

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: 1655

Rubrik: Swiss events

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Download PDF: 10.08.2025

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

The Swiss Observer

Published Twice Monthly at
63/67 TABERNACLE STREET
LONDON E.C.2
Tel: 01-253 2321

Telegrams: Paperwyse London
HON. PRESIDENT: Robert J. Keller
HON. VICE-PRESIDENT:

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24 issues Frs. 25—or £2.50

Swiss subscriptions may be paid into
Postcheck Konto Basle 40—5718

Editor's telephone: 01-602 1378

COMMENT

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION DENIED TO A BELGIAN DON

A Belgian Marxist Professor was refused entry into Switzerland under the terms of a 1948 law preventing foreigners from delivering political speeches on Swiss soil. The Federal Council rejected early in February the third appeal lodged by Professor Ernest Mandel, a lecturer in political sciences at Bruxelles, against an order denying him entry into Switzerland.

Professor Mandel's application had first been rejected by the Public Prosecutor, and subsequently refused on appeal by the Department of Justice and Police. As a last resort, Professor Mandel had appealed to the Federal Council, but the Government, after some apparent hesitation, decided to uphold the previous administrative rulings.

The Government's decision was strongly criticised by progressive circles who claimed that ideas should be allowed to circulate freely in a free country, whether they are professed by a Swiss citizen or a foreigner. In a communique, the Federal Council alleged that the Belgian Don had publicly supported violence and called for an armed overthrow of the established order.

As Professor Mandel had never been known to put his inflammatory teaching into practise, one can only conclude that the Swiss Government is frightened of ideas and thinks little of the solidity of the Swiss establishment. The Federal Council seems to think that our basically liberal and non-communist institutions

would not sustain the impact of lectures by a foreign intellectual.

Although the hospitality of the Swiss as a people is vaunted on every political and patriotic platform, there is no doubt that this hospitality is often cautious and not really outgoing. The authorities are particularly wary of foreign residents voicing their political opinions in public. This means that a foreigner is, practically, never allowed to say what he thinks during a television interview.

In comparison, the British authorities emerge as considerably more relaxed and carefree, even though British institutions are perhaps not as solid as Swiss institutions. A Tariq Ali (the Pakistani left-winger who organised massive demonstrations in the streets of London four years ago), wouldn't be allowed to stay in Switzerland for 24 hours. It is true that, a year later, the Home Office took the incomprehensible decision of expatriating an inoffensive Marxist, Rudi Düsckhe, who was peacefully working on his

Doctorate at Cambridge. The Home Secretary claimed that Düsckhe's presence was a threat to the security of the State.

However, this was a rare example, whereas several political figures are prevented each year from entering Switzerland because of their subversive opinions. Dom Helder Camara, a Brazilian bishop known for his revolutionary stance, nearly found himself banned from ever returning to Switzerland after delivering a speech in Lausanne in which he questioned the ethics of Swiss investments in certain countries where millions live in poverty. This speech caused a minor diplomatic incident.

The 1948 law on political speeches is said to be under review. Meanwhile, foreigners who are given the privilege of setting foot on Swiss soil will be expected to behave rather like the guests of a right-thinking household: they should show respectful gratitude, and not say anything that might hurt their host's self-esteem.

P. M. B.

SWISS EVENTS

THE "THIRD FORCE" OF THE JURA REASSERTS ITS POLICY

The party known as "*le Mouvement pour l'Unité du Jura*" (MUJ) held its annual congress at the beginning of this month. Also known as the "third force" party, the MUJ stands in-between the two extreme tendencies in the Jura: the Separatists, who want independence from Berne and the creation of a 23rd Swiss Canton, and the *Union des Patriotes Jurassiens*, who are favourable to the *status quo*.

The MUJ was founded two years ago by a small committee grouped around the Mayor of Moutier, one of the main industrial localities of the French-speaking Jura, in a bid to settle a political deadlock that had lasted for over twenty years. The MUJ called for a half-way formula: The Jura wouldn't break its links with Berne, but enjoy a special "status of autonomy" within the Confederation's largest Canton.

The precise aims of the Party were redefined during the February Congress. The MUJ wants the seven districts of the Jura region to be considered as one constituency for elections to the National Council; they also want new administrative and cultural centres for the French-speaking Jura; special provisions in the Cantonal Constitution defending the will of its people in the event of constitutional revisions affecting the Jura. Finally, they want the area to have its own legislation

on certain specific matters. On these four points, the Government of Berne is prepared to satisfy the Third Force. But there is complete disagreement on three other important issues, namely: the Government of Berne is not prepared to turn the Jura into a separate constituency for elections to the cantonal executive and to the Council of States (Upper House of Parliament). There is also a large degree of disagreement on plans for re-carving the administrative map of Berne and creating a "*Région*" for the Jura.

Switzerland to buy more "Hunters"

Parliament will be called to pass the 1973 federal military budget, which includes the purchase of 30 second-hand Hunter jet-fighters at the cost of 136 million francs. The makers, Hawker-Siddeley, will sell the planes in a re-furnished condition. A similar order was passed in 1971 and the first revised Hunters arrived in Switzerland before Christmas. The Government's proposal aim to fill the gap in Switzerland's air cover while the decision to buy an entirely new aircraft is taken. It is not planned to build further Mirage 111 jet fighters under license as a substitute solution. The British-made Hunters first flew in the early fifties. They are the backbone of the Swiss Air Force.

Monthly parliamentary sessions?

The Government is studying proposals to hold monthly parliamentary sessions with scepticism. The two houses of Parliament presently meet for four sessions of approximately a month each every year. The Secretariat of the Federal Assembly has called for an alteration of the system to monthly week-long sessions, with a recess in July and August. The Secretariat believes that this would give the opportunity to members of Parliament to discuss current issues while these were still topical. The proposed system would also reduce the pile-up of parliamentary work. A spokesman for the Federal Chancery said that monthly recesses would probably not reduce the burden of work.

New agreement between Geneva and the neighbouring French local authorities

Geneva has accepted to pay neighbouring French communes yearly compensations for the losses incurred by French borderer-workers employed in Geneva.

Over 21,000 French workers drive in to work in Geneva every day and pay cantonal taxes. Their local authorities have long claimed for some form of compensation from the Swiss authorities. A Franco-Genevise commission was set up and negotiations led to an agreement whereby Geneva would pay 5 million francs to the French communes concerned in 1973, and 10 million francs the following year.

Obituaries

H. O. ERNST

It is with regret that we have to advise our Readers of the death of Mr. Heinrich Otto Ernst (known to his Swiss friends as Otto and to his English friends as Henry). Mr. Ernst was born in 1894 and came to England in 1919 as a Junior Clerk with the Swiss Federal Railways, London Agency. By dint of very hard work his efforts on behalf of both the Swiss Federal Railways and Swiss National Tourist Office, of which he was then Manager, since 1946, the interest in travel to Switzerland was enormously increased and popularised. Mr. Ernst always took a keen interest in the Swiss Colony in this country and was very much involved in the activities of various Clubs and Societies.

Mr. Ernst retired from his work in the latter part of 1959, remaining in this country until his death on the 14th February, 1973. Sincere condolences are extended to the whole of his family.

MRS. E. M. BOEHRINGER

It is with the deepest regret that we have to announce the death after a long illness of Mrs. Elsie Martha Boehringer, the wife of the late Founder of the *Swiss Observer*. Mrs. Boehringer was in her 80th year. The death occurred during the night 19th/20th February, 1973, at the

home of her son Mr. Oscar F. Boehringer in Golders Green. This latter is the present Secretary to the Swiss Observer Council and Chairman of Swiss Observer Ltd. Since the first issue of our Paper in 1919 Mrs. Boehringer has always shown the keenest interest in the publication and was a pillar of strength to her husband in this venture during his lifetime. Mrs. Boehringer had a wide circle of friends in the Swiss Colony and in her earlier years took a most lively and active interest in the various organisations formed for the benefit of Swiss Nationals in the U.K.

The Swiss Colony in the U.K. are deeply indebted to the Boehringer family as a whole for their unstinting support both financially and administratively of the *Swiss Observer* and this makes it all the more saddening when we learn of the passing on of any member of that family. The Council, staff and we, are sure that we may include all of our readers in offering most sincere sympathy to both Mr. and Mrs. Oscar Boehringer in this most grievous loss.

Switzerland third in telephone league

Switzerland is third in the world telephone-density league.

With 50.91 sets per 100 inhabitants at the beginning of last year, it came third after the United States (60.13), and Sweden (57.58). With 3.2 million telephone sets, it had more units than the whole of Central America and nearly as many as the African continent (3.5 million sets).

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