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league has fallen. For example, Hungary was by no means a high suicide nation before the war and is probably less so today with a stabilisation of the Communist regime over there. If the Swiss suicide rate is on the decrease, this could correspond to the opening-up of people and society, the gradual seeping-in of fresh air which we are witnessing today. The increasing questioning of accepted

standards and facts, the straining at traditional structures seem to have a beneficial effect on the human soul. A little trouble and a few jolts seem to increase one's zest for life. There are no strikes in Switzerland — but more suicides. This proposition may however lose its truth sooner than expected.

P.M.B.

go or be content with yearly and seasonal workers' status. At the end of 1972, the 1,052,300 registered foreigners of all categories living in Switzerland constituted 20.1 per cent of the resident Swiss population which was estimated at 5,236,700 persons.

Oberriet crime: Police pick up valuable leads

A fortnight after the attack on a customs office at Oberriet (SG) in which two customs men were killed and an Austrian civilian fatally wounded, Police in Switzerland, Germany and Austria were reporting steady progress in tracing back to the criminals behind this apparently pointless murder. The Oberriet crime had been definitely connected with a bank robbery which committed the day before at Buchs. An Italian gang was suspected of being behind both incidents and an international arrest warrant was issued against its leader, Carlo Gritti, a 26-year-old ex-convict wanted in Italy for murder and armed robbery. Two other Italians had been arrested in Constance, and a third man seen near the scene of the robbery at Buchs was beginning to talk after two-weeks' detention at St. Gall's jail.

CHILEAN REFUGEES GET TO KNOW SWITZERLAND THE HARD WAY

Some forty Chilean refugees of all

HOME NEWS

A new fighter aircraft to be evaluated

The Federal Council has decided to have a new aircraft, the American Northrop F-5E "Tiger", evaluated by military experts with a view to introducing a new fighter-jet in the Air Force. Following rejection of the "Mirage" and the "Corsair" after years of painstaking evaluation, the whole process is to be resumed. This time, however, it will be apparently limited to a single model. According to the NZZ, this new plane satisfies Switzerland's requirement in respect of cost, adaptation to geographical conditions and to the country's particular defence organisation. This would warrant concentrating pre-purchase studies to this one aircraft, writes the Zurich daily.

HOW TO SETTLE THE FATE OF HALF A MILLION UNWANTED FOREIGNERS

Signatures are being collected in favour of a new initiative sponsored by the "National Action" against excessive foreign presence and over-population. Swiss citizens are being asked to back proposals consisting in a reduction of the resident alien population to 12 per cent of the Swiss population in every canton with the exception of Geneva, which is allowed 25 per cent by 1977. Allowing for hospital workers and international officials, which are spared by the Action's initiative, this would reduce the present population of 1,052,300 foreign persons to 560,000 during the next three years. 492,300 persons will presumably have to

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ages who had been accommodated at a home in Trogen, near Saint Gall, were told to start working less than six weeks after their arrival. Owing to a shortage of staff and other material problems, the home had to be shut by 31st January and all its occupants thrown into Swiss life. Not all those concerned were overjoyed at the prospect. They had been promised a 3-month period of adaptation by the Embassy in Santiago and hardly any of them spoke German. Although a few refugees were offered jobs adapted to their qualifications, one music student refused to become a lorry driver and insisted on continuing his studies. Other menial jobs were offered to university graduates. Two or three others who speak French had hoped to be sent to the refugee centres of Glion and Pully. But after these hard beginnings, the situation should improve by April, when all the refugees wishing to live in the French-speaking part of Switzerland will follow an intensive course in French at Fribourg. Refugees at Glion, Pully and Alstaeten, who had come earlier, had all been given a better opportunity to adapt to their new country and remained for three months in these centres.

Following a campaign launched by some twenty churches and humanitarian organisations, over 2,000 places in Swiss homes have been offered to Chilean refugees. A place represents free board and lodging for five months. The organisers of this campaign hope that 3,500 such places will soon be on offer to these latest refugees to Switzerland.

2 million francs of subsidies for Swiss films

In accordance with a new federal law supporting Swiss film producers, the Confederation has awarded grants totalling 2 million francs for the production of some thirty films during 1973. Over half of that money has been allocated to the three following films: "Fluchtgefahr" (Markus Imhoof), "Pardon Auguste" (Michel Soutter) and "Mulungu" (Beat Kurt).

Energy: Natural gas to be bought in Algeria

In order to diversify its sources of energy, Switzerland will get considerable quantities of natural gas from Algeria. A billion cubic metres of gas, transported in a liquefied state to Trieste, will be bought yearly after 1978 by the Swiss gas company following an agreement with the Algerian producer, Sonatrach. Switzerland will soon be getting 500 million cubic metres of North Sea gas a year from Holland through a pipeline due to be operational next spring.

Talking about the consequences of the energy crisis to Switzerland's balance of trade, Mr. Georges-Henri Chevallaz, our new finance minister, said that rising oil costs will increase Switzerland's import bill by about 3 billion francs a year. He added however that Switzerland should be able to meet this bill and suffer

to a lesser extent that Britain and Germany, who had many heavy oil-consuming industries.

52 pence a gallon of super

Following a series of talks between Mr. Leo Schürmann, the official Prices and Wages supervisor, and petrol

distribution companies, the price of petrol has now been fixed at 81 centimes a litre of regular, and 85 centimes a litre of super. Assuming a rate of exchange of 7.50 francs to the pound and remembering that a gallon is equivalent to four and a half litres, this works out at 48 pence and 52 pence a gallon respectively.



A SOLUTION TO THE OIL CRISIS...

Judging from the above print of the Zermatt area made by the artist Kram in 1984, the petrol situation hardly improved in the West during the decade following the October, 1973 Middle-East war. Unfortunately, Arab intransigence heightened by a stagnation of the Middle-East conflict lead to further cut-backs in oil deliveries, compelling industrial countries to search frantically for oil on their own soil. As early as November, 1974, the Federal Council obtained vast new credits for the speeding-up of prospection on the Plateau and in certain areas of the Alps where geologists were hopeful of finding something. They struck vast quantities of oil at Schwarzee, on the foot of the Matterhorn, at the end of 1976. Proven reserves were above a hundred billion barrels, enough to satisfy the country's needs for a Century.

A nation-wide controversy exploded on whether or not to tap these vast unexpected resources. The Conservation Lobby had gained in strength and the needs of the environment had by that time been deeply ingrained in the minds of the Swiss. But their standard of living had

been declining by an annual ten per cent owing to the scarcity of oil and the exorbitant price demanded by the producing nations. Without oil and without banks, Switzerland would soon have regressed to the state of a nation of shepherds and alp-horn players. This ominous prospect was put to the Swiss people by the Freissinig Party and the industrial lobby with such persuasiveness that in the most crucial referendum of their history, the Swiss agreed to devote unlimited resources to the exploitation of what was soon to become the Matterhorn Oil Field.

A sum of thirty billion francs, or about a third of the national product, was required to fetch the oil which lay at a depth of 6,000 metres beneath the Matterhorn. Most of these funds were available thanks to Arab money stored in Swiss banks. Despite strong local opposition, cars were finally allowed in Zermatt, which rose from 1976 to 1983 from a commune of five thousand to a city of 85,000 people (mainly engineers and oil technicians) dominated by BP's 25-storey tower-block. A vast petrochemical complex was built in the Mattertal and the flare of the Visp refinery illuminated the upper Rhone Valley during the crisp winter nights.

Further increases are to be expected during the year, depending on the international situation. But Switzerland's fuel stocks remain quite high for the moment and have not required an extension of the Sunday driving-ban which was enforced for three consecutive Sundays at the end of last year.

In another development, a "Blick" report concerning negotiations for a direct deal between the Swiss government and Arab producers on petrol supplies has been officially denied.

Uproar over a redundant bridge

An uproar is brewing in Basle over the proposed demolition of a bridge that was made redundant last December by the opening of a stretch of motorway linking Birsfeld and a goods station on the northern outskirts of Basle. The St. Alban bridge, a modern four-lane construction hitherto handling heavy traffic towards Germany has now been by-passed by a 1.3 km ten-lane viaduct which has cost about 130 million francs. The trouble is that the "Black Forest" bridge is relatively new and in perfect condition. It was only built in 1955 at the cost of 9 million francs. To dismantle it would cost one and a half million francs at a time when local authorities are desperately trying to reduce their soaring deficit. The public works people of the town claim that leaving it standing would be an unaesthetic exercise. But their opponents insist that its half-hectare surface could be used as a playground for children, a park, or other kinds of amenities. They note that Basle must make good use of every square yard it can

find. A leading architect claims that an estate of 134 apartments could be built on the bridge adding that this would not

only save vital space, but represent a more imaginative solution than plain demolition.

SWISS FARMERS WANT HIGHER PRICES

The most discontented section of the Swiss population must be its farmers. They staged a major demonstration in Berne last December in protest against their difficult conditions. Now disagreement over the guaranteed price of milk has created a further outburst of incidents in the cantons of Vaud, Fribourg and Berne. In its package to increase the income of farmers at the same level as in other sectors of the economy, the Federal Council has allowed for an increase of one centime per litre of the price of milk. The Swiss union of peasants and other organisations have derided this proposal. The most militant members of the farming community, particularly in Fribourg and the Jura, have protested by refusing to submit to new federal milk controls.

These controls had been devised by the Institute of Technology in Zurich and have been experimented with for several years. Their purpose is to assess the germ content and quality of milk marketed by every farmer in the country. Producers have periodically to present samples of their milk. When the presence of over 80,000 germs per unit of volume is measured, they are penalised by one centime per litre. When there are over

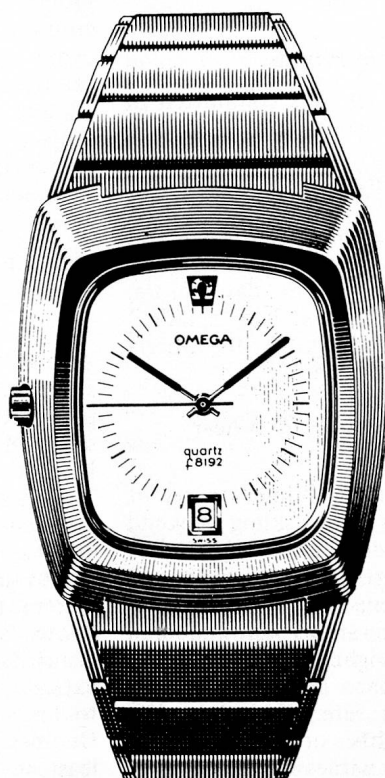
300,000 germs, they must pay 3 centimes per milk. The purity of milk is essentially dependent on the care given to the cows and the cleanliness of the stables. The tests can also determine whether cattle suffer from udder and other infections.

Although the peasants were not against the principle of these tests — which had replaced an earlier system — they questioned their validity. It was claimed that two samples of milk extracted from the same milk could lead to different test results. But the demonstrations against the controls were essentially aimed at the government's milk policy. In one instance, a crowd of a hundred farmers surrounded Fribourg's cantonal milk laboratory and tried to get at the technicians, who had locked themselves inside. But the demonstrators destroyed several hundred flasks of samples stored in a nearby school. In another incident, farmers stopped a sample collector, forced him out of his car and destroyed his merchandise. Some militant farmers in the Jura talk of going beyond this kind of exercise to suspend milk production altogether.

The Swiss Union of Producers, which represents the more militant section of the farming population,



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decided to continue its boycott of milk tests until its demand for higher prices were met by the Federal Council. Meeting in Lausanne, the Executive committee of the organisation also decided to urge its members not to renew their sugar-beet contracts with the federal authorities.

Three hundred farmers have already taken this step. Sugar beet production is submitted to federal controls as Switzerland has instituted a quota system for its sugar production.

Finally, the Swiss Union of Peasants stood by its original demands which was considerably above the one cent per litre increase offered by the Federal Council.

The decision not to renew sugar beet planting contracts could mean a reduction in the country's home production and a serious blow to federal sugar policy. But the General Secretary of the Swiss Union of Producers, Mr. Chapatte, has stressed repeatedly that there could be no question of backing down.

Following criticism of the farmers' stand by a high official of the Migros Cooperatives, the peasants of the Moudon area refused to evacuate and spread on their land the 50,000 litres of dung produced daily by a large industrial pig-sty owned by Migros. The organisation attempted to force this boycott but 400 peasants demonstrated in front of the pig-sty. To avoid polluting neighbouring streams with an overflow of the pigs droppings, it was agreed that some of this excess matter should be disposed off in three Migros farming properties. To lift their boycott, the USP branch of the Fribourg area have asked the official concerned to publicly retract his criticism within a deadline of four days. This deadline had however to be extended because the official happened to be abroad.



Human wastes help to solve the energy crisis

Human wastes are not only of interest to farmers who feel they could be better for soil than potash, they present potentialities as a source of energy. To prove this point Mr. Franz Geiger, a keen handyman from Sion whose brother was the former manager of the town's waste-disposal plant, contrived to collect the gases produced by these wastes and used them to power his old 1965 Taunus before the astounded gaze of pressmen. Mr. Geiger plans to put his ideas to chemists and engineers as he is convinced of their feasibility. Each inhabitant of Sion produces 22 litres of combustible gases a day. This surely represents an appreciable amount of energy. The idea of using organic wastes as a heating agent has already been applied to the buildings of waste disposal plants. But it is the first time that this principle is considered for motive force.

WATCHES: SWITZERLAND STILL AHEAD OF JAPAN

Switzerland is still way ahead of Japan as a watch manufacturer and exporter, according to a high official of the Swiss watch industry.

Speaking at a recent conference of Swiss foremen in industry, Mr. Robert Nicolet, Deputy Director of the Chamber of Swiss watch-making, said that Switzerland's production exceeded Japan's, Russia's and the USA's. He added that we had exported 76 million watches in 1972, or 70 per cent of the world total, against 13.6 per cent only for Japan.

Mr. Nicolet added that the Swiss watch industry gave employment to 76,000 people working for 1,100 different firms. 78 million watches had been manufactured, only two million of them retained for the home market and

the remainder exported for 2.8 billion francs. These exports amounted to 11 per cent of total exports and 2.6 per cent of Gross National Product.

Other speakers expressed concern at the diminishing differential between the foremen and semi-skilled employees of the watch industry. They stressed that the income of foremen in that branch had slipped from 4th to 16th place in the national scale since 1956. They added that it was essential to prevent foremen and skilled workers from leaving the industry. They noted that the wages of workers in the industry had risen by 10.8 per cent last year compared to 5.6 per cent for their own wages. Taking account of a 9.5 per cent rate of inflation, they claimed that their standard of living had fallen by 4 per cent.

32 killed in avalanches last year

Thirty-two people have been killed in avalanches during the 1972-73 winter season, reveals a report in "Les Alpes", official organ of the Swiss Alpine Club.

These 32 people were the worse off among the 116 who were carried away by avalanches but managed to save themselves, or be saved, during that period. Of those 116 people, 93 were skiers, 8 ramblers, 4 motorists and 7 people were surprised during work. The worst of these accidents happened at the end of the season (5th May) and killed 5 villagers from Grand-Chavalard-sur-Fully (Valais) as they were preparing a track for a ski-race.

Anti-Spanish demonstrations

A bomb attack was committed in early January against the Spanish Consulate in Zurich. The blast shattered windows in a large area around the Consulate, whose offices are on the floor of a building in Stampfenbachstrasse, and caused damage estimated at 300,000 francs by the Police. The day before, unknown demonstrators had splashed paint on the windows of the Iberia Airlines agency in Zurich.

32 French tourists crash 100 ft near Sainte-Croix

A coach bringing home a party of 32 French tourists from a skiing weekend in Switzerland skidded on an icy road in the Jura near Sainte-Croix and crashed in a 100 ft ravine causing the death of 8 people. Rescue operations were hindered by fog and the night. A second coach following not far behind narrowly avoided the same fate. Warned by the flickering headlights of an oncoming motorist who had witnessed the disaster, the driver of the coach brought his vehicle to a stop against a snow ditch after having slewed a 180 degrees.

New opposition to Kaiseraugst

Renewed action by militant environmentalists may delay further the beginning of works of Switzerland's long-awaited third power-station at Kaiseraugst, near Basle. Opposition by local authorities and several nature-loving groups, and drawn-out legal procedures have postponed work on this badly-needed power-station by several years. The main concern of these opponents to the project lay in the possible effects of two large cooling towers on the local climate. But an agreement was eventually reached and most opponents were resigned to see the project carried through. But a new grouping of young people has sprung up over the New Year and started campaigning in the area. They claim that all the legal avenues to prevent the project were not explored. They plan to demonstrate and place pickets on the site as soon as the first bulldozers move in.

SWISS BANKS UNDER SHARP ATTACK IN AMERICA

A report in the Neue Zürcher Zeitung last December gave an account of a television film on Swiss banks that was produced by an American company and screened in the US. According to the NZZ, the report was completely biased. The interviews of several Swiss bankers were cut and edited in such a way as to convey the picture of a dishonest, money-grabbing and illicit banking system. But the interview given by a well known socialist national councillor, Mr. Henri Ziegler (Geneva) was reproduced in extenso. Mr. Ziegler apparently gave vent to his acrimonious feelings towards the Gnomes of Zurich. He was criticized in at least one other paper for having projected such a bad image of Switzerland abroad. The fact that Swiss banks should still be the target of similar attacks by the

American media despite a recent judicial cooperation agreement shows how badly the Swiss image is dented in some countries as far as banking is concerned.

The Swiss double their consumption of tobacco

The Swiss smoke twice as many cigarettes today as they did ten years ago and the number of deaths by lung cancer have doubled during the same period. 1,887 people (1,680 men and 207 women) died of this illness in 1972 against 980 (870 men and 110 women) in 1960. These figures published by the Swiss anti-alcoholic secretariat show that the cancer scare which was triggered off in 1964 in America by the book "Smoking and Health" has abated. This is due in part to the arrival of a new generation of young smokers. It is also true that scientific improvements in the manufacture and content of tobacco have diminished the risk. After their initial impact, anti-cancer campaigns have lost in efficiency and smokers seem immune nowadays to the graphic posters and health-warnings being published in certain countries.

Banning cigarettes can't obviously be seriously considered. The solution to the problem consists in devising sure tests determining those people who are prone to lung cancer through the effect of tobacco, and those who are not. It is a well known fact that many people die of lung cancer who have never touched a cigarette in their lives, and that some who smoke three packets a day live to be ninety. On a statistical basis, however, it has been abundantly proved that heavy smoking can reduce up to ten years in an average life. About 45 per cent of the human population have an inherited resistance to lung cancer. To determine who these fortunate people are, a team in Houston, Texas, have devised a test based on the reaction of a blood ferment with benzoprene. But we will still have to wait some time before this and other tests are failsafe.

While the cigarette industry puts new products on the market at fairly regular intervals, certain brands on the other hand are withdrawn from the assortment made by the factories. This phenomenon is bound up with the evolution in smokers' tastes, but also to a certain extent with changing fashions. During these changes the filter has become well established for all types of cigarettes; at present over 95% of the cigarettes sold in Switzerland are filter-tipped. On the Swiss market today there are 109 brands of cigarettes offered in 174 different versions, an absolute record for Europe. In 1965, there were 140 brands presented in 192 different ways. While there is an appreciable reduction in "Oriental" type brands, there is, on the other hand, a considerable increase in the number of American blend type cigarettes. Another fact to be noted is the ratio of brands to versions. In 1965 there was a greater variety of brands, but fewer versions. The present trend is

towards the multiplication of presentations per brand. The tendency of

firms to merge is obviously not without influence on this phenomenon.

SWISS FOREIGN POLICY— Past, Present and Future

by Ambassador Albert Weitnauer

Thanking the Swiss Ambassador to Great Britain, Dr. Albert Weitnauer, for his speech at the January Meeting of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique, the President of this Society, Mrs. Mariann Meier, praised him for what he had done for the Colony. It is also appropriate for us to praise the Ambassador here for what he has done for the Swiss Observer. With an Interview and a previous article, this is his third major contribution to our

publication. The following exposé on Swiss foreign policy gives a concise and complete account of the meaning and purpose of neutrality. Dr. Weitnauer's roundup of something so fundamental to Swiss history leaves nothing unsaid. This has the advantage of leaving us no excuse for touching on the theme of neutrality again. We should like to thank Dr. Weitnauer for sparing us this trouble for a long time to come.

Whoever is called upon to give a talk on Swiss foreign policy is immediately faced with a very fundamental question, namely: is there really any such thing as a Swiss foreign policy? Taking a rather superficial view one might assume that a country committed to permanent neutrality has, in fact, abdicated as a politically active member of the family of nations.

Let me dispel any such misconception — if it should exist — from the very beginning. It is true that Switzerland has maintained — almost without interruption — the status of permanent and armed neutrality. It is also true that at the Vienna Peace Conference of 1815 Swiss neutrality was officially recognized and, on top of that, stated to be in the best interests of the European nations. But the very fact that Switzerland is a neutral country is a political phenomenon; it entails a very specific policy, the policy of neutrality, which our country has upheld to the present day.

I shall have much more to say about the policy of neutrality later in my talk. For the moment let us accept that neutrality is a form of foreign policy. In our own case it means that we carefully abstain from meddling in other people's affairs, that we do not join (and do not intend to join) any political or military alliances and, as a corollary to this, provide for our own defence through a well-trained, well-equipped militia-type army.

Neutrality: a question of survival

With your permission, I would like to recall why, from the beginning of the 16th century onwards, Switzerland has resorted to neutrality as the policy best suited to her own needs as well as those of her neighbours. We are a multilingual country, two major religions are professed in Switzerland, and we are geographically situated at the cross-roads of Europe in the very centre of the old continent. Our powerful neighbours —

whose languages we speak — were often engaged in bitter and exhausting wars with one another. Quite generally, Europe was far from being an area of peace and quiet. Any other policy than neutrality would have involved, directly and unmistakably, the danger of our country's collapse, since we would have been torn apart by conflicting political, religious and perhaps other equally powerful allegiances. Switzerland held together through neutrality, but also through the political will of the Swiss to be a nation. Switzerland certainly has developed enormously since the first pact of the three cantons of primitive Switzerland was concluded in 1291. The fundamental inspiration, however, has remained the same: common defence against the outside world on the one hand, peaceful settlement of any conflicts arising within on the other. The second element developed, over the years and the centuries, into the very complex organization of our life as a nation as we all know it.

Switzerland's existence as a neutral country is in no way disputed by the community of nations. If the Swiss want to remain neutral, let them remain neutral: this is the reaction we get from abroad. This attitude very rightly implies that it is of our own free will that we are a neutral country. We may give up neutrality any day, join an alliance or otherwise conduct a "committed" foreign policy of our own. I think it is essential to make this point since exaggerated views are sometimes held in Switzerland itself according to which Switzerland, through the Vienna Treaties of 1815 and its long practice of neutrality, has an obligation to remain neutral and any departure from that attitude would be a violation of international public law. Let me stress that this assumption is totally wrong and has no foundation whatever, legal or political. We were neutral in the past because it suited us, and we have remained neutral up to the present day because it continues to suit us.

If this is so, the question quite