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SWISS EVENTS

JURA: NEW CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY HOLDS FIRST SESSION

The Jura's Constituent Assembly held its first session at the beginning of April in the Church of Saint Marcel at Délémont. The 50-seat Assembly, which was elected a year ago, will work out the Constitution of the New Canton uniting three French-speaking districts of the North of the Jura.

Several thousand demonstrators greeted the delegates as they entered and later left the Church. It was in the same edifice that the priests and administrators of the Jura had been sworn in following the area's annexation to the State of Berne by the Congress of Vienna in 1815. The choice of this venue had therefore a symbolic significance.

During the session, delegates heard a speech by the *Reassemblément Jurassien's* principal spokesman and thinker, Mr. Roger Schaffter. He said that the creation of the Constituent Assembly was the outcome of a long struggle which began when the people of the Jura, who had hitherto been under the jurisdiction of the Archbishops of Basle, were placed against their will under the authority of Berne. This struggle eventually led to the creation of the *Rassemblement* as a result of the famous Moeckli affair in 1947. But it still took another thirty years to bring a first answer to Jurassian aspirations, Mr. Schaffter recalled.

The Separatist movement had aimed at creating a new Canton independent from Berne comprising the six French-speaking districts of the Jura. As a result of the elections that were held

in the Jura to decide on the issue, during which the majority of voters in the three southern districts expressed the desire to remain in Canton Berne, the Separatists have settled with the three northern districts. The fact that they are going ahead with creating the constitutional and legal framework of the new Canton State shows that they acknowledge, and accept, what they have already got. But the Movement has certainly not given up its struggle in the South so that the whole French-speaking area of the Jura can one day become a new Canton "liberated" from Berne.

SEVERE ANTI-POLLUTION MEASURES ON CARS IN THE OFFING

Anti-pollution measures which were accepted by Parliament in November 1974 and which provided for an 80 per cent reduction of the level of carbon monoxide and hydrocarbon pollution of all cars are likely to have their first biting effect in the near future. The provisions were also intended to reduce maximum car noise to 6-8 decibels until 1980. These measures were to be carried out by stages and it was planned that the maximum level of noise produced by all transport vehicles should be reduced by 1-4 decibels, depending on the type of vehicle, by 1st January next.

Although the Federal Council hasn't yet published precise noise and gas pollution figures, car importers say that the measures, as they stand, will mean that about 80,000 new cars, or a third of imported cars each year, will not be sellable next year.

Representatives from the car trade and automobile associations have asked the Government to urgently reconsider its plans. If these are not modified, they claim, some makes of cars would be entirely banned from Switzerland until the manufacturers managed to comply to the new regulations. These would be more stringent than in any other industrialised country.

MR. SPINOLA ASKED TO LEAVE SWITZERLAND.

Mr. Antonio Spinola, Portugal's former President, was asked by the Federal authorities to leave Switzerland at the beginning of April. (See Gottfried Keller's Letter from Switzerland.) The former General, who had escaped from his country after taking part in an abortive right-wing coup last year, had resided for only two months in Switzerland on a refugee passport.

The Government's decisions was taken because Mr. Spinola had broken the conditions of his stay in Switzerland namely, that he should not carry out any political activity whatsoever. But the federal authorities questioned him after the West German magazine "Stern" had published an article claiming he had recently visited Germany with the purpose of buying arms for staging a coup this summer.

The "Stern" article claimed that three other high ranking Portuguese officers were at the meeting. Both they and Mr. Spinola denied the claims, but the Swiss Government was satisfied that the former Head of State had not abided by the conditions imposed on all aliens.

Before he left Geneva for Bazil, Mr. Spinola issued a statement deploring the fact that the Swiss Government had allowed itself to be "influenced by unfounded reports from left-wing elements bent on preventing the return of democracy to Portugal". He also said that the measure taken against him was not in keeping with Switzerland's traditions of hospitality.

NESTLÉ SHOW RECORD TURNOVER

Nestlé's world-wide sales last year totalled 18,286 million francs (about £4 billion at the present rate of exchange). This was an increase of about 10 per cent over the 1974 results. Consolidated net profit amounted to 4.4 per cent of turnover.

"Faith budget" by Protestant Church - Geneva

The Protestant Church of Geneva passed a 1976 Budget which one newspaper described as a "Faith Budget". In a period of lingering recession, the Budget commissioners approved expenses of 8.2 million francs based on an expected increase of one million francs in the income derived from ecclesiastical tax contributions.

The ways churches get their income vary from Canton to Canton. In those Cantons where the churches are more or less linked to the Cantonal State, ministers receive remarkably high salaries. In Geneva and several other Cantons, the system is to ask people who declare

themselves as Protestants on their resident registration forms to pay an optional tax to the Church. The income from this tax instituted in 1946 has steadily declined. It used to represent 50 per cent of the Church's revenue. Now this proportion is about a quarter and is likely to dwindle to near zero within some twenty years if the present trend continues.

Statistics revealed during the Budget debate at the Consistoire showed that only 12 per cent of nominal Protestants accept to pay the full amount of ecclesiastical tax contribution. 39.2 per cent pay a part of the Tax and the remainder contribute nothing at all.

Ladies get the brush off - again!

Once again the male electorate of Appenzell Ausserrhoden have refused their women-folk the right to vote on Cantonal and local affairs. At a recent Landsgemeinde the men reiterated the old belief that woman's roles were "Kinder, Küche und Kirche"-Children, kitchen and church.

I have a strong feeling that Gottfried Keller will have a few words to say about this rather astonishing decision in one of his forthcoming letters from Switzerland!

WGS

NINTH BIG BIRD

Swissair's Board of Directors has confirmed the order for a ninth DC-10-30 wide-bodied trijet for delivery in October 1977. Subject to Board approval, the company's management had placed the order last December to secure purchase at the special price of Sw.Frs. 81.6 million under a short term offer made by the manufacturers McDonnell Douglas. Following this order Swissair now holds no further DC-10 options.

SKY HIGH GASTRONOMY - TO MUSIC

Extending the improvements in passenger facilities made earlier in the year, Swissair has introduced new amenities on its South American services.

In first class on southbound flights a de luxe "buffet gastronome" is offered, including caviar, "galantine gastronome truffée", and fillets of beef and veal specially grilled to passengers' wishes on an electric grill carried on board the DC-10s. A selection of fresh fruit tartlets with fresh double cream rounds off the meal. The first class menus also contain low calorie dishes marked with an asterisk for easy reference. Passengers can also enjoy drinks at a bar at the rear of the first class cabin.

Pre-ordered special meals for children are now available in both classes, similar to those on Swissair's North Atlantic and West African routes.

Portuguese and Spanish-speaking hostesses are on board all South America services. Apart from the usual newspapers and periodicals, an in-flight library provides bestseller paperbacks in English, French and German.

On all wide-bodied jets operating over Swissair's network passengers now have a wider choice of music entertainment. Whereas the eight sound channels previously provided the same programme on flights from and to Switzerland, a different programme selection is now offered in each direction; the programmes are changed each month.

CLIMBERS TRAPPED

Winter returned very suddenly to the Swiss Alps at the end of April following a period of warm and sunny weather. Some 100 people were trapped in cabins and mountain huts in cloudy and snowy conditions. Helicopters were called in to rescue those trapped at levels of 10,000 feet and above but the bad conditions made the operations difficult and hazardous.

CONVICTED KILLER MAY BE RETURNED TO ENGLAND

The Swiss Government has made a formal request to the British authorities that Donald Hume, convicted of the murder of a taxi driver in Switzerland 17 years ago and sentenced to life imprisonment, should be repatriated to the United Kingdom.

Hume, whom the Swiss authorities describe as insane, has spent the entire

period of his imprisonment in solitary confinement and has constantly refused to co-operate in any form of psychiatric treatment.

Before going to Switzerland, Hume had already served eight years in Dartmoor for dumping a car dealer's body in the Thames. He later confessed to the murder. WGS

Banks again asked to 'open up'

Once again the Swiss banking authorities are being asked to break their strict rules of secrecy on numbered accounts. This time the request comes from the British Home Office who would like to examine an account in Lord Lucan's name. Lord Lucan, who disappeared last year, is wanted for questioning in connection with the death of his children's nanny.

The British Embassy in Berne is conducting the negotiations with the Cantonal Bank of Berne. A London

accountant acting as trustee in Lucan's bankruptcy case is asking the bank to hand over any money in the account. The accountant says that the money would be used to pay Lord Lucan's creditors.

The last occasion when the Swiss authorities agreed to open an account was in 1972 to recover royalties paid to Clifford Irving, an American author, for what was alleged to be an authentic autobiography of the late Howard Hughes. WGS

Many villages were also cut off by heavy snow which fell in the Bernese Oberland, the Grisons and even in Ticino. With up to three feet of fresh snow, the Swiss Institute for the Study of Snow and Avalanches issued a general warning. In the Rhone Valley, where the Spring festivals were under way, snow ploughs had to be called out. Wet snow has also damaged fruit trees which were already in flower following an unusually mild spell.

Some resorts in Canton Valais reported more snow than at Christmas and a number of railway lines were blocked for some time. The Jura area, which had been suffering from a drought, had up to a foot of snow. More misery hit Ticino where gale force winds were reported.

SWISS WATCH INDUSTRY RESPONDS TO CHALLENGE

The Swiss watch industry, which has been facing increasing difficulties over the past few years, is becoming more and more worried about the rapidly growing popularity of digital electronic watches, primarily from the United States and Japan.

Swiss industry unveiled its answer to the challenge at the recently-held European watch, clock and jewellery fair in Basle. Ebauches SA, one of the main producers of parts is to invest £200 million into research and development of electronic watches.

Paul Tschudin, Ebauches director general, says that the Swiss effort will be concentrated on refining the electronic technology for liquid crystal display units, the area where the biggest growth is anticipated. This system demands less battery power and will give a constant black-on-white reading. The product is expected to appeal to the higher priced end of the market.

SWISS CURB ON IMPORTING BANKNOTES

The Swiss Government has issued a decree which limits the value of banknotes imported into Switzerland to Francs 20,000 per person in any three month period.

This unusual step has been taken because of the recent heavy movement of banknotes into the country, particularly from Italy. The movement has caused an upward pressure on the Franc. The move is designed to protect the Franc but also to please the Italian Government which is worried about the outflow of money because of the weakness of the Lira. It has been estimated that as much as five billion lire were crossing the Italo-Swiss border each day.

There will, however, be no formalities and no form filling at the border. Travellers will simply be asked to declare how much money they have in banknotes "in much the same way as they are for alcohol" said a spokesman. Spot checks will be made as a usual customs procedure.