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# The Swiss Observer

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viously overlooking some elementary facts, such as: A much longer period of military service, far higher taxes, less democracy and a lower standard of living.

## Guy Fawkes in Berne

"X" wouldn't be explicit on the means the militant and activist elements in Separatist movement intended to use to speed up the independence of the Jura. However, he said these portentous words, which I report with utter honesty: "I shouldn't be telling you this" (he hesitated for a moment, but the fact that I didn't know his name probably helped him to overcome his inhibition) but there is a plan to blow up the Federal Palace".

Not wishing to discourage him from revealing more details of this sensational plot by showing any signs of disbelief, I avoided making any flip-pant comment and asked him who were the people with such sinister designs.

"I can obviously not tell you. But don't be surprised if the Federal Palace is rocked by an explosion some time in the future. Some circles are considering this very seriously."

This all seemed very conspiratorial. My friend "X" spoke with utter seriousness and clearly believed in his assertions. To me, the odds were that he had picked up rumours from certain Separatist sources and taken them to be true. However anti-Bernese (and sometimes anti-Federal) the extremists of the movement have proved to be, the suggestion that they should go as far as to blow up the Federal Palace must be taken with a large grain of salt. At worst, someone might plant a

powerful banger in the corridors of the Federal Chancery, or daub official monuments with red paint. Yet it deserves to be put on record here and now that there are people in the Jura who appear to be informed of a planned bomb attack on the Federal Palace. No dates are given for the event and no explanation either.

At the long village of Tavannes, we halted for a drink. We went to look for one of "X's" friends and ordered large bottles of "Cardinal" beer in a deserted cafe. The friend, who was a lorry driver from the area, told me in answer to a question that he was basically anti-Separatist. This surprised "X" who was peeved to learn that one of his mates should have such a political stand. It surprised me too. If Jurassians should feel so strongly about the Separation issue, then one would expect that two acquaintances should be aware of their mutual political stance. In this case, two young people coming from the same town and obviously acquainted with each other for a long time were unaware of each other's political creed. The lorry driver discounted the Separatist demonstrations that had been going on during the summer as "nonsense". The other fellow reacted rather sharply. Later that day, when we had moved on to Moutiers and drunk our fifteenth beer, the effect thereof had loosened his already limited self-restraint, and he became rather aggressive.

## What the women say

Yet he and his mate the lorry driver will continue to remain friends in the future and will not be estranged by their conflicting positions on the Jura.

During the evening, I carried out an opinion poll among samples of Moutier's female population. The girls of Moutiers, I can testify, are in the main indifferent and unconcerned about the Jura problem. Nearly all of them seemed to have neither opinion nor interest. One girl called herself a member of the "Third Force", another unconvincingly said that Berne should leave the Jura, and a third opined that there would be no trouble in the Jura if people minded their own business.

The Separation issue certainly didn't appear to perturb the social life of the youth of Moutier. A party of young people having fun in a rather trendy cafe probably represented all political tendencies. German-speaking Jurassians were playing Jass in a *Brasserie* next to their "Latin" compatriots and none the worse for it.

Having spent my cheapest night in Switzerland (15 francs for bed-and-breakfast at the Post Hotel or Station Hotel, I'm not sure which) I set off for Délémont, the Separatist stronghold.

A curtain of rain veiled the charm of this ancient town with stone buildings. This is a town where the Separatists form the establishment. One is very far from Berne. At a news stall standing on a wet cobbled street, I bought the weekly organ of the *Rassemblement Jurassien: Le Jura Libre*.

With all its reputation, this weekly leaf, which has now been published for 23 years, has only four pages. There is surprisingly little to read in it. One full page has small adverts and the list of subscribers for various Jurassian good causes. The remainder consists of editorial material of a highly polemical nature. The *Jura Libre* is more of a regularly published political manifesto than of a newspaper.

In its 7th July, 1971 issue, the *Jura Libre* printed a ravishing elegy on the Jura people by Roger Schaffter, polemist, writer and Secretary of the *Rassemblement Jurassien*. Any translation would water down the lofty inspiration of his prose, where the reader is told, among many other lovely things, that in the Jura "*l'énergie a pris place à la résignation, la fierté affronte ouvertement l'injustice et le mépris* . . . ."

Let us hope that the opposing constituencies of the Jura will continue to limit their weaponry to words like these.

(PMB)

# COMMENT

## A WAGES AND INCOMES POLICY?

Switzerland is fortunately not yet at the top of the inflation league. With inflation rates running at a little under seven per cent, it is a long way behind the leaders, particularly Great Britain, and the Swiss Franc is still a strong currency. Yet its value suffered severe erosion and people are now thinking in terms of a wages and incomes policy. A man earning 2,000 francs a month in 1940 needed to earn 5,000 francs thirty years later to enjoy the same standard of living. A 3,000 franc a month salary was equivalent to 5,000 francs a month in 1970.

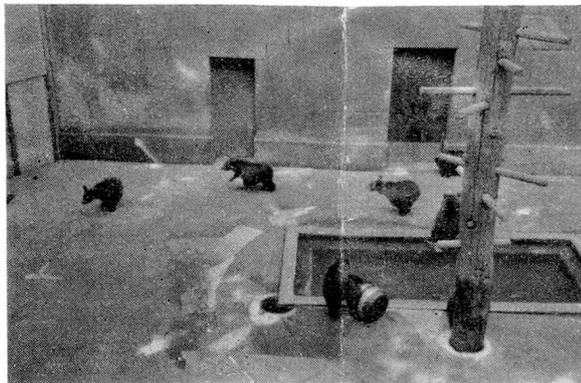
Shortly before the last elections to the National Council, the Vorort, an association of employers, suggested a prices and incomes policy with an increase of working hours. Swiss farmers were in favour of the scheme but the Trade Unions, for reasons best known to themselves, announced their firm opposition. Mr. Ernst Brugger, Head of the Department of Economy, initially

reacted with interest and then, backing down, said that the implementation of a prices and incomes policy would require the setting-up of an elaborate organisation, and recommended that the best way to hold prices down was by maintaining the dialogue between employer and unions and not making excessive demands.

He was in fact proposing a system in application for the past thirty years. Owing to the "Peace of Labour" spirit guiding collective bargaining, wage inflation has played a minor role in the rising cost of living. Besides the growing cost of imported goods, it is the pressures of labour shortages that have pushed prices up. Booming business meant that employers were prepared to pay skilled and unskilled labour exaggerated salaries for fear of losing their much-prized manpower to competitors. By refusing to agree among themselves on salary scales, employers in several branches of trade and industry have borne the responsibility of inflation.

For the Swiss Government, inflation is primarily due to a boom in the economy and its policy has tended to slow it down by clamping on imported manpower, by regulating the building industry, by calling on the cantons for more budgetary restraint and by tightening credit. The Federal Council can at present take far-reaching measures in emergency situations only—it cannot impose a wage freeze, for example. With a recent revaluation, gloomy trade prospects and an increasing number of firms in difficulty, pressures for a prices and incomes policy are bound to grow.

(PMB)



*The bear pits at Berne have been blessed by a brood of bear cubs which have given tourists delightful entertainment. They carousel, chase each other round the pit, romp with each other for hours and push each other in the pool. Nothing can tire them, not even the sweltering heat of last summer. When these cubs grow older they will become more lethargic. They will lumber despondently like their parents in the other pit, sit with boredom and stare up at the public, lapping the*

*carrots which children can buy at 50 cents a packet and which are the only goodies they are allowed to give them. Both pits have a high stump planted in the centre. This 10-metre high totem pole with uncertain hand-holds seems rather a challenge for 800 lb. beasts. Yet the bears not infrequently scale them, occasionally falling on to the hard paving of their closed-in universes. Yet no casualties have been reported. Bears are wise and take no serious risks.*

#### ANGLO-WORLD TRAVEL LTD: CORRECTION

In our account on the opening of the new Headquarters of "Anglo-World Travel Ltd." in our 14th January issue, we wrote that Mr. Gustav Scheller, Founder and Manager of this company, had been a co-founder of the Anglo-Continental School of English in

Bournemouth. We have been told that this statement, made in all good faith to situate Mr. Scheller to our readers, was incorrect. Although he became a Director of the School some years after its creation and played an eminent role in its success, Mr. Scheller was not one of its founders. Mr. Fritz Schillig, actual Principal Director, was sole founder of the Anglo-Continental School of English on 7th April, 1950.

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