

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: 1666

Rubrik: Home news

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HOME NEWS

THE INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS OVERHAULED

The organisation expected for many months at the International Red Cross Committee in Geneva has taken effect on 1st July. The world wide organisation has a new President to succeed Mr. Marcel Naville: he is Mr. Eric Martin, a distinguished Geneva surgeon and former dean of the faculty of medicine at Geneva University.

The reorganisation of an institution responsible for co-ordinating the work of the Red Cross across the world rests essentially on a separation between executive and legislative powers within the Committee and the introduction of fixed terms of office.

The new system effects a major break from the previous organisation, where the Committee, with a sub-Committee known as the 'restricted Committee', were theoretically responsible for legislative executive decisions respectively. However, the attributions of the two sections of the all-Swiss Committee was rather hazy.

This situation has been altered with the institution of an Assembly of 18 to

25 members responsible for establishing guidelines and policy decisions, and an *Executive Committee* of five to seven members whose mission is to carry out the decisions taken by the Assembly. The President of the latter is Mr. Eric Martin, whereas the President of the Executive Committee is Mr. Roger Gallopin, 63, a man who has spent his whole career with the Red Cross. A 'Methods Group' will act as consultant to the Executive Committee in a drive to streamline the organisation of the International Red Cross.

The co-operation system, whereby members of the Committee could hold their office until their death or retirement is replaced by fixed terms of four years. A member may be re-elected twice, which means that no one can remain an executive with the IRCC for more than twelve years. As hitherto, those sitting at the Assembly and the General Committee remain Swiss. This has proved necessary in times of war because it preserves the neutral image of the Red Cross.

The Vice-President of the Executive

Committee is Mr. Victor Umbrecht, a Ciba-Geigy official who is presently conducting relief operations in Bangladesh. He lived for several years in Britain. Mr. Max Petitpierre, former President of the Confederation and probably Switzerland's most eminent post-war statesman, also sits at the Assembly, whose presidency he has refused. He has nonetheless played a major role in the present re-organisation of the International Red Cross, the guidelines of which were laid down by a law professor from Berne, Mr. Rudolf Probst.

Acting on the orders of the Federal Attorney, Police in Zurich inspected the headquarters of the magazine *Offensive* following an article on recent manoeuvres in the Romont area. The story went into details of what happened during these manoeuvres and thus broke the 276th Article of the Military Penal Code which forbids all press disclosures of events happening during national service.

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REFUGEE-SMUGGLER SUFFERS SET-BACK IN CZECHOSOLOVALIA

An agent of the 'Aramco', the Zurich company specialising in the smuggling of people out of Communist countries of eastern Europe, has been sentenced to three years jail by a court in Tachov (Czechoslovakia). Ernst Honegger had been arrested last February at the border post of Rozvadov at the wheel of a car with a double floor concealing the company's 'clients'.

Honegger's trial was held with the greatest discretion. The Czech press didn't mention it at all. A Swiss consular official attended the proceedings.

This affair had caused a sensation in Switzerland last April when Mr. Hans Lenzlinger, boss of 'Aramco', bound and gagged one of his agents, Mr. Fahrni, and carried him in a wheelbarrow before the Federal Palace claiming that he has been responsible for Honegger's arrest. Mr. Lenzlinger was subsequently arrested on charges of 'sequestration of person' but released. He claimed that he could get Honegger out of jail 'within a month'.

Operation against Swiss watch imitation

A team of two police experts has recently toured Hong Kong and Singapore for ten days to persuade their respective governments to act with more determination against the manufacture of watches stamped with the false "Swiss-made" brand. The two men were Mr. Jean Benoit, head of the Swiss Interpol Office and Mr. Dominique Thomas, director of the foreign affairs division of the Swiss Watch-makers Federation.

The production of fake "Swiss-made" watches with mainly Japanese and Russian components is a thriving business costing an estimated billion francs' loss of watch-exports to Switzerland. Hong Kong is by far the main producer, but there is a chance that, with rising costs, this production may shift to South Korea

and Taiwan. Hong Kong exports about ten million units a year, mainly to Indonesia, India and Africa. Singapore is the main transit and distribution centre for this trade.

Although both Hong Kong and Singapore stand to lose by stamping out this industry (which is not really "illegal" as there is no international convention on counterfeit brands) they are nevertheless prepared to cooperate with Switzerland in this matter. In fact, Hong Kong has already inflicted severe fines on exporters and manufacturers of fake "Swiss" watches. Mr. Benoit explains this goodwill is due to the fact that both these financial centres have a reputation to defend. Hong Kong wishes to achieve prosperity but within ethical limits. As for Singapore, its main concern is to be the cleanest city of Asia. Long-haired tourists are mercilessly trimmed by customs men if they wish to visit Singapore, and cigarette stubs thrown on a public causeway are conducive to fines of £75. This cleanliness must also apply to business. Singapore's prime minister has also pledged during a recent visit to Switzerland not to allow this traffic to tarnish the reputation of his country.

Following this far-east tour by two experts, Swiss watch interests will try in earnest to fight the continued business of false "Swiss" watches. To begin with, the Swiss Watch Federation will send a permanent representative to Singapore. The exchange of information will be developed and the Watch Federation will intensify its intervention through its lawyers abroad. Schemes envisaged include publicity campaigns or the recourse to payed informers.



High wages and low income tax

The last issue of the Union Bank of Switzerland's brochure 'Switzerland in Figures' shows that the per capita income of the Swiss has reached 14,900 francs a year of about £1,900 at the present rate of exchange. The wealthiest cantons are Basle Town (22,675 francs), Geneva (19,635), Zurg (18,435), and Zurich (17,255). The less well-off are Appenzell Outer Rhodes (10,295) and Obwald (10,940). Of all the cantonal capitals, it was in Sion and Fribourg that total taxation (cantonal, communal and federal) was the highest. A married tax-payer without children earning 30,000 francs (£3,800) was taxed 13.3 and 13.6 per cent of his gross income in these two cities, or about half the level of British income-tax for comparable earnings.

High Costs, Bad Work

The increase in the cost of housing is primarily due to the absence of any competition in labour recruitment. Apart from speculation on property and other artificial factors, the actual high cost of housing in Geneva is mainly the result of the pressures bearing on the labour front. This was claimed in a recent letter to the Geneva town council by the City's architects.

This lack of manpower, they said, can be translated into general lowering of individual output in respect of quality and quantity. The rush for labour entails a general diminution of competence.

Moreover, wage increases and the improvement of social benefits are 'unfortunately accompanied by a considerable deterioration in the quality of performance'.

Without the introduction of several

labour-saving measures, costs would have soared even higher.

The absence of competition among contractors and suppliers is equally damaging. Overburdened as they are, contractors have to turn down jobs and too few of them compete for the same offer, with the resulting loss in quality. The Architects say that contractors are compelled by their over-garnished order-books to spread their machinery and labour in several work sites which is irrational. Their effort to honour their commitments leads to disorganisation and delays. By being overburdened, the construction industry is experiencing the laws of diminishing returns.

One solution suggested would be to allow foreign contractors to compete for public and private works in Switzerland.

The young Swiss abroad take to the Army

Among the surprising facts published in the last Annual Report of the Secretariat of the Swiss abroad is the appeal of the Swiss Army among young Swiss abroad. Over a hundred of them accepted to undergo the trials and efforts of a Recruit School last year. This exercise is completely optional. The fact that so many young people submit to it demonstrates the strength of the ties between the Motherland and "Fifth Switzerland". A return-ticket to Switzerland is offered free to volunteers. This has naturally some effect as well.

We shall be outlining the latest Annual Report of the Secretariat in a future issue.

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ALSO FIRSTCLASS MEAT

Jazz at Montreux

From small beginnings, Montreux's annual jazz festival has become a major musical and show-business event. This year, it turned out to be a marathon festival with jazz performances lasting every night until 4 a.m. Many enthusiasts were discouraged by this plethoric production and the lack of discrimination between excellent, mediocre and downright bad material. Many of the artists had come from America with a posse of technicians working for recording companies. Some of the jazz performances turned out to be recording sessions with gramophone companies intent on taking recordings of live concerts. This meant that the performances of the Festival were nearly all longer than programmed. As every band enlisted had the equal right to perform, regardless of its quality, jazz buffs often had to endure hours of pointless noise to get a chance to hear the kind of music that had attracted them to Montreux. There were nevertheless a few highlights, such as the concert by the pianist McCoy Tyner and by the British clarinettist Dave Shepherd who resuscitated the bouncy style of Benny Goodman.

Lip S.A. put into liquidation

Lip, France's most important watch company, has been put into liquidation by the Commercial Court of Besancon.

The company had filed a petition in bankruptcy last June and has since been taken over by its 1,300 employees. A major Swiss firm, *Ebauches S.A.*, which controls as much of *Lip* as French law permits, is a major Swiss firm, *Ebauches S.A.*, which controls as much of *Lip* as French law permits, is unless the other shareholders or another partner, also made an effort. At one time, a British investment bank, *Vikers Decosta*, showed interest. Its chief executive, Mr. James Marshall had talks at the French ministry of industrial development but gave up the idea of taking a stake in *Lip* because no French partner had showed up (one did, but only briefly) and because its intentions went against *Ebauche*'s declared plans of depleting *Lip* of its non-horological interests.

The British bank insisted on having a French partner mainly for psychological reasons. It had raised the 25 million francs which were considered necessary to ensure the company's continued operations.

Meanwhile, the management of *Lip* has been put in the hands of a liquidator and a 'judicial commissioner'. Its various sections will be put up for sale in order to pay creditors. The workforce has expressed satisfaction that the management of the company should no longer have the responsibility of its former owners, but has warned firm

action against all attempts to dismantle *Lip* interests and cause redundancies. This new militancy has caused considerable strife in France.



Where obligingness can lead

Because he was too obliging with motorists, a gate-keeper at the village of Saxon (Valais), was responsible for the death of a man and his wife. Mr. Henri Burnier, a man faultless at his work, committed a fatal miscalculation when the visual flashes and bell rang at his level-crossing hut at Saxon to tell him that a train was approaching. He waited for a few moments before lowering the gate at the nearby village of Saillon, of which he was also in charge. This was a simple gesture of goodwill towards motorists whose impatience at level crossings is well known. But this act of "complaisance" proved fatal because Mr. and Mrs. Gilbert Crettenaud, who had just branched off the cantonal road to climb up the vineyards into their village of Saillon, were crossing the Simplon railway when a 20-ton lone shunting locomotive emerged steaming towards them at 40 m.p.h. The driver of the machine applied the brakes as soon as he saw that the gates had been left open, but in vain. He smashed into Mr. Crettenaud's car. He died instantly at the wheel, his wife was thrown into the bank and died moments later. They were good friends of the gate-keeper and left two children.

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GOVERNMENT WARNS OVER POWER CUTS

Opposition to the construction of new power stations in Switzerland is such that the Government has now had to warn of possible power cuts within the next five years unless the present deadlock is lifted. In a letter to the Federal Electricity Administration, Mr. Roger Bonvin, Head of the Department of Transport, Energy and Communications, underlined the urgency of putting in service at least one new nuclear power station by 1975. If this were not achieved, the power shortages which would inevitably be felt by then would require rationing current.

Switzerland has only three power-stations in service. Several more are planned but stalled by local opposition. Among the sites where new power plants were planned are Verbois, near Geneva, Kaiseraugst near Basle and Goesgen, near Solothurn. The struggle

between the regional electricity boards and the communes of the two latter villages has dragged on for years. The Great Council of Basle Country recently appealed to the Administrative Court of Canton Aarau (which borders on Basle-Country) against the erection of the Kaiseraugst power-station. This action having been rejected, the Great Council decided to bring the matter to the Federal Court. Similar wrangles have been brought about by the planned power station at Goesgen. The Public Works Department of Canton Solothurn has recently rejected the third appeal by Goesgen against the decision by the neighbouring commune of Daeniken to go ahead with the works. But the Department partially accepted a complaint by the company, called 'Gesegen-Daeniken AG', responsible for building the plant. This complaint had been lodged because of the stringent conditions set by Daeniken for the continuance of the works.

Strong verbal contest in Parliament

A violent verbal clash was fought out during two parliamentary sessions between Mr. Pierre Gruber, Head of the Political Department, and Mr. James Schwarzenbach, the leader of the right wing Republican Party. Supported by a handful of fellow national counsellors, Mr. Schwarzenbach attacked Mr. Gruber personally, calling him a 'little king', and criticised his foreign policy, in particular his alleged excessive trips abroad. Mr. Gruber who is known for his fast repartees, countered hard. By the accounts of the Press, he won hands down against Mr. Schwarzenbach. In another, previous exchange, Mr. Gruber firmly destroyed the arguments of a Christian Democrat parliamentarian who claimed that the minister's journey to Cairo in early-May had been a waste of time and contrary to Swiss neutrality. The opponent had argued that Egypt was in a state of war.

Technical Items

SWISS PARTICIPATION IN THE SKYLAB MISSION

The Bulova (Biene, Berne) timekeeping laboratory has received an order for a certain number of Bulova Accutron "countdown" alarm watches for the Skylab laboratory. These alarm watches are fitted with the same electronic tuning fork movement as that normally used in Bulova Accutron watches. The dials are of the "countdown" type, that is to say decreasing, so that each astronaut can see at a glance the time left for performing the programmed operations set for the mission. Over 50 space missions, including those of the Apollo programme, have already used timekeepers made by this Berne factory.

GIANT TURBINE-PUMP MADE IN SWITZERLAND

The Vevey Engineering Works Co. Ltd. (Vaud, Switzerland), specializing in the construction of hydraulic machinery, helped fit out the French power station at Vouglans, Ain. The French licensee of the Swiss firm built, according to a Franco-Swiss technique, the largest turbine-pump in France, which is also the biggest in Europe. The Vevey Engineering Works Co. Ltd. were commissioned to develop this new type of machine and carry out the corresponding trials on a scale model in their hydraulic laboratory; they were also commissioned to supply the constructional plans for the turbine-pump, to provide the electronic regulators and the pivot as well as to finish the wheel and the guide vanes. The Swiss firm was also responsible for supervising the assembly, starting up and testing of the machine under extreme conditions. These tests, which have just been completed, showed excellent results.

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