

**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:** - (1974)

**Heft:** 1689

**Rubrik:** Technical items

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# technical items

## CREATION OF THE ARAB-SWISS CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Living on the spine of a continent, fastened to the earth, live the inhabitants of the Alps, surrounded by powerful people nations owning the whole earth... Their soul clings to what they have because all the others, the powerful of the earth, have the remainder. Their country is small and their possessions small: how will they replace them if they loose them?

Can Switzerland play a meaningful role in the European system, in her retrograde and earth-bound fashion? I believe that the answer to this question is yes. The answers to political problems are not necessarily related to Spirit, Progress and Change, but also to Immutability and Standfastness. Progress can also descend from the mountains, and permanence can still be a solution preferable to the fast tempo of progress. Countries too can become tired and yearn towards a stabilisation of their political and social institutions. One need only consider the meaning of the *Pax Romana* to the Roman Empire.

The Swiss are particularly hostile to alien political and spiritual involvement. That he should stand against all kinds of political interference — this being inherent to the art of neutrality — is understandable. His opposition to foreign spiritual interference is more mysterious but nonetheless true. I can attest to this from my personal experience as a practitioner: Englishmen, Americans and Germans are far more open, as patients, to new ideas than the Swiss. As a rule, a new idea does not involve a risk for others, whereas it does for the Swiss. For them, new ideas are something akin to an unknown and dangerous animal which must either be swiftly avoided or approached with the greatest care.

In order to simplify the work of small and medium-size firms, it will also set up a service of economic, commercial and legal information relating in particular to the products and equipment available for export, the legislations and fiscal laws affecting foreign trade, the State or private concerns operating in different sectors, the tenders offered by the authorities of the different countries, the infrastructure schemes and the investments provided for in their development plans.

## NEW BUILDING PROCESS

As traditional building methods and even prefabrication no longer fully answer the requirements of the modern economy, a firm at Courgenay (Berne,

Switzerland) has devised a new building process making possible considerable mechanisation and real industrialisation in this sector. The result of years of study and research, this process has been inspired by the engineering industry, where moulds in which the material is cast or injected are used for the manufacture of metal or plastic objects. The equipment devised by the Swiss firm consists of a certain number of items of formwork — the modules — which, like the parts of a building set, can be arranged at will by the architect to form a mould. Before filling or injecting with concrete, the builder inserts into this mould all door and window frames, electrical and sanitary installations, heating, metal reinforcements, thermal insulation, etc. After removal from the cast, only finishing work remains to be done and the floors to be laid. This highly mechanised and rationalised system makes for a very considerable drop in construction costs and a big saving in time and skilled labour. In addition, it offers the advantage of enabling several trades to work simultaneously, resulting in a big reduction in running costs and delivery dates.

## NEW DISH-WARMER WITHOUT FLEX OR CANDLE

No self-respecting housewife would be without a dish-warmer, but how often has she experienced the annoyance of candles that go out or a flex that spoils her table decoration. An aluminium foundry at Bellach (Solothurn, Switzerland), specialising in the construction of aluminium appliances, has launched on the market a new gas-heated dish-warmer that is both practical and elegant. It requires no preheating and gives off constant heat with a regular flame for 7 hours; a built-in pressure-regulator ensures a uniform supply of heat, so that the dish-warmer does not gradually grow less hot but continues at a temperature of 150°C

## TRAVEL WEEKLY TO AND FROM SWITZERLAND AND ENGLAND

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throughout the whole of its use. The dishes stay hot therefore, even in the open air. The scratch-proof hot-plate is designed so that the dishes cannot slip. This appliance requires no special maintenance and it is sufficient to change the gas-bottle from time to time. As these dish-warmers (effective work area 33 x 18 cm) can be fitted one on top of the other, they are particularly suitable for use in hotels.

#### ELECTRONIC SYSTEM FOR RAILWAYS

A new electronic system for measuring distances and speeds on railways has been developed by a specialised firm in Berne (Switzerland). The Teloc-E system consists of a series of appliances forming a modular unit capable of being combined with tachometers and small, complex instrument board calculators. An impulse frequency — proportional to the speed of the wheel and corrected according to changes in diameter — serves as the measuring base. The system makes it possible to solve practically all operations connected with the indication, recording and processing of distance covered, speed and acceleration. It has already been adopted for trains on the Vienna underground, among others.

#### BIG ORDER FOR A SWISS CONCERN

J. Bobst and Sons Co., Ltd. at Prilly-Lausanne (Vaud, Switzerland), in co-operation with its American company, has just been awarded a big order for Brazil. The machines involved are four rotogravure presses and converting machines for the making of packages, totalling 8 million Swiss francs in all. In order to ensure rapid delivery of these machines, the Swiss firm will construct them partly in its works at Prilly and partly in its American works. The loan of 50 million Swiss francs, granted to consumer goods to Brazil, helped to conclude this contract.

#### THE "SOCIETE SUISSE POUR L'INDUSTRIE HORLOGERE" IN THE USA

The American company HWM Industries Inc. has just sold 83 per cent of the shares of its subsidiary, Hamilton Watch Co., Inc., in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, USA, to the Société suisse pour l'industrie horlogère SA (SSIH) in Geneva. As this big Swiss watch holding company, which includes Omega and Tissot, already owned 17 per cent of the American company's shares, it becomes, with immediate effect, the sole owner. In 1971 SSIH had already bought the Hamilton brand for all countries with the exception of the United States and Canada. The purchase of all the shares of Hamilton Watch Co., USA, will enable it in future to apply a truly integrated marketing policy and to promote the brand on a world scale.

#### SWISS BOOKS IN ALGERIA

The Association of Booksellers and Publishers of French-speaking Switzerland, in Lausanne, signed an agreement at the beginning of this year with the National Algerian Publishing and Distribution Association providing, on the one hand, for the holding of an exhibition of Swiss books in Algeria and the sale of the books exhibited in Algerian bookshops and, on the other hand, the organisation of an exhibition of Algerian books in Switzerland. As far as Swiss books are concerned, the transaction covers in a first stage over 350 titles, representing 6,000 copies in all and a value of 100,000 francs. The agreement signed with the Algerian Association should open up the way to similar transactions with other French-speaking African countries; in addition, the Committee for the Co-ordination of Swiss Books Abroad is considering the organisation in the Maghreb countries of an itinerant exhibition representative of Swiss publishing as a whole.

#### RESEARCH IN THE SWISS CHEMICAL INDUSTRY

Switzerland is the only country in the world where the part played by private industry in scientific research is so much larger than that played by official circles: private enterprise in fact covers three-quarters of the whole of the costs involved. The chemical industry alone accounts for about two-thirds of this remarkably high participation on the part of the Swiss private economy. It is estimated that the amounts invested by the three big Basle chemical firms both in Switzerland and by their affiliated companies abroad work out at 7 million francs per working day, i.e. nearly 2 billion francs per year. The dynamism of the Swiss chemical industry is also evident in the statistics concerning patents. Of the 4,669 patents for chemical products taken out between 1st January, 1972, and 30th September, 1973, by the ten largest chemical firms in the world, 1,105 were lodged by Swiss firms, i.e. 23.5 per cent. First come three West German firms with 1,174 patents, followed by Switzerland (1,105), the United States (939) and Great Britain (851). In the order by firms, Bayer (Germany) tops the list with 812 patents registered. Switzerland comes 2nd, 9th and 10th with Ciba-Geigy (650), Sandoz (230) and Hoffmann-La Roche (225).

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#### GLORIA VANOLI'S HARPSICHORD RECITAL

On Wednesday, 3rd July, the Swiss artist Gloria Vanoli gave a harpsichord recital at the Swiss Church in London. The concert was under the auspices of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique and in conjunction with the International Liszt Centre for 19th century music in London.

Miss Vanoli was born and brought up in Chur, Switzerland and studied music with Sava Savoff in Zurich and under Isabelle Nef at the Geneva Conservatoire where she graduated with the harpsichord diploma. Next followed studies in Paris with Huguette Dreyfus and Laurence Boulay. She left the Paris Conservatoire with great honours.

When Miss Vanoli studied English harpsichord music in London two years ago, she ordered a new harpsichord from