

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: - (1972)
Heft: 1647

Rubrik: Comment

Nutzungsbedingungen

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. [Mehr erfahren](#)

Conditions d'utilisation

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. [En savoir plus](#)

Terms of use

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. [Find out more](#)

Download PDF: 15.01.2026

ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>

years ago. Today, its problem is to handle over-abundance and improve the quality of life of its citizens. In the first place, we should preserve or re-create the vital spaces indispensable to our well-being. On 6th June, 1971, the Swiss people set the Confederation launching on a global environmental policy. The task of protecting our environment calls for careful planning and regional planning. This is absolutely necessary if we want to leave our children a worthwhile heritage of humane towns, regenerating landscapes, unspoilt lakes and forests. But before we can act in an efficient way, we will have to agree on basic conceptions.

In the field of education, the Confederation will in future have to assume a more active role and take initiatives. It has already undertaken to promote the growth of universities, the implementation of a goal-oriented science policy and increased art sponsorship.

When we think of the future, our thoughts naturally turn to those who will take this future in hand: The young of today. Until now and with a few regrettable exceptions, youth has not caused us problems beyond our understanding. Yet we have to realise a certain "malaise" exists among a great many young. With some, it is expressed by an indifferent attitude and by self-centredness, with others it comes out as a systematic opposition to the established order. These are phenomena which we may not ignore. We must especially help the young who ask questions, with an often highly critical mind, on our existing institutions and on the future of our country.

Several recent publications develop ideas worthy of interest and which we should take very seriously: I am thinking in particular of the latest annual pamphlet of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique entitled "Which Switzerland do we want?". We can only hail the sense of engagement and criticism of this publication.

But to solve all these problems, we need adequate financial means. We will have to find new resources. But that is not all. We also need to

have a sense of measure. In my 1st August speech, I urgently appealed to my compatriots to act and think along those lines. We cannot allow the State to degenerate into a gigantic services enterprise. Before calling on its assistance, all people concerned, whether in Switzerland or abroad, must think of the ways of solving their problems by their own means. This old truth is expressed by the popular adage: Whoever seeks a helping hand will find it at the end of his arm!

COMMENT

END OF THE MILAN-CORSAIR SAGA

Six years after it had been decided to equip the Air Force with a new ground-assault jet fighter, after years of painstaking evaluation, controversy and political upheaval, the Federal Council announced that it had made up its mind: Switzerland would buy neither the "Milan" nor the "Corsair"—the two contending aircraft which had survived a lengthy process of elimination.

The two reasons put forward were as follows: First, Mr. Rudolph Gnaegi, Head of the Military Department, explained that the deficit between federal income and expenditure has soared in the recent past. Spending the planned 1,400 million francs on a new aircraft would make the situation worse and run against the government's fight against inflation and economic overheating. Mr. Gnaegi added that the destination of 80 per cent of federal expenditure was fixed by law. This lack of flexibility made it therefore impossible to spend money on new planes at the expense of other defence and civilian commitments.

The second reason put forward by Mr. Gnaegi was that military conceptions had changed since 1966, the year when it was decided to find a replacement for the "Venom" and when the specifications of the new

machine were first laid down. He said that this about-turn fell within a general reconsideration of national strategy. The Military Department would be asked to make temporary proposals. This was understood to imply the purchase of more refurbished Hawker-Siddeley "Hunters", thirty of which have already been supplied to the Air Force.

Thus years of efforts by military experts were spent in vain. They performed their job to the best of their ability, although their final conclusions in favour of the Corsair left room for some doubt. One understands nonetheless that they should be bitter over this outcome. Early in August, Mr. Heiner Schulthess, Head of the Armaments Division of the Military Department, had resigned in protest against the Government's delay in taking a final decision after it had received formal recommendations in favour of the "Corsair" by the Military.

The reasons put forward by the Federal Council are definitely weak. The planned expenditure had been accepted and budgeted. The Government had several years during which to decide whether the country could afford the necessary 1,400 million francs. Everyone had been prepared for the expenditure and one is surprised that, all of a sudden, the figure should have been deemed of forbidding magnitude.

The Federal Council also had six years to define strategies. The minds of colonels, politicians, military experts and other pundits were set the task of elaborating new strategies for the seventies and eighties. The concept of "global defence" of national territory was evolved during that period. New military etiquette was introduced in the forces. The Swiss Little Red Book, that gem of military thinking, was distributed to every household in the land. And yet, despite all that intellectual effervescence, the Government was unable to make up its mind when it came to the crunch. We should also note that the expenditure involved was quite moderate: a ninth of the annual budget and considerably less than what other similar countries, such as Belgium, Holland and Britain, are prepared to spend, all things being equal.

The Government has therefore shown that it didn't know what it wanted.

This having been said, we should be thankful for the outcome of the Milan-Corsair saga because, as the French saying goes, "dans le doute abstiens toi". Secondly, it is true that neither of the aircraft were entirely satisfactory. The selected "Corsair" was at the end of the production line and had been withdrawn from Vietnam operations. The "Milan" had not yet proved itself with other foreign air forces. One can also argue that

PROCTER & GAMBLE in Geneva is interested in YOU

- If you are Swiss and fluent in English
- If you can type, use shorthand or a dictaphone
- If you are interested in getting to know your country better
- If you are keen on becoming an experienced

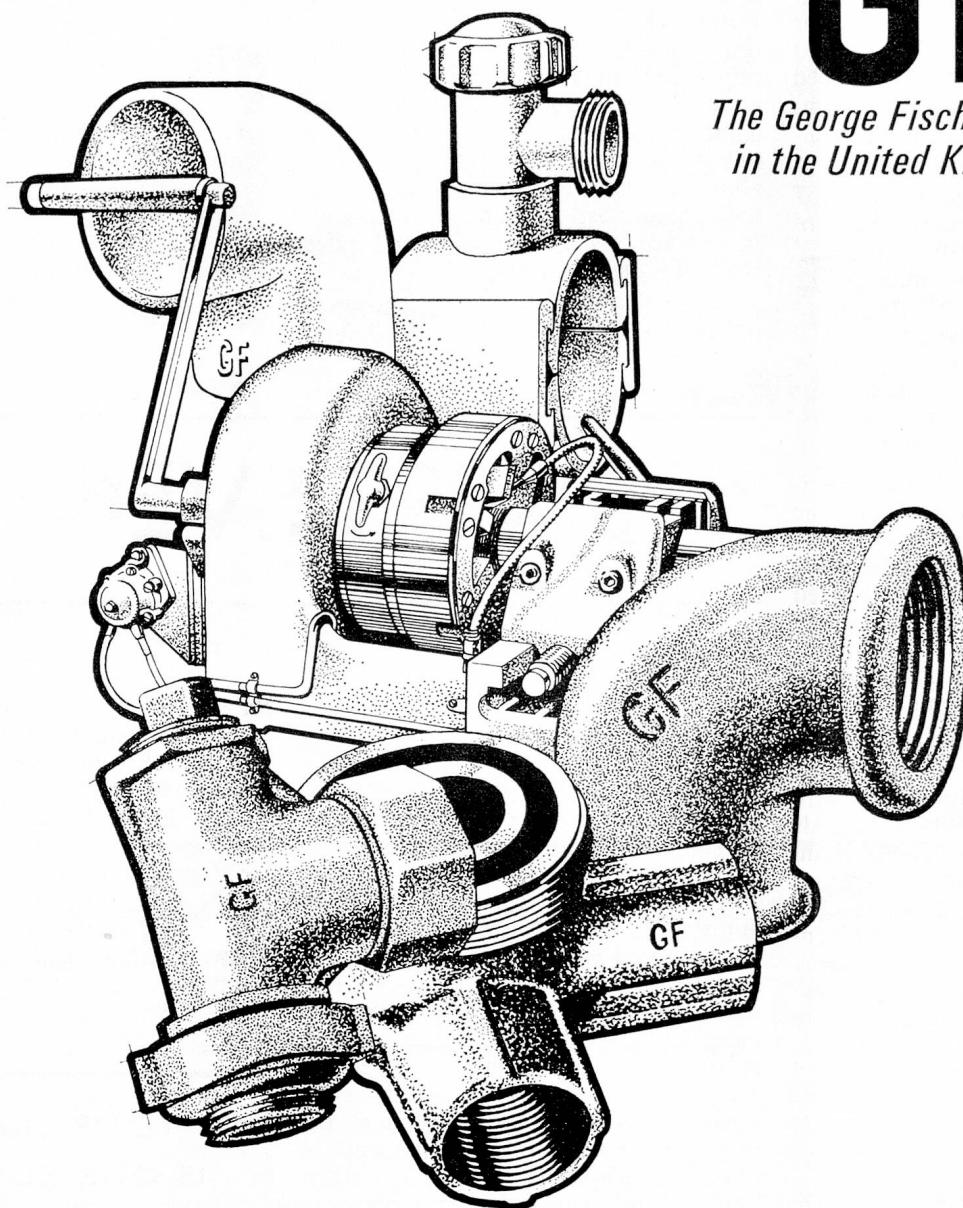
SECRETARY

Please write to: Procter & Gamble A.G., Personnel Dept.
80, rue de Lausanne, 1211 Geneva 2.

INTERVIEWS WILL BE HELD IN LONDON

GF

*The George Fischer Group
in the United Kingdom*



GEORGE FISCHER CASTINGS LIMITED Bedford

Manufacturers of GF malleable iron pipe fittings, flexible couplings and castings.

GEORGE FISCHER PLASTICS LIMITED Huntingdon

Manufacturers of GF plastics pipe fittings.

LE BAS TUBE COMPANY LIMITED London and Branches

The marketing organisation for products of the George Fischer Group factories in England and on the Continent – products renowned the world over for their quality, reliability and superb finish.

the nation has more pressing needs than jet fighters. We hope that these will never be used. Moreover, the risk of a war in Europe is at present remote.

But what is true of fighter planes is surely true of other military equipment. The Government apparently considered aircraft in a different light from other mechanised material for which it has not hesitated to spend heavily. However, forces equipped with efficient guns, lorries and armoured vehicles would be helpless without a proper air cover.

With the exception of our 57 Mirage III-S interceptors, the bulk of our fighting air force still consists of "Venoms" and "Hunters" built in the early fifties. The "Hunter" cruises at only 500 m.p.h. and can reach 600 m.p.h. in a dive. One fails to see how such a plane could be a match for modern fighters three times as fast and equipped with air-to-air missiles.

Why should aircraft be sacrificed to ground equipment? If the necessity of a modern army is acknowledged, then this army should be modernised all round. Mr. Gnaegi argued that buying sophisticated jet fighters would harm the "credibility" of Swiss neutrality. But the other costly weapons of the Army are also anti-neutral.

Much of this inconsistency reflects the dilemma of small countries trying to reconcile military credibility with their modest means. Military officials pressing for more defence funds claim that it is no use having an army if its equipment is inferior to the weapons put in battery by a potential enemy. This argument was the mainstay of the campaign launched by these circles when the Swiss people were called in the early sixties to decide on an initiative depriving Switzerland of all nuclear weapons. The anti-initiative posters showed a soldier with his hands chained.

Now it is the Government whose hands are chained by the fear of going all the way into making the Swiss army an efficient deterrent. By not buying a new aircraft, it has remained half way along the road. Its call for more strategic thinking is only a temporary way out.

In our view, the Swiss army, as indeed the army of any small country, can't possibly frighten off a potential invader. This is equivalent to putting in doubt the military use of our Army, however many millions the Confederation may spend. It is not contrary to patriotism to argue that "Hunters" and "Venoms" are symbols of limited military relevance. Yet they are necessary as the outward trappings of a national defence system. It is, after all, too early to disarm unilaterally. This can only be carried out on a multilateral basis, and that is why Switzerland is keenly interested in the

forthcoming European Security Conference.

Although our country appears to the tourist as the best defended in the world (with all these fortifications and the troops one meets on every train journey), Switzerland in fact spends less on its defence than any other modern country in the world excepting Iceland. Ignoring the loss of production through regular individual military commitments, Switzerland spends about 2½ per cent of its national income on defence. This is why the outcry of those dissenters who talk about a waste of money on guns is unfounded. Switzerland has enough money to buy a few guns and offer butter to the Third World.

The real reason for the existence of the Swiss Army is not to defend

the country against the outside but against the inside. The Army gives consistency to our nation. It is a vital part of the Swiss framework, a bond uniting people of every social background; a school in civic duty; a symbol of service to society; and one of the last remaining bulwarks of our values.

This is why the Army should be preserved and made as democratic as possible—and why the Declaration by the so-called Thirty Two should be rejected. The Thirty Two only see the symbols of death emanating from weapons. But weapons also breathe vigilance, discipline and unity. But to carry this symbolism, weapons need of course, not be of the most sophisticated and the most costly kind.

(PMB)

SWISS EVENTS

FEDERAL

The Confessional articles

The National Council voted by 121 to 3 in favour of a Government project calling for the abrogation of the two constitutional articles forbidding Jesuits from carrying out their ministry in Switzerland, and banning all new convents and religious orders. But the vote was not so clear-cut and smooth as the above tally seems to indicate. There were various counter proposals, all of which were rejected. These were: to substitute the suppressed articles' two addendas on religious freedom; to take this opportunity to do away with two other "confessional articles"—those preventing ministers of the Church from sitting at the National Council and preventing the Catholic Church from instituting new dioceses in the country; to submit the abrogation of the two articles under examination separately to the people. These proposals were turned down in successive votes.

The Munich aftermath

A few days after the massacre of the Israeli team at Munich, Interpol warned the Swiss authorities that a group of four or five Arab terrorists were planning to blow up refineries and industrial installations in Basle, Zurich and Geneva. Every customs office was immediately armed and surveillance doubled. Officers carried guns during the day and double-checked every Arab national crossing the border. No arrest was reported.

In another development, the American magazine "Newsweek" claimed that the attack on the Olympic Village had been planned in Switzerland. The magazine said that Mr. Daoud Barakat, who is officially the Yemen Press Attaché at the United Nations in Geneva, and, unofficially, the Representative of the Organisation for the Liberation of Palestine, played a major role in preparing the attack. "Newsweek" alleged that he had also taken part in previous raids by the

YOUR TRAVEL IS OUR BUSINESS

by air - coach - rail - sea
ANYWHERE IN THE WORLD
just the ticket
package holidays
independent arrangements
coach tours
cruising
car ferries
motorail
self drive cars
party bookings
private coaches
hotel reservations
no booking fee
Ask for free brochure from
A. GANDON

HOWSHIP TRAVEL AGENCY
(Established 1934)
188 Uxbridge Road, Shepherds Bush
W12 7JP
(next to Metropolitan Station)
Tel.: 743 6268
MEMBER OF ABTA