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# SWITZERLAND IN THE BRITISH NEWS MEDIA

Switzerland has been the background of various articles in the Press and features on television lately. The most prominent article which we came across appeared in the *Observer* Colour Supplement of 28th November, 1971. It was a highly dramatic report on pollution in Switzerland. Judge by the title: "Swiss shamed by new role" and by the script: "The country with the most baths in Europe is Switzerland, of course. It fits the cleverly purveyed image of the spotless clean country: inhabited by a people with an abhorrence of dirt, who earn their living in a modern, science-based industry. A country of hygienic watch factories in sylvan settings, of sanatoria in which invalids recover from tuberculosis. Such a reputation is worth money. Swissair advertise in American magazines 'Health Holidays in Switzerland' . . . But there is a second Switzerland: a country of untreated sewage and pollution . . ."

There follows a devastating description of environmental neglect in Switzerland, enough to scare away all tourists for ever. Although the feature tended to be sensationalistic and therefore offered an incorrect picture of truth, the list of facts recorded are worth mentioning. These were: Typhoid in Zermatt in 1963 with 310 casualties and two deaths; further typhoid outbreaks affecting 55 people in 1965 and 1966; barring of several consignments of Swiss cheese by U.S. health authorities; ban on swimming in Lake Lugano and several rivers, particularly the Limmat and the Sihl; the pollution of the Rhine, whereby Switzerland exported its pollution to neighbouring countries; Berne treats a third of its sewage and Vlais, Glaris, Grisons and Tessin have virtually no sewage plants (hem); Lake Geneva loses 30,000 tons of oxygen a year, it receives 275,000 tons of human fecal matter annually, there are 33 crude sewage discharges on the Swiss section alone, its eutrophication is speeded up by the proliferation of various vicious species of algae and there are no more correjones (cousin of the salmon) left at all; finally, Swiss farmers use 240 per cent more fertiliser than 20 years ago. The article concludes: "It has been pointed out that China would have a gross environment problem if it were inhabited by 700 million rich Chinese. The trouble with Switzerland is that it is the home of the rich Swiss".

The "Sunday Times" published three paragraphs on Switzerland in its series on the countries of the world. There was very little that could be said

in such a short space, and the article did little more than to harp on the women's newly-acquired right of voting and the multiplicity of banks in Switzerland.

Switzerland was the back-cloth of a television programme on the life and work of Karl Gustav Jung, produced by the specialist in religious sciences, Lawrence Van der Post. The series was very well done, rather in Kenneth Clark's "Civilisation" vein. It tended to make Jung look like a kind of religious guru whose contemplative life was spent in the secluded "temple" that he had designed near to his home in Kusnacht. The film surrounded Jung's career and personality with an aura of mystery which was highly effective. It stressed the metaphysical aspects of Jung's research, and relied more on evocation and suggestion to depict Jung rather than on the precise discoveries for which he is to be credited. It must have pleased viewers of all degree of education. One of its interesting features was the new insight given to laymen on Jung's rift with Freud.

The "Bird's eye view" of Switzerland screened on the evening of 26th December on BBC2 was of a quite different level. While it offered beautiful views of Switzerland taken from a helicopter wandering across the country (they must have been particularly vivid for the fortunate owners of colour TV sets) it was marred by an unbearably soppy commentary by the Swiss writer Herbert Meier. To illustrate its ponderous and at times plain "corny" style, it may be pointed out that the phrase "my country" was uttered 12 times and that the fallacy "Yes, Switzerland is a Christian Country!" was emphatically stressed three times, one occasion being when the camera was pointing at Basle Cathedral. As if the existence of cathedrals in Switzerland proved this assertion.

The commentator made a number of reflections with his awfully sincere and drooling voice about the Swiss people. They were supposed to be profound but were in fact inane. This sentiment was shared by many English viewers to whom the subject was relatively new. The film purported to offer a "new" picture of Switzerland, but we had in fact most of the usual clichés: Cows, folklore, landsgemeinde, the Gruetli and mountain resorts. A tremendous amount of footage was devoted to the Swiss Army and English viewers saw refurbished British-made Centurian tanks display their might on the training ground of Biere for an un-

duly long time.

The Midnight Mass from the Cathedral of St. Nicolas in Fribourg broadcasted on ITV at Christmas Eve was definitely more inspiring. Celebrated by Monsignor Pierre Mamie, Bishop of Western Switzerland, the Mass was broadcasted by Eurovision. The celebrated "Chanson" choir of Fribourg, directed by the Abbe Pierre Martin, made it a moving and grandiose ceremony.

Those admirers of Muhammed Ali had the opportunity to watch him dominate the German heavyweight Jurgen Blin and finish him off in the seventh round of a knock-about on the evening of Tuesday, 28th December. The fight took place in the Hallenstadion in Zurich and was broadcast direct by ITV.

A documentary on Switzerland's National Parliament shown on the "Europa" Programme on 3rd January. Produced by Swiss TV, it was spoilt by its mention of the "provident Swiss"—as though a stereotyped image *had* to be maintained.

Finally, an interview of Swiss au pair girls was broadcasted on a Sunday in October by BBC Radio 3. The interview took place in the hall of the Swiss Church in London. The girls were questioned about their work and living conditions. Asked about the way au pairs were received in English churches Pastor Marcel Dietler said that with a few exceptions Swiss youths in London found it hard to be integrated in English parishes. This was one of the reasons why they came to the Swiss Church although they would prefer to experience an English-speaking environment. (PMB)

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