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Parliament takes the open air

A TRADITION of a very special sort is observed at the end of April and beginning of May in five Swiss rural and mountain cantons - the Landsgemeinde. It is a deep-rooted example of democracy in its most genuine and vivid form.

Voters assembled en masse elect their representative to the cantonal authorities and dispose of

decided to stay in the U.S. in 1913 to
important business by a show of hands.

It is hard to say which of these open-air "parliaments" is the most impressive.

The one in Appenzell Ausserrhoden, which is held at Hundwil this year as in all years ending in odd numbers and at Trogen in



Switzerland likes to be in the open air

other years, may appear particularly compact.

On the other hand the **Landsgemeinden** in Glarus (held in Glarus town), Obwalden (on the Landenberg near Sarnen) and Appenzell Innerrhoden (at Appenzell) are often marked by their free give and take of discussion and argument.

ON the afternoon of the first Sunday in May curious objects, carefully constructed of wooden frames richly adorned with foliage and paper streamers, make their appearance in several quarters of Bad Ragaz.

Known as "Mai-Bären", they are carried around the streets and finally some are thrown into the rushing waters of the Tamina.

The "Mai-Bären" symbolise crop demons and the custom reflects an ancient fertility rite. Youngsters who parade around with them make as much noise as they can with bells, and collect donations for their school outing fund.

There is a similar custom in several country districts of Geneve, called "Feuillu", and held on the same day.

While on the first Sunday in May in the Ticino – particularly in the Lugano district – children gather round a maypole for a custom known as "Maggiolata".

International music festivals

THREE international music festivals are being held in Switzerland this year – at Zurich from May 31 to July 2, Lucerne from August 15 to September 8, and Montreux-Vevey from August 26 to October 4.

A leaflet, "European Association of Music Festivals – Season 1981", is available from the Swiss National Tourist Office.

Non-stop success

IN THE last 12 months more than 100,000 passengers have used the direct motorcoach service between Lausanne and Geneva airport. The service was started in 1971 and since then has carried nearly a million passengers.

The vehicles make 22 trips a day. The journey is non-stop, and there are no traffic lights on the route, which is mostly by motorway, bordered on either side by the countryside of Vaud and Geneva and the beautiful vineyards of La Côte.

Britons top of the list

THE popularity of Switzerland with British holiday-makers is reaching new heights. The latest figures from the Federal Statistics Office show that in January Britons accounted for 114,000 bednights, which was 38 per cent up on the previous year.

The average increase for

the first two months of the year was 43 per cent. This compares with 27 per cent for Americans, 11 per cent for French and Germans and 7 per cent for Italians.

The total of all foreign visitors in the first two months was 11 per cent. But the number of Swiss visitors showed a 2 per cent drop.

Health package from Baden

HOTELS in the famous spa resort of Baden near Zurich are again offering three-week all-inclusive arrangements during the next winter season.

Brochures giving full details are available from the Swiss National Tourist Office.

Cut prices for senior citizens

ALL holders of a valid Senior Citizen Rail Card issued by British Rail are entitled to reduced hotel rates in Switzerland.

In the case of couples staying at hotels participating in the scheme, it is sufficient for one spouse to be a holder of the Senior Citizen Rail Card, and it is immaterial whether the other is of senior citizen age. The card must be shown to the hotel

receptionist on arrival.

A brochure giving details of participating hotels, prices, periods of validity, etc, is available from the Swiss National Tourist Office.

Booklets available

A COMPLETE set of all-inclusive arrangements in summer 1981 in various resorts in Central Switzerland is now available from the Swiss National Tourist Office.

THE third International Triennial of Photography will be held in the Museum of Art and History at Fribourg from June 11 to October 15.

Held under the patronage of the canton and city of Fribourg, it features photographs from professions from all over the world.

Events of the month

May 1-10	Sion	Sion-EXPO
May 2	Biel	9th International marathon
May 2	Geneva	Palais des expositions: International model exchange bourse
May 3	Glarus	Landsgemeinde: Open-air cantonal voters assembly
May 3-9	Montreux	21st Golden Rose of Montreux, international television festival
May 6-17	Neuchâtel	18th Neuchâtel Musical Spring
May 7-17	Berne	Allmend: 30th BEA, handicraft, agricultural, industry and trade exhibition
May 23/24	Berne	22nd Swiss two-day march
May 23/24	Fribourg	«Zähringer cities Day», international congress
May 23-31	Lucerne	Allmend: LUGA 81, Lucerne agriculture and trade exhibition
May 26-31	Basel	Muba: REHAMEX, international fair for the rehabilitation and integration of the disabled
May 29-31	Solothurn	3rd Solothurn literature days
May 31-June 7	Solothurn	1st International art festival