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JURA: A CITY DIVIDED

SWISS EVENTS

The March plebiscite in the Jura has dramatically affected the social climate in Moutier! The city is divided into pro- and anti-Separatist Communities, not unlike the Northern Irish situation!

The plebiscite was held in order to allow the three southern districts of the Jura (Moutier, Courtelary and La Neuveville) to decide whether they wished to stay in Canton Berne or form a new canton with the three northern district (Délémont, Franches-Montagnes and Porrentruy) who had already opted for the Jura's autonomy in 1974.

While Courtelary and La Neuveville proved convincingly in favour of remaining in Berne at the March plebiscite, the poll was almost equal at Moutier. The separatists have made great strides in the area during the past 16 years. They took 33 per cent of the votes in a 1959 plebiscite, 49.2 per cent last June and 47 per cent last March. With such a close score, the separatists refused to accept defeat and were demanding a new vote.

This division is felt at every level of this industrial town noted for its

precision industry.

Old friends are said to avoid each other in the street. Regular functions have to be cancelled. Even the activities of the Shooting Association are compromised and the atmosphere at the Communal Council has soured.

The town's main square was the scene of a pitched battle between some 300 young separatists holding a rally and 80 Bernese police officers.

Tear-gas canisters and cobble-stones were thrown and a restaurant facing the square was damaged.

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