

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: Home news

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HOME NEWS

MR. GNAEGI VINDICATES SWISS DEFENCE

Federal Councillor Rudolf Gnaegi, Head of the Military Department, delivered an important speech on Army policy at the Annual General Meeting of the Society of Officers which was held at the end of June in Basle.

Mr. Gnaegi took the opportunity to reassert the country's official defence policy and of outlining a future Government white paper on the subject.

The Speaker stressed that a small neutral country was pledged to have a strong Army and rely on its own strength. Permanent neutrality required constant vigilance. The present situation in Europe and the that in east-west relations should not be a reason for shelving the country's weapons as the formidable armoury existing in the world today could still be used one day. Switzerland should be prepared for any sudden emergency.

Mr. Gnaegi concentrated a great part of his speech to the growing dissent of the young, who were not only questioning the relevance of the Swiss Army, but also the country's institution. According to Mr. Gnaegi, the only way to reverse this trend is by increasing efforts at the public of the Army's purpose. It was necessary to convince the people that the Army was still necessary, that it was not the affair of a small military and reactionary minority, and that Swiss values were worth defending. The Army was therefore an instrument of peace deserving the full support of every citizen.

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The end of Mr. Gnaegi's speech was devoted to the growing requirements of the Army in modern equipment. The sophistication of new weapons will require more and more funds. Although recent budgets have granted increasing priority to civilian expenditure, the Army will soon be compelled to claim a wider share of the budget if it is to fulfill its mission. Mr. Gnaegi added that Switzerland's basic policy was to maintain a strong army and demonstrate the country's strength as this was the only way that we could act towards peace.

In another development, General Staff Colonel Heinrich Wagner, outgoing president of the Society of Officers, suggested in a military review and a Basle daily that special anti-subversion forces should be set up in Switzerland. He claimed that various left-wing organisations were actively preparing to undermine the established order and that troops should be trained in street fighting. One of the organisations named, the Swiss Council for Peace, immediately countered with a declaration saying that Colonel Wagner's position reflected the "insecurity prevailing in military circles".

In his two articles, Colonel Wagner said furthermore that the Oswald amendments to military etiquette and standards had brought about a situation which was at the "limits of the bearable". The Oswald Report recommended two years ago a series of changes in military discipline to conform to the times. The new rules related in particular to dress and salute to superior officers. They were hotly debated at the time in every circle.

cost of an inflow of seasonals, who have increased since then by 50,000. The Government wishes to limit the issue of yearly-permits to 10,000 workers a year. In any event, it has to grapple with subtle arithmetics as it has promised the Swiss people to deal with the foreign labour problem efficiently. Too many foreigners displease the ordinary working man, but too few of them raises cries of distress from leaders of nearly every industry. There are about 1.1 million foreigners living in Switzerland and 800,000 of them working at any one time. This figure should be compared with Switzerland's total population of 6.3 million.

THE GOVERNMENT REJECTS A CALL FOR DIRECT INTERVENTION IN THE JURA

The Federal and the National Councils rejected a motion by a Jurasian M.P. calling for Government intervention in the Jura. Mr. Jean Wilhelm, Christian Democrat National Councillor from Porrentruy, in the heart of the Separatist district of the Jura, said that it was time for the Government to "find a viable and just solution" in the Jura as the situation had "come out of bounds" in the area.

In a long message, the seven-man Federal Council firmly turned down the proposal and remarked that Mr. Wilhelm had made no suggestion indicating how the federal Government should act. The Federal Government stressed that any direct intervention would be contrary to the Constitution. Cantons were guaranteed safeguards from such federal interference and were to solve their internal difficulties themselves. All the Confederation could do, and had done, was to encourage Cantons to work towards a solution. The Federal Council added that it was not desirable to alter the Constitution so as to allow for federal intervention in the Jura.

The worsening of the situation was due to the hard-line adopted by some quarters who refused all dialogue. The Government called on the Jurassian delegates both at the National Council and the Bernese Parliament to engage in discussion and not abide by their "empty seat" policy. This was unjustified as the Bernese Parliament had not yet decided on proposals for a new semi-independent status for the French-speaking districts of the Jura published two years ago. The Government strongly criticised, without naming them, the Separatist elements threatening the use of violence to reach their aims and expressed the certainty that "despite the strong words sometimes heard in the Jura", its population shared the feeling of the Swiss people and yearned for a negotiated and democratic settlement.

The motion was debated the same day at the National Council and defeated by a strong majority although some left-wing and Jurassian representatives

backed it. Mr. Wilhelm was charged by some speakers with making the situation worse by his own personal attitude to the Jura problem, but he stuck to his motion.

BRINGING PETROL TO THE MOTORIST

Switzerland could be faced by serious petrol-supply problems by 1980. Quite apart from the world energy crisis which effects all developed countries, Switzerland is more specifically faced with transport and refinery problems. The country presently imports 14 million tons of petrol a year (half of which is already refined and the remainder for refining at the Cressier and Colombey refineries) which cover 80 per cent of her energy requirements. This demand is expected to rise, although not at the same rhythm as during the past ten years, so as to reach 30 million tons at the turn of the Century. As the two existing refineries cannot be expanded for lack of space and environmental considerations, at least two new ones should be built to face the demand. But these projects are faced with the same problems. Another difficulty is that of transport. One tanker truck leaves Basle every 90 seconds during week days to distribute petrol across the country. Basle, which already handles 54 per cent of petrol imports, could theoretically handle more. But if the present pattern of distribution is left unchanged while demand soars, a truck will be leaving Basle every fifteen seconds at the end of the Century and cause unacceptable traffic problems. What is urgently needed is a third refinery linked to Basle by a pipeline but the experts believe this is a long way off.

Petrol prospection

After twenty years of small-scale efforts, petroleum prospection is still in limbo. Nothing of commercial interest has been found so far, although some petrol spouted from the ground at Essertines, in the Jura, in 1963.

Relying so heavily on petrol for its energy requirements, Switzerland would naturally consider with the utmost interest any prospects of producing her own petrol. Research has been confined so far on the Plateau. A company called Swiss Petrol in which various petrol companies and local or cantonal interests have a stake, has been directing this research which has recently concentrated on the Jura.

Six lorries specially equipped with devices producing vibrations in the ground are at work in the area. Seismometers deployed in the vicinity pick up the echoes, and this allows specialists to map the tormented profile of the Jura's subsoil and assess the chances that it may yield some petrol.

According to a man on the field, the echoes have been "good" but prospects for digging a well are still very far off. Despite this, 25 million francs have been invested in the prospection

work currently launched in Berne and Neuchatel. It is also hoped to find natural gas.

Lead-content of petrol produced

New limits on the lead content of motor and aviation fuel will come into force on 1st January, 1974. The maximum content for petrol will be set at 0.4 grammes per litre. It is actually 0.57 grammes per litre for super, and 0.54 for regular petrol. As for aviation fuel, its lead content will drop from 1.29 gr to 0.57 gr per litre. It is assumed that these limits will not impair the operation of ordinary engines.

In another development, Mr. Leo Schurmann, the Swiss prices watchdog has ordered petrol companies in Switzerland to cut back rises implemented at the end of May and revert to the former tariffs. Mr. Schurmann explained that the rises had been unjustified. Recent legislation gives him full powers to order such price reductions.

Underprivileged women

An assembly of women meeting at the "Congress for the rights of Swiss women" heard a socialist parliamentarian, Mr. Jean Ziegler, Geneva, claim that they constituted the "third-world" of Switzerland. The speaker stressed that the situation of women in Switzerland hadn't basically changed after an International Labour Organisation convention guaranteeing equal pay for equal work had been ratified by the Swiss. The granting of equal political rights (which had led women to hold 6 per cent of the seats at the National Council and one seat at the Council of States) hadn't furthered their promotion in any practical sense. He claimed that labour legislation was based on the "biological curve" of men and not of women. Mr. Ziegler, who teaches sociology at the University of Geneva, admitted however that this was also true of many other countries.

The theme of the two-day meeting was "Women in professional life". A woman-speaker illustrated it with figures. She said that in a firm at Fleurier (Neuchatel), men were earning 4 francs 90 an hour whereas women were getting only 3 francs 20. In neighbouring Buttes, women working half-time were getting only 2 francs 60. At Couvet, the Dubied machine company were paying men 4 francs 60 an hour and women 3 francs 40. Suchard (chocolate) were paying men 5 francs 55 and women only 3 francs 65. Moreover, women had lesser chances of promotion.

This situation also prevailed in the

civil service, where the Government had more means at its disposal to follow the ILO convention which it had ratified in 1971 after 20 years. Of 2,800 top civil servants, only 18 were women. But women built up more than 50 per cent of the workforce in lower echelons. According to the same speaker, two-thirds of young Swiss girls became salesgirls!

SWISS FIRM INVOLVED IN FOREIGN COMPANY CRISIS

A major Swiss firm is involved with the major industrial relations row that has aroused from the bankruptcy of the French watch company *Lip* in Besançon. The Neuchatel-based company *Ebauches S.A.* which manufactures over half the components which go into Swiss watches, took an interest in *Lip* over five years ago. Following the French firm's difficulties they bought the shares of its ambitious Chairman and General Manager, Mr. Fred Lip, and came to control 43 per cent of the company. This was the highest stake which a foreign undertaking could hold in a French firm under French law.

Although *Ebauches S.A.* had been the French firm's principal shareholder since 1967, it proved unable to implement urgent transformations in time. Owing to its top-heavy structure and loss-making machine tool and military procurement interests, *Lip* made steady losses every year while the Japanese firm *Seiko* and the American giant *Timex* (with a plant in Besançon) challenged *Lip's* position on the French market. *Ebauches* was called to ease the firm's cash-flow problems on several occasions but the situation, compounded by a worsening climate between an old-school and domineering management and shopfloor militants, continued to deteriorate. When *Ebauches* refused to guarantee further losses, the pool of French banks which had sustained the firm decided to suspend its support and *Lip* was declared insolvent last March. The company is theoretically administered by two liquidators, but the workforce, angered at being made redundant without notice, decided to stage a work-in.

This event caused the same sensation as the Upper Clyde crisis two years ago in Britain. The 1,400 employees took their ailing firm in hand, manufactured and sold pirate watches. This enabled them to have an extra month's wages and holiday pay but caused negotiations on their future to grind to a halt. The people of Besançon wondered how this challenge would end. At the end of June, it seemed that the rebels would not be able to continue going it alone after the July holidays. Although the people of the town admired their determination, they were at the same time a little uneasy at the extent of their struggle. As middle-class provincials, they thought that they had gone a little far in flouting the established rules of

ownership and company procedure. Ebauches S.A. issued a statement saying that the work-in would only harm the firm and refused to take part in labour negotiations until an end had been put to the "anarchy" prevailing in the Besançon factories. The Neuchatel firm was willing in the long term to help re-organise the barnacled company as long as its French partners were willing to co-operate.

Meanwhile, the Swiss Engineering Union, its French counterpart and an international federation of unions in the metal-working trades stated after a meeting in Berne that they would take "appropriate measures" to counter any move to dismiss workers in the Lip group or transfer production to another country.

subsidiary, Sapac Corporation, served a writ on Mr. Peter Walker, Secretary for Trade and Industry, through the High Court. The suit is expected to last for about two years. The Roche group wants damages for the losses incurred following the DTI's order (Roche Product claimed at the end of June that it had already lost £500,000 since April, when the price of Valium and Librium were reduced by 75 and 60 per cent of their 1970 levels). It wants the High Court to recognise that the Monopolies Commission Report and the price-reduction Order which it had motivated are "invalid" and "unfair and contrary to natural justice".

SWITZERLAND NO LONGER AS ATTRACTIVE TO FOREIGN BANKS

A recent survey shows that of the 487 banks operating in Switzerland, 97 are foreign (among them 23 American, 14 British, 13 Italian and 9 French) and have a total balance of 27.3 billion francs, or 10.7 per cent of the 255 billion francs which represent the total balance sheet of Swiss banks excluding private banks.

There has been a definite slow-down of business for foreign banks in Switzerland. Their balance sheet increased by 7.6 per cent last year as against 7.9 per cent for Swiss banks. The Federal Banking Commission has at present very few applications for establishment to examine. Foreign banks, 45 of which have their main offices in Zurich and 32 in Geneva, find Switzerland no longer as attractive as in the past. The new situation has been brought about by stringent monetary controls to protect the Swiss franc and stem inflation, and also by high capital requirements from the applicant banks.

These conditions have strongly reduced Switzerland's aura as a financial market at the heart of Europe and it is estimated that Switzerland's share in the growth of the Eurocurrency market is at most 6 per cent.

Foreign banks are of course primarily interested in international and foreign transactions. Swiss operations play an insignificant role and their Swiss holdings amount to less than a quarter of their resources.

Roche counter-attacks

Following a surprise defeat in the House of Lords, who rejected proposals for an enquiry into the DTI's price-slashing order on Librium and Valium, Roche Products Limited, Hoffman-La Roche (the mother company in Basle) and a South American

Two days after the writ was served, the Welwyn Garden City company threatened that it would raise the prices of Librium and Valium to their previous levels whether the DTI agreed or not. The surplus money would be put in a separate bank account controlled by its solicitors and stay there until the High Court proceedings would be completed. Alternatively, the DTI could formally undertake to pay the money eventually should it lose the action in the High Court. By taking this course of action, Roche hoped that the Government would have to apply for an injunction. A court would then decide quickly whether the banking idea is acceptable during the course of action in the High Court. These proposals were submitted to the DTI in a letter which appeared to precipitate the confrontation between the Swiss pharmaceutical group and the British Government.



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Heavy flooding in Central Switzerland and the Jura

Some of the worst rains Switzerland had experienced for years caused extensive floods in the centre of the country, where two people were drowned, and in the Delémont area of the Jura. The strongest rains poured on the weekend of 23-24th June and caused several mountain accidents. A rock as large as a house hurtled across the Visp-Zermatt railroad only minutes after a train had passed and bounded 90 ft. across a torrent before coming to rest. Two American mountaineers who had begun the ascent of the Matterhorn in excellent conditions were marooned by a

catastrophic change of weather and disappeared from the rock face.

Half of Delémont was under water. The river Sorne and the Ticle Canal merged into one torrent as wide as the Danube and the whole eastern approaches of the town was submerged thigh-high in muddy and turbulent water. The river Birse overflowed and on several stretches found relief in the adjacent cantonal road leading from the Jura to Basle. Several motorists were blocked; one had his car washed away and barely escaped with his clothes on. In the Zäziwil area of Canton Berne, torrential rains caused no less than 36 landslides.

NO QUESTION OF JOINING THE IMF

With the exchange rate of the American dollar falling from about 5 Swiss francs to below 3 francs Swiss currency has effectively been revalued by 43 per cent between May, 1971 and today. Mr. Nello Celio, Swiss Finance Minister, warned that the Swiss franc was actually overvalued and that Swiss business abroad could hold its own only because inflation in other countries was even higher than at home.

Speaking at a Press Conference, Mr. Celio said that the situation could easily deteriorate. He added that, although he was in principle opposed to the floating of the franc, this was inevitable under the circumstances. He claimed that the money market was 95 per cent influenced by capital movements and not by the exchange of goods and therefore beyond the control of individual nations. He said that confidence in the dollar had sunk so low that security could only be found in more tangible assets, such as gold.

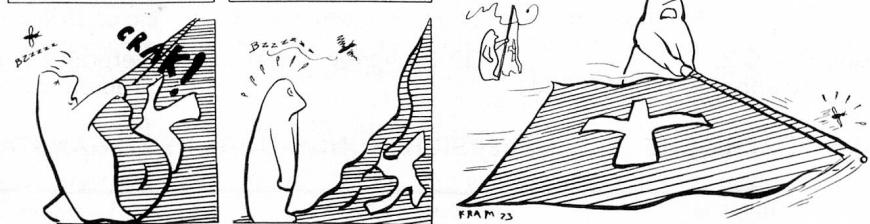
Contradicting various signs showing a change of the Federal Council's attitude in this matter, Mr. Celio stressed that it was "actually impossible" for Switzerland to join the International Monetary Fund. He then expressed considerable pessimism on the efficiency of this international monetary institution.

Although Switzerland takes part in the discussions of the "Group of Ten" which bring together the wealthiest nations in the world, she has firmly rejected all appeals to join the IMF.

The fall of the dollar has prompted bullish Swiss investors to spend massively on the American stock exchange. With such a favourable exchange rate and signs that the American economy is prospering, many investors (particularly the main banks) have found the risks worthwhile and have spent over a billion dollars on Wall Street during May and June.

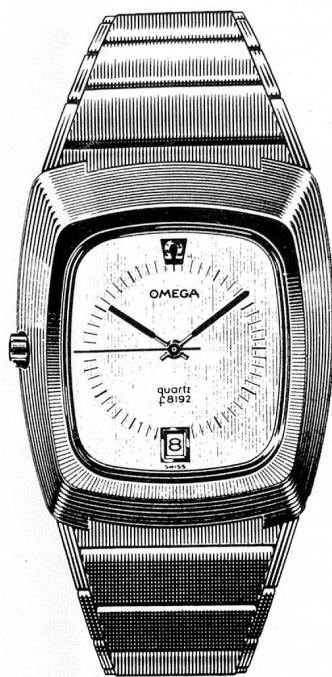
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Minister treks 500 miles across Canton Vaud to raise money for Church centre

A 60-year-old minister from Canton Vaud has launched a 500-mile march across the Canton to raise funds and sympathy for Crét-Bérard, the meeting place of the Protestant Churches of Vaud. Pastor Charles Nicole-Debarge, resident Minister at Crét-Bérard, set out on his long march as this church institution, which has played a steadily growing role, celebrated its twentieth anniversary. Crét-Bérard needs at least 500,000 francs for a new wing. Situated in the countryside above Lausanne, this centre is well known to many former Swiss of London as the ex-parishioners of the Swiss Church meet there every year. Pastor Nicole-Debarge is carrying out his venture with a 300 lb. wagon mounted on bicycle wheels which contains all he needs to sleep and to wash. During his long trek, he meets plenty of good will and helping hands to push his wagon when climbs get a little steep.

Swiss Embassy to be built in Peking

The Federal Council has asked Parliament to approve an expenditure of 8.9 million francs for the erection of Switzerland's new embassy in Peking. A long lease has already been acquired on a three acre plot of land in Peking's new diplomatic district, east of the capital. Work on the future Embassy should begin in 1973 and be undertaken by the Chinese. The Embassy in Peking will probably be smaller than the Embassy in London, which was budgeted at 11 million francs four years ago.

Electronic eye at Geneva traffic lights

Geneva Police has installed cameras at certain important crossings which will detect motorists driving through red traffic lights. This device, which is already in use in Zurich, takes two pictures at a second's interval of offending motorists. It is actuated only once the lights have turned to red. The device is aptly concealed and during the first four days of service had traced 190 offenders who were each fined 50 francs. This will help to pay for the apparatus, which costs 40,000 francs. The system not only gives an assessment of the offending vehicle's speed, but also of the exact lapse of time since the "reddening" of the lights. This new electronic spy should cause a minor revolution among Geneva motorists. One doubts that they have welcomed it.

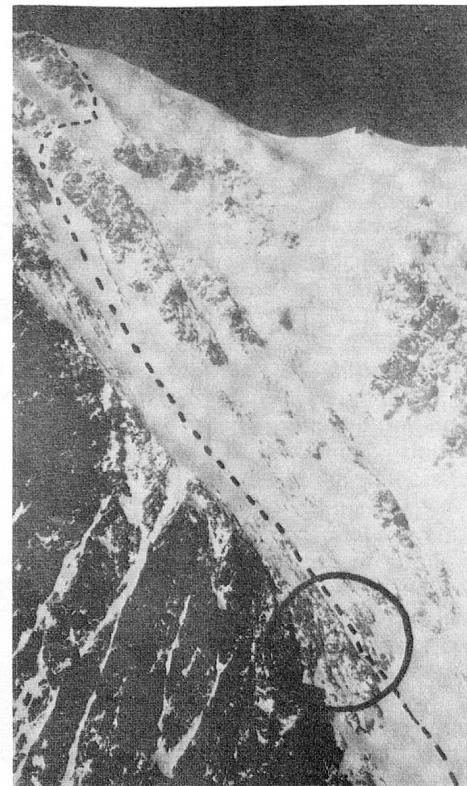
Great leap forward

A Swiss stuntman claimed a new world record for long jumping into water in a car. Driving ace Jim Stark drove at more than 62.5 mph to a ramp set up on the shore of a basin new Sion and then covered 47 yards in the air before landing in the water. The organisers said the previous world record was 39 yards.

Ski-stuntsman registers new performance

Sylvain Saudan, the Swiss suicide-skier, has achieved another incredible feat: he skied down the Mont Blanc by the west face and weaved his way through rocks, crevices and snow pits along precipitous slopes with 55 per cent gradients. Any faltering of concentration and slip would have meant probable death. But Saudan, having lost 900 ft. in altitude by using a path which would have awed inexperienced rockclimbers, vowed that he would improve on this exploit and ski next winter down the Aconcagua, 7,000 metres, the highest peak of the Andes.

Saudan, who is already 37 but contends that he is stronger than at 20 and ready to continue until he is 48, has already skied down Europe's most famous mountains, such as the Eiger, Aiguille Verte, Monte Rosa and Grandes Jorasses. Last year, he skied down Mount McKinley, 6,200 metres, North America's mightiest mountain. Saudan will not quit his career as ski-stuntsman until he has matched his skills with the Himalaya.



LETTER FROM SWITZERLAND

THE SWISS POST OFFICE: LESS THAN STERLING SERVICE

The following facts are a sad illustration of the deterioration in public services in Switzerland. At the end of May Federal President Roger Bonvin issued a public statement in his capacity of Chief ("Minister") of the PTT. In it he declared that he had given *instructions* to the administration and management of the PTT, according to which the proposed reduction from two letter deliveries per day and one on Saturday to one a day and none on Saturday *was not to take effect*.

Shortly afterwards the General Manager of the P.T.T. issued a communiqué according to which the instructions of the P.T.T. Chief were to be followed *as far as possible*.

A day later the District Post Master of Zürich also issued a statement, in which he simply declared his regret at being unable to maintain the postal services which had so far existed and that consequently certain sub-districts in the Zürich-agglomeration, for example Seebach, would from now on only get letter deliveries once a day, with none on Saturday.

The District-Postmaster of Küsnacht did not even bother to issue a statement. And when I asked our postman — a very nice and friendly man — what was to happen in Küsnacht, he told me that there had been a lively exchange of letters and telephone calls between Berne and the local Küsnacht Post Office, but that letter deliveries would definitely be reduced from two to one a day, with

none on Saturday as they did not have enough men.

Hitherto the first mail arrived round about 10 a.m. and the second one around 4 p.m. Now the one delivery we get arrives round about lunch time, between 12 noon and 1 p.m. and if anybody wants his letter-mail on a Saturday, he has to go to the Post Office between 10 and 11 a.m. to get it. Political Newspapers, however, are still supposed to be delivered the same day, even if this necessitates the postman calling twice a day. This decision followed violent representations made by the Swiss Newspaper Publishers Association to the Federal Authorities, representations made in the name of the right to information of the public and the freedom of the press. How this will work, remains to be seen.

The fact remains, and it is a fact which gives cause for anxiety, that the Political Chief of the P.T.T.-Department, Federal Councillor and at present President of the Confederation and thus the highest magistrate in the land, has issued firm *instructions* about a federal matter, which are not followed on the cantonal and local level. And this, without any doubt, is serious.

Switzerland is, so one is told, at present short of 400 postmen. Recruitment into their ranks is going badly, because in this country of high and sometimes very high salaries in industry, the pay the postmen get, especially in the lower grades, is frankly bad. But the postal authorities keep stressing that their remuneration cannot be substantially increased without a further substantial