Sport Toto (Swiss football pool) and the Lottery. He decided that something ought to be done about it and, in all good faith, published an announcement in the papers asking for Sport Toto better to give their opinion. This was an honest personal enquiry. The announcement was printed separately and sent to better holders a Sport Toto or Lottery account.

The management of the Sport Toto reacted immediately. It wrote to its account holders telling them that it hadn't sent the announcement and that the answer slips should not be sent back to Sport Toto. It also lodged a complaint against the Scot for "the abusive use of the names of Sport Toto and Number Lottery" and asked the postal services to block his postal box address.

The Scot reacted with the violence that Scots can show in these circumstances and counter-attacked by suing the Sport Toto for libel. The Court recognised his entire good faith and decided to dismiss the case, a decision against which the Sport Toto has already appealed. There remained the complaint for libel of the Scot. He appeared before the Magistrate accompanied by the talented football champions Philippe Pottier and Roger Bocquet. Sport Toto's representative was absent, but he was excused by a lawyer. The hearing didn't go very far because the Sport Toto lawyer denied all competence to the court. The alleged libel had been committed in Lausanne and Swiss law stated that libel cases have to be handled in the district where they were committed. The fiery Scot had to go home with his sportive escort—until they meet again in Lausanne.

(La Suisse)

OTHER NEWS

The stately railway station at Lucerne has been destroyed by fire. The "Roi Soleil" Hotel at St. Moritz has also been gutted by a fire which fortunately made no victims among the 400 guests. The Christian Social Party has published a manifesto calling for a full-time and salaried Federal Assembly and a coalition government. The eighth revision of the Old Age Pension has been the subject of heated debates at the National Council and the principles of the "three pillars" of old age were upheld. The discussions between Italy and Switzerland on the status of Italian workers which broke down in December will be resumed. The Italians are anxious that their nationals should enjoy the same rights as their Swiss work-mates.

BUSINESS NEWS

MEDICAL ELECTRONICS— A NEW FIELD OF ACTIVITY FOR SWISS INDUSTRY

At the beginning of September, 1970, the Swiss pharmaceutical group Hoffmann-La Roche and the French firm Electronique Marcel Dassault (EMD) signed an agreement on industrial co-operation which opens up new vistas in the field of medical electronics. By the terms of this agreement—which must still be submitted for approval to the French Ministry of Economics and Finance—the medical division of EMD assigns its patents and manufacturing licences to the Swiss firm, which undertakes to exploit them on a world-wide scale.

This is not the first time that Hoffmann-La Roche has signed an agreement regarding medical electronics. The firm first manifested interest in this line several years ago and it is perhaps worthwhile retracing the various stages through which its activities in this field have passed.

The first steps

It was in 1966 that Hoffman-La Roche first entered the medical electronics field. At that time its interest was directed towards the USA and found support from the Radio Corp. of America (RCA). On the basis of the agreement reached between the two firms the latter contributed the electronics know-how it had acquired in its space research work and Hoffmann-La Roche made available its medical and commercial infrastructure. It was not very long, however, before differences of opinion arose as to the form the collaboration was to take and in 1968 the two partners decided to separate. Hoffmann-La Roche resumed possession of the joint subsidiary which had been set up in the USA and decided to concentrate its research work at its Basle headquarters. It was nevertheless plain that the activities of the Swiss firm in medical electronics, which was a new field of operations for it, could be successful only if they were backed by an adequate technical infrastructure. It was for this reason that it sought to join forces with new partners.

In quest of a technological infrastructure

A first step in this direction was taken in 1967, when Hoffmann-La Roche was able to secure a 25% holding in the capital of the Société Genevoise d'Instruments de Physique (SIP). This firm specialises in the manufacture of high-precision apparatus and enjoys a world-wide reputation. Its experience in this field helped to pave the way to the manufacture of instruments of the highest precision capable of meeting present medical standards.

Once it had assured itself of the experience of SIP in micromechanics, Hoffmann-La Roche had to find a partner that could supply the necessary

electronics infrastructure. Negotiations with Brown, Boveri & Company Ltd. in Baden led to an agreement being signed in June 1969 by the terms of which the two firms covenanted to collaborate in the development of instruments and apparatus for medical electronics.

It was natural that the Basle chemical group should see in Brown Boveri, the Swiss electrical engineering giant, a partner capable of supplying the electronic know-how it needed. More than 10% of the Baden company's turnover is in the electronics field, which it is anxious to expand. Moreover, it has a holding in Faselec, a company formed a few years ago on the initiative of the Fédération Horlogère and specialising in miniature circuits. Finally Brown Boveri has perfected the famous "betatrons", which are used in the treatment of several diseases and, in the latest versions, develop an energy of 45 million electron volts. Today Brown Boveri, along with Siemens, is still the only firm in the world manufacturing these apparatuses.

The creation of this triangular "pool" assembling Hoffmann-La Roche's knowledge in the medical field, Brown Boveri's in electronics, and SIP's in micromechanics, is the upshot of a long process which has led Swiss industry to concentrate its efforts in those specialised sectors in which it particularly excels. All the same, medical electronics is an avante-garde sector where a great deal of spadework remains to be done. It is for this reason that, on the conclusion of the agreement between Hoffmann-La Roche and Brown Boveri, the assumption was that the collaboration between the two firms would initially take the form of research work aimed at exploring the possibilities of applying electronic techniques to medicine and biology. It was anticipated that a number of years would elapse before actual manufacturing of the apparatus could be taken in hand and a pivotal role was assigned to SIP in this connection. However, the recent agreement with Electronique Marcel Dassault alters the situation to the extent that it now seems likely that the manufacturing stage, i.e. the production of medical apparatus, will be reached more rapidly than had been originally thought.

Dassault products fill a gap

By assigning its patents and licences to Hoffmann-La Roche, Electronique Marcel Dassault is in fact giving up the manufacture of medical apparatus whereas the Swiss group acquires the right to exploit the apparatus in question commercially. Mainly concerned are the "Monitor V", an apparatus permitting simultaneous surveillance of several patients and already installed in a number of hospitals, the "Groupamatic", an apparatus for automatic blood-grouping highly rated on the world market, and various other instruments. Thus, for the first time in