

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: - (1973)

Heft: 1665

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: 19.04.2026

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

from primary production. The peasant, still predominant in the last century, now has become a rather lonely figure. In the last three decades, the disappearance of farm units has been rapid. At the same time, the average unit has become bigger than it used to be. Small-scale farming has been literally eliminated except in some mountain regions where this change is still in process now. But production has not decreased. Actually, the 7% peasants of today produce more than the 25% did before the Second World War. And, by state measures, largely *via* administered prices and direct subsidies, the agricultural income could roughly be kept on the same level as income in industry. The question is whether this situation can be maintained in the future. Would it not be better to give up intensive agriculture, turn to extensive agriculture and buy most food abroad at the best possible world market prices? For defence reasons, in order to guarantee an adequate percentage of good production inside the country, this solution, however, in spite of its evident economic advantages is not taken into consideration. But it seems inevitable that the role of agriculture in Switzerland will be somewhat different from the past. The peasant, and this especially under the influence of the new environment thinking, is not only useful because of what he produces, but he is looked upon as a "scenery gardener" who, by his work, saves the land from erosion and ruin for the good of the other 93% of the population who need fresh air and recreation. Plans are actually being made to change the traditional agricultural policy of consumer-oriented production and income to a scheme of subsidies which would partly be independent from the farmers' output.

"The rising volume of milk production has lately become a serious problem, and Swiss cheese, encounters more and more difficulties on the export markets. This is due to less and less competitive prices, but to some extent also to a change in consumer taste. Emmenthaler, for instance, seems to run into difficulties lately because of this! There is a problem, too, with excess production of butter. Thus it can be expected that the traditional production line of milk and dairy products will lose importance. Diversification will mark the agricultural picture of the future with perhaps more emphasis on meat production."

Stormy waters for Industry

Next, Dr. Boeckli turned to industry where a picture of change no less radical than in agriculture could be seen. Here too, a trend to concentration was making itself felt with an imminent danger of elimination for smaller units, especially family enterprises of the more traditional type. He mentioned the wide spread fear that the former classical industries which had so far survived fairly well, were going to be in stormy waters. It was possible that labour-intensive industries whose products were often of relatively

low value compared to the cost of raw materials, were on the way out, such as textiles, clothes, shoes, leather, wood and some branches of the metal industry.

The watch industry was meeting increasing competition from certain countries, especially in the field of cheaper-priced watches. The main problem appeared to be in the marketing of the product, not as yet in the product itself which still compared well and enjoyed a prestige advantage. The main industry, in the speaker's view, would probably be forced into a higher degree of concentration in order to survive in the most important markets.

Dr. Boeckli finally turned to the machine industry. "Some well-known firms seem to get into trouble because of the last international currency upheavals which hit them hard. This is more than a temporary symptom. It shows that the profit margins are narrow, and therefore the price competition has a tendency to be unfavourable for many Swiss products. It may be that innovations will hold the threatened front as has happened many

times before in the watch and machine industry.

"Better prospects may be forecast for the chemical and pharmaceutical industries, electronics, advanced food processing, banking, insurance and, of course, a wide range of service industries. It is possible that these industries show an even higher growth rate in future and largely characterise the industrial landscape of the country within the next generation, whilst the first-mentioned group of industries will eventually disappear from the Swiss scene because they are hopelessly outpriced."

The discussion following Dr. Boeckli's talk was in two parts and showed the immense interest the audience had taken in his exposé. Questions were pertinent and he answered them with skill and competence, enlarging on many of the points he had raised. His talk had certainly given much food for thought for any compatriot who has the future of Switzerland at heart.

M.M.

COMMENT

HOW ACCEPTABLE IS BUGGING?

While the Watergate affair was one of the most publicised issues in the West, a leader of the Separatist Movement in the Jura claimed last May that 48 leading Swiss politicians, magistrates and journalists had their telephone calls tapped. Referring to secret sources of information, he said that even the telephone of Mr. Kurt Furgler, "Minister" of Justice and Police, was being bugged. Mr. Furgler ordered an immediate enquiry and reported to Parliament six weeks later that none of these claims had been substantiated during a thorough check of the Capital's telephone network.

Meanwhile, it was disclosed that a bug connected to a micro-transmitter had been placed in the premises chosen at Epalinges (Vaud) by the Swiss Marxist League for their Annual Congress. This incident called for explanations. Mr. Furgler supplied them in particular during a debate on the reform of administrative penal law. While the Lower House accepted a heavy package of new proposals prepared by a special committee during several years of efforts, the delegates stumbled on article 66, which covered the use of bugging and other "spy" devices by the Federal Administration. Many parliamentarians felt that the article did not provide a valid legal foundation to the use of bugs. After nearly a full day's debate, the whole package was accepted but it was understood that article 66 would be re-examined at a future date.

Recognising that telephone conversations were being tapped in certain circumstances and defending this

practise, Mr. Furgler said that it was the responsibility of the State to be *aware* of the activities of organisations committed to the overthrow of the established order by violence and against the will of the majority. He stressed that the Swiss Marxist League, however insignificant numerically, had nonetheless tried to steal electronic material from an important firm in Baden and prevented the Colonel responsible for the country's military training from delivering a speech in Berne. "We must constantly be on the watch out for them", he said.

Despite protests from the left, the majority of the National Council endorsed Mr. Furgler's statement and implicitly admitted that privacy could be infringed by the State in the interest of Society. The controversy touched not on the principle of bugging, but on who should draw the line. So far it is the Federal police acting under the orders of the Federal Attorney. The use of bugs, an inherently anti-democratic concept, is thus resorted to at the discretion of an administrative machine upon which the people have only an indirect control. Similarly, the use of bugs by the White House and the FBI pertains more to private undercover dealings than to the watchfulness of a responsible society eager to preserve its values. The answer therefore would be to bring the whole bugging issue in the hands of a parliamentary commission and the judicial powers of the land.

Bugging is acceptable only if the elected representatives of the people can supervise the way it is put in operation.

P.M.B.