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SWISS EVENTS

ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION: THE DYNAMIC INITIATIVE OF A SWISS VALLEY

Situated in the Jura, less than one hour from Geneva, the Vallée de Joux (Vaud) enjoys a world-wide reputation for the originality and avant-garde conception of its watch creations: the first watch to be worn on the moon, the smallest watch, the most complicated, and the slimmest, the first electronic chronograph, the clock wound by variations in the atmospheric pressure, are all products of the Vallée de Joux.

It would however be wrong to think that the industrial activity of this district is limited to watchmaking. Many firms work in other fields, where they are able to give their customers the benefit of their know-how and knowledge acquired in the spheres of micro-engineering, miniaturisation, the processing of metals and the hardest materials, the machining of small, complicated and precise components, the design and production of machine tools, as well as automatic, mechanical, pneumatic or electronic regulating or control devices, etc.

With the Vallée de Joux Technical School, the firms possess a vocational training and applied research centre backing up their work. In order to make the possibilities offered by the Vallée de Joux known to a wider circle of industrialists, inventors, businessmen and patent holders, the communes and industries of this region have founded an Association for the Diversification of the Economic Activity of the Vallée de Joux, which aims in particular at simplifying contacts with a view to the acquisition of manufacturing and research contracts.

Among other things, this association has just published a catalogue of the industries and crafts of the Valley, describing the activities of some 50 firms in the region and their capacities for sub-contract work.

These firms are already well-established in various fields: foodstuffs, aeronautics, electronics, optics, plastics, toys, measuring instruments, spectrographs, hospital equipment, wrist-strap buckles, micro-meters, etc.

The Association is at the disposal of all concerned to help them establish contacts with industrialists in the best position to satisfy their needs.

KAISERAUGST SITE EVACUATED

Demonstrators who had taken over the construction site of the Kaiseraugst nuclear power station have vacated the premises following the promise of more negotiations by the Federal and Cantonal

authorities. Several thousand demonstrators took part in the movement to ban the power station, the construction of which had been delayed by years of controversy. A few hundred of them had maintained a vigil by establishing a camp within the site. This commune of young conservationists has been provisionally dismantled, but the demonstrators are very likely to bring their tents and wooden huts back to the site should work on the power station be resumed. Their chief complaint is that the Basle area will one day see the highest concentration of nuclear power stations in the world. Several other power stations are, indeed, either planned or already under construction in neighbouring France and Germany.

ONE POST OFFICE FOR EVERY 1,600 INHABITANTS

In Switzerland today there are some 4,000 post offices handling practically every type of postal transaction. This works out at approximately one post office for every 1,600 inhabitants.

In order to simplify posting of letters for the public, nearly 15,000 mail boxes have been installed.

INCREASED USE OF THE GUARANTEE AGAINST EXPORT RISKS

The present monetary instability, the increased competition on world markets and the considerable slowing down of activity in certain sectors of the national economy have encouraged Swiss exporters to make increasing use of the Federal guarantee against export risks.

In 1974, out of a total volume of exports valued at 35.35 billion Swiss francs (ie 18 per cent more than the previous year), a total of 4,944 million francs (2,857 million in 1973) was guaranteed on 3,057 applications (2,813 in 1973).

Calculated according to the value of the invoices, the guarantees granted increased by 73 per cent over the figure for the previous year; this increase can be broken down as follows: 893 million for the machinery industry; 390 million for chemicals; 563 million for the building trade; 157 million for engineering firms and 83 million for other branches. The 4,944 million francs guaranteed presented 14 per cent of Switzerland's total exports in 1974, the equivalent figure for 1973 being 9.4 per cent.

BETTER TRAINS

New inter-city express trains, a new line and improved passenger amenities have been introduced by the Swiss Federal Railways.

The new fully air-conditioned trains, orange and beige in colour, operate from Rorschach via St. Gall, Zurich, Berne and Lausanne to Geneva and back at speeds of up to 87 miles per hour.

They have first and second class

compartments with special facilities for conferences and also for invalids in wheelchairs.

A Swiss Federal Railways spokesman says it is possible that even more technical improvements may be made, aimed at increasing speeds and cutting travelling times still further — "but thorough tests will be necessary to find out whether benefits are in reasonable proportion to the expenditure involved."

Restaurant cars on the new trains include "a super kitchen", spacious refrigerators, high-duty ovens, a new coffee machine and — for the first time — a built-in dishwasher.

The new line is a stretch through the Heitesberg Tunnel, which cuts the distance between Zurich and Berne by five miles and reduces travelling time by at least seven minutes.

On some lines — including the Geneva-Basle route — self-service restaurant cars have been introduced.

The 32-seat cars are equipped with microwave ovens for the speedy cooking of frozen foods, and cooling equipment for keeping prepared cold dishes fresh.

An eight-day Holiday Pass costs Sw. Fr. 100 (second class) and Sw. Fr. 140 (first class). Children up to 16 travel half price. The Holiday Pass can be ordered (outside Switzerland only) from travel agencies and Swiss Tourist Offices, including SNTD in London.

CO-OPERATION

Airlines from Austria, Britain, Canada, Pakistan and Spain are among the latest to announce their support for World Wildlife Fund resolutions on the carrying of animals as freight.

The resolutions passed by the Swiss-based Fund in 1971 and 1974 called on airlines "to commit themselves to nature conservation ... and not to carry species threatened with extinction as freight, in contravention of national bans or the Washington Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species".

TRADE PROMOTION IMPROVES REGIONAL PROSPECTS IN CENTRAL SWITZERLAND

As the focus of financial and economic activity in Central Switzerland, Lucerne offers exceptional advantages to German business groups and companies wishing to establish a Swiss domicile or set up a holding company.

The city is not only a centre for tourist traffic along the traditional North-South trans-Alpine Gotthard route, but is also an ideal location for management and finance companies active at the international level.

Thus a steady growth of commerce and trade, in addition to medium-sized industrial operations, can be observed in the immediate and more distant surroundings.

This trend has recently been given a substantial stimulus now it is realised that

the economic structure, hitherto heavily dependent on tourism, must be more broadly based and diversified, since the economic foundations of the city and canton should not be based exclusively or predominantly on a sector as subject to crises as tourism.

Economic diversification, as it is known in modern terminology, is a matter of the utmost urgency. The traditional service industries are not only to include hotels and guest houses in future, but also to an increasing extent commercial ventures, management companies and consultancy services of various kinds.

The Trade Promotion Board for the city of Lucerne has outlined the benefits offered here in lucid and informative documentation. The scope is wide and covers everything necessary to encourage business enterprise, from tax relief to the existing reservoir of highly skilled labour in the region.

Corporations, such as public companies, limited partnerships, companies with limited liability and co-operatives with headquarters in Lucerne, pay no tax on earnings. Moreover, corporations whose operations in Lucerne consist largely or entirely of services or ancillary functions for affiliated foreign concerns are granted special tax concessions.

Tax relief for a maximum of 10 years can be allowed to newly opened companies which are to be encouraged in the interests of the canton and community, whereby the tax differential with respect to other countries may also be of some consequence. There are no gift taxes and estate duties are very low. Taxation on high incomes does not exceed 22 per cent or so, while property tax is no greater than seven parts in a thousand. Rates of this kind prove attractive!

Some 55 per cent of the working population is engaged in the services sector. For this reason alone there is sufficient management potential available. All secretaries are trained to be multi-lingual. There are not only vocational schools, but also advanced training colleges such as the Central Switzerland Technical College and Evening Technical School, the Senior College of Economic and Business Administration and the Hotel Training School, in addition to the School for Bakery and Confectionery.

The high standard of instruction given to local personnel simplifies the recruitment of qualified employees. Lucerne has 72,000 inhabitants, the region houses some 168,000 people and the entire catchment area has a population of over 400,000. Foreigners at present comprise 12 per cent of the regional population.

As a business centre and tourist city, Lucerne is situated at the intersection of major lines of communication, at the heart of both Switzerland and also of European markets. Nearly 100 express trains stop in Lucerne every day.

There is also a North-South TEE-rail connection. Trains arrive from six different points of the compass.

A direct link is planned to Zurich-Kloten airport. The sports and private airfield at Beromunster is within easy reach. With the North-South motorway, Lucerne will shortly be connected to the general network of European autobahns. An efficient bus service has been developed for services within the city and to surrounding points. Five multi-storey car parks provide space for a large number of vehicles. Pedestrian precincts permit undisturbed shopping in the city. The police have one of the most active departments for noise abatement and clean air, which has been widely acclaimed in official circles for its successful work.

Quick and effective action is taken against those disturbing the peace or polluting the air. With its beautiful old town and lake, its majestic mountains, Lucerne is a pleasant city in which to dwell. Distances from recreational areas are short. All the elements of scenic beauty, water, woodland and mountains, are near at hand. The residential areas are easily accessible from the place of work. Industry and relaxed sociability are harmoniously blended. The local people are open-minded and friendly.

Their close connection with tourism makes them tolerant towards strangers and their outlooks.

As an enterprising business centre and hospitable tourist city, Lucerne offers an ideal location for the establishment of international companies, whether domiciled firms, holding companies or service operations. The Trade Promotion Board for Lucerne (Postfach 576, CH-6002 Lucerne) will gladly help or advise prospective companies or concerns with all problems arising in conjunction with an intended settlement.

From: German-Swiss Chamber of Trade Journal, Zurich, No. 1 January 1975 24th Year.

SWITZERLAND FAILS TO ENTER THE "SNAKE"

Switzerland's hope of easing some of the problems caused by the franc's high parity by joining the European joint float system has been temporarily frustrated.

The Council of EEC Finance Ministers decided in Luxembourg at the end of April that the "time was not ripe" for Switzerland to join the "snake", which links five European currencies.

In the "snake" the currencies of Germany, Holland, Belgium, Denmark and Luxembourg float jointly (with small and limited fluctuations between them) against other currencies.

In other words, the rate of exchange between these five currencies are more or less fixed although they may vary considerably with respect to other currencies such as sterling, the US dollar and the Swiss franc.

Two other countries — Sweden and Austria — are unofficially linked to the system. They are not EEC members but all have central bank agreements with each of the five EEC countries in the "float".

The main advantage for Switzerland would have been to stop the Swiss franc from appreciating against the deutschmark. West Germany is both Switzerland's principal market and biggest competitor. Linking the mark and the franc would at least have stabilised Switzerland's exports income from a large part of her market.

The problem was becoming crucial and has already compelled the Government to offer exchange-rate guarantees and easy export credits to the most affected sectors of industry, such as watch-making.

The National Bank was authorised to start negotiations at the end of March. Mr Georges-André Chevallaz, Head of the Department of Finance, went to Paris in April to sign an agreement setting up an OECD Energy Fund and took the opportunity to explain Switzerland's wishes to his French counterpart, M Jean-Pierre Fourcade.

M Fourcade was cool to his visitor's wishes. Three weeks later he was the main opponent to Switzerland's joining the float.

France, who had joined the system from the outset, backed out in early 1974 when she could no longer sustain the French franc against the other five currencies. It was for the same reason, incidentally, that Britain, Italy and Ireland, all countries with weak currencies, never contemplated participating in the system.

France believes that the high demand enjoyed by the Swiss franc would have lifted the jointly-floating currencies to unprecedented levels against outside currencies.

Mr Fourcade claimed that it would be hard for other participating countries to "keep up". This argument was rejected by the Swiss press which noted that drastic measures had already been taken to prevent the franc from climbing yet higher against the dollar. In fact, the exchange-rate has settled at around 2.50 francs per dollar.

Swiss papers gathered that France's main motive was political. Switzerland's participation in the joint float system would have enhanced the weight of the deutschmark in Community dealings, and made the French franc's re-entry into the system more difficult.

The Ministers in Luxembourg also invoked the fact that the Swiss National Bank required powers of monetary intervention to be renewed by the Swiss people during a vote planned for 8 June.

This indicated that the Swiss democratic machinery would stand in the way of international decisions.

IMPORTANT ESPIONAGE AFFAIR

An East German couple were condemned in June to seven years'

imprisonment by the Federal Court. Hans Guenter Wolff, 55 and his wife Gisela had been arrested in September, 1973. Both were working for Sulzer Borthers in Winterthur, Switzerland's second engineering firm. As a trained engineer and economist, Wolff had a job in the planning department while his wife was with the firm's public relations. These positions enabled them to carry out the industrial espionage for which they have been charged. During their six-year stay in Switzerland, they managed to break industrial and trade secrets. They also supplied the East German secret services with information on Switzerland's defence system, on her relations with other countries and her attitude towards the European Security Conference. They also had to collect information on neighbouring NATO countries such as West Germany.

At the time the case was disclosed, it was described as possibly the worst espionage affair to arise in Switzerland since the end of the war. The sentence inflicted on the two (from which the time spent in custody will be deducted) is very close to that demanded by the Federal Attorney. He had called for sentences of 8 years' imprisonment for Wolff and of 7 years for his wife.

FEDERAL VOTE

A lot of homework was required of Swiss voters before the federal vote that took place on 8th June. The people had to state their position by a "yes" or "no" answer on no less than five issues, not counting the many cantonal and communal issues that are usually put to the people on voting days. All but five of the proposals were accepted, except the one which called for an increase in customs duties on imported heating fuel.

Weary with very heavy increases, the Swiss, who rely on heating fuel more than any other country in Western Europe, decided that their purses had been taxed sufficiently.

But as a measure of compensation, they agreed to an increase on petrol surcharge — although by the rather slight majority of 53.5 per cent. The Government must nevertheless have been most relieved at the outcome since the surcharge was one of the main ways by which it had intended to reduce the federal deficit.

The three other issues were just as technical, and all related to money, economics, savings, etc. One gave the government more freedom to act in defence of the franc, another provided for expenditure cuts, and the third for an increase in Turnover Tax and direct taxation. Three of the above measures were specifically designed to improve federal finances.

FAIRS AND EXHIBITIONS IN SWITZERLAND

Among the fairs and exhibitions announced, let us call attention to the following, due to be held in Switzerland during the third quarter of the year 1975:

10 August — 13 August — Berne: ORNARIS — Fair for Interior and Handicrafts.

27 August — 1 September — Zurich: FERA — Radio and Television Exhibition.

29 August — 2 September — Lucerne: Forestry 75.

30 August — 7 September — Berne: "Meat as a Foodstuff" — International Exhibition.

31 August — 1 September — Zurich: — International Shoe Sample Exhibition.

31 August — 3 September — Berne: SPISO — Exhibition of Toys, Souvenirs, Boutique-, Christmas- and Winter-Articles.

4 — 7 September — St Gall: WERBES 75 — Fair for Publicity Means and Publicity Technique.

9 — 13 September — Basle: INELTEC — Exhibition for Industrial Electronics and Electrotechnics.

9 — 13 September — Zurich: BUEFA — Swiss Office Equipment Exhibition.

13 — 28 September — Lausanne: COMPTOIR SUISSE — National Fair.

22 — 27 September — Berne: SAMA INTERNATIONAL 75 — International Exhibition for Miniaturised Automation.

THREE FOREIGN GUESTS OF HONOUR AT THE 56th SWISS NATIONAL FAIR

The 56th Swiss National Fair, or Swiss Comptoir as it is known locally, will be held in Lausanne from 13 to 28 September this year.

This event, which is highly representative of the Swiss economy, will be of particular importance this year as it

has become more necessary than ever today to make the country's activities widely known.

In addition to Switzerland's four original cantons, the Lausanne National Fair will be welcoming three foreign countries as guests of honour.

The official exhibition of the people's Republic of China will form an interesting counterpart to the Swiss industrial exhibition Sitex, held in Peking last year.

Under the high patronage of its Embassy in Switzerland, China will be showing the Swiss public its people and activities, its agriculture, its consumer and investment goods industries, its craftwork and its arts.

Older visitors will be able to gain an idea of the progress made since 1958, when this young nation took part in the Swiss Comptoir for the first time.

Another young country, Kenya, which is famous for its tourism, will be showing the progress that has been achieved in its agriculture, craftwork and new industries, in all of which Swiss industry takes the most active and effective interest.

El Salvador, representing Latin America, will be taking part in the Lausanne National Fair for the first time, with a display enabling visitors to discover one of the most captivating parts of the world.

16th SWISS ART and ANTIQUES FAIR

The 16th Art and Antiques Fair of Switzerland closed its doors on Wednesday 14 May.

There was for the first time in the history of the fair talk of "recession",

56th NATIONAL FAIR

Comptoir Suisse Lausanne
13th — 28th September, 1975

Swiss National Autumn Fair, offering a vivid overall view of the Swiss economy, with over 2,500 exhibitors

This year's guests of honour:
CHINA — KENYA — EL SALVADOR

Leaflets are available at:

Swiss Embassy, 16—18 Montagu Place,
London W1H 2BQ Tel: 01-723 0701

and

Swiss Consulate-General, Sunley Building,
Piccadilly Plaza, Manchester M1 4BH
Tel: 061-236 2933

and the antique and art dealers had come with only modest expectations.

It soon became evident that pessimism was unjustified!

A large number of costly, signed silversmith works of the 16th/17th centuries returned to museums and private collectors in their places of origin, in Switzerland and in the Federal Republic of Germany.

Dealers were also able to report very high sales figures — sales worth up to Sw Fr 10,000 to 20,000 were made, but masterpieces such as the Roman bronze head of a wolf were snapped up for several times as much.

The next Swiss Art and Antiques Fair will take place from 18 to 28 March 1976 — coinciding with the 14th European Educational Materials Fair Didacta.

SWISS TO VOTE ON CAR BAN

Switzerland is to hold a referendum on whether cars should be banned on one Sunday each month. This is a result of three car-less Sundays in November and December 1973, during the height of the "oil crisis".

Many people in cities and towns apparently then decided that quiet and fresh air justified the inconvenience of using public transport, bicycles or horses.

The sponsors of the proposal, have used the "popular constitutional initiative". Through this, any group can oblige the Government to put their ideas to a referendum, provided 50,000 signatures are collected from people on

the electoral register. In this instance they got more than 117,000.

The proposed prohibition for 24 hours from 3 am on a Sunday, would apply to cars, motor cycles, private boats and aircraft. The referendum is expected to be early next year.

A COMMUNIST MAYOR

The Geneva borough of Carouge has elected a Communist Mayor, Mr. Albert Felder, during elections held by the councils of Canton's thirteen major communes.

MISSILES NEAR THE BORDER

The official bodies of the district of Ajoie in the Jura sent a letter to the Federal Council to warn of the dangers of French "Pluto" nuclear missiles to be based 10 kilometres from the border. Following a meeting in Porrentruy, the mayors and local officials demanded that these missiles should be put back, and that the 100 kilometres security zone between France and Switzerland should be respected.

GET EATING

Food and wine editors and specialists from the United States spent a week in Berne at the invitation of the Swiss capital's Tourist Office. Main aim of the visit was to see the city's Forum Culinaire — "the first centre in Switzerland for seminars, conferences, demonstrations, exhibitions in the field of modern cooking and nutrition".

ZURICH AIRPORT'S NEW TERMINAL

In autumn 1975 Zurich airport will undergo a change of complexion with the opening on 1 November of Passenger Terminal B.

A new multi-storey car park with space for 2,100 cars and directly connected to the terminal will come into use at the same time.

Terminal B consists of a main building with handling facilities and related services on three levels, and a "finger-dock" with nine parking positions for large aircraft.

Passengers will be able to get to and from the car park to the terminal building under cover all the way. Terminal B is also linked to Terminal A by covered corridors.

INTERNATIONAL DOG SHOW

Under the name "Animals and Man", an exhibition devoted to the relationship between man and animals will be taking place for the first time in the halls of the Swiss Industries Fair in Basle from 22 to 30 May 1976.

Within the framework of this exhibition, a large international dog show is planned in the Round Court Building for the weekend from 22 and 23 May 1976. This is the first show of this kind that has been organised in Basle since 1965.

Many different breeds of dogs — in 1965 there were about 100 — from owners from all parts of Switzerland and from other countries will be on show.



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