

Adam and Eve in the Alps

Autor(en): **Creux, R. / Chevalley, H.**

Objektyp: **Article**

Zeitschrift: **The Swiss observer : the journal of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK**

Band (Jahr): - **(1968)**

Heft 1556

PDF erstellt am: **26.09.2024**

Persistenter Link: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-695849>

Nutzungsbedingungen

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Inhalten der Zeitschriften. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern.

Die auf der Plattform e-periodica veröffentlichten Dokumente stehen für nicht-kommerzielle Zwecke in Lehre und Forschung sowie für die private Nutzung frei zur Verfügung. Einzelne Dateien oder Ausdrucke aus diesem Angebot können zusammen mit diesen Nutzungsbedingungen und den korrekten Herkunftsbezeichnungen weitergegeben werden.

Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. Die systematische Speicherung von Teilen des elektronischen Angebots auf anderen Servern bedarf ebenfalls des schriftlichen Einverständnisses der Rechteinhaber.

Haftungsausschluss

Alle Angaben erfolgen ohne Gewähr für Vollständigkeit oder Richtigkeit. Es wird keine Haftung übernommen für Schäden durch die Verwendung von Informationen aus diesem Online-Angebot oder durch das Fehlen von Informationen. Dies gilt auch für Inhalte Dritter, die über dieses Angebot zugänglich sind.

The Swiss Observer

FOUNDED IN 1919 BY PAUL F. BOEHRINGER.

The Official Organ of the Swiss Colony in Great Britain

Advisory Council: R. J. KELLER (Chairman), GOTTFRIED KELLER (Vice-Chairman), O. F. BOEHRINGER, J. EUSEBIO, A. KUNZ, C. NATER, R. M. SUESS.

EDITED BY MRS. MARIANN MEIER WITH THE CO-OPERATION OF MEMBERS OF THE SWISS COLONY IN GREAT BRITAIN

Telephone: 01-253 2321/2.

Published Twice Monthly at 23 LEONARD STREET, E.C.2.

Telegrams: PAPERWYSE STOCK LONDON

Vol. 54 No. 1556

FRIDAY, 11th OCTOBER 1968

ADAM AND EVE IN THE ALPS

Switzerland: a small country set in the very heart of Europe. What role does it play in the confluence of civilisations around it? This was the basic question facing the organisers of this Hemisfair exhibition, held at San Antonio from April to October this year. Their first step was to look at Switzerland through the eyes of a foreigner. What they saw was an image compounded of familiar and apparently inevitable commonplaces.

What does the outsider see in this open-air museum of ideas and traditions handed down from generation to generation? The Watch, of course, with all its proverbial Helvetic precision. Cheese. Chalets: chalets which are so scrupulously clean as to be virtually unreal, but which nevertheless fire the romantic imagination. Chocolate: the finest in the world (made, paradoxically, from cocoa beans which have to be imported). A federation of states clustered under the breathtaking panoply of the glaciers. William Tell, a national hero who, thanks to Schiller and Rossini, knows no national frontiers. Legendary hospitality, recognised early by Montaigne but first exploited by Thomas Cook, who brought the English to Switzerland. And, finally, the Swiss himself. A serious type — or so they say. But is this fellow, who dissects time into hours, minutes, seconds and hundredths of seconds with such pedantic accuracy, really so stuffy and withdrawn? It the Swiss himself firmly ensconced within the gold casing of a watch? Or does he also have his lighter moments? On entering the Swiss pavilion the visitor is confronted by a medieval belfry in the round on which the hours are carved. Death flirts with the Lady of Pleasure under the indifferent gaze of the Bishop. Chronos, the unrelenting God of Time, makes a sinister feast of his own offspring, the Hours. Just inside, a huge mechanical bird symbolises fleet-winged escape from Time. William Tell sits astride the bird, anachronistic telescope in hand, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau puts the finishing touches to his 'Promenades'. These impressions serve as a whimsical preamble to Switzerland as it really is: a unique synthesis of the civilisations which surround it and which it has assimilated.

The giant bird can also be taken as a symbol of the liberty which Switzerland has cherished throughout its history. William Tell, a hero cast in the mould of a Davy Crockett or a Joan of Arc, presides over our freedom. History has made of him the hero who was forced by a foreign tyrant to shoot an apple from his son's head. We, in turn, have taken a liberty with Mr. Tell — we have placed a watch on his son's head instead of the traditional apple. This, however, is a pardonable liberty, because we are anxious to preserve the original apple. Indeed, it is an ideal way of expressing our democracy. Cut the

apple into three segments and you arrive at the original Swiss Cantons, the alliance out of which today's Switzerland was born. Cut the apple into twenty-two segments and it represents the twenty-two Cantons of Switzerland today. Every apple has, however, its share of pips and, appealing as this image of Switzerland may be, there is no denying that there are still one or two black spots. Since handing over the apple, Eve has seen precious little of it, certainly not as far as civic responsibility is concerned — and matters won't improve until her menfolk finally get around to giving her the vote!

In Genesis, the forbidden fruit created havoc. In the Helvetic Garden of Eden, however, the reverse is true: people of every creed live in quiet harmony. It must be added, nevertheless, that this harmony was not achieved overnight. Co-existence in creed is also matched by co-existence in language. It is the Swiss's proud boast that he can say 'Freedom' in four languages — French, German, Italian and Romansh. This agglomeration of races, creeds and languages forms, in effect, a delightful jig-saw in a box labelled 'One for All and All for One'; a motto which has held good throughout the ages and has not aged the slightest in the process.

Switzerland, then, is a haven in the centre of Europe and the Swiss themselves make the most of it. Adam, united in holy matrimony to his pigtailed Eve, rejoices in the 16,000 square miles at his disposal — bearing in mind that, to cover the distance between the plants and the mountains, he has to have a season ticket for the railroad. The happy couple's neighbours — Austria, Germany, France, Italy and Liechtenstein — look on benignly. Adam is content with his season ticket and blissfully relaxed in his metaphysic. Or should we say Dr. Adam? Yes, he has now acquired a title, the dream of every Swiss. And a visiting card.

In the meantime, Eve has not been idle. She has presented him with some six million children and raised them on a homestead made up of two mountain chains, the Jura to the North and West, the Alps to the East, South and South-West. In other words, it is three-quarters rock. No matter — Eve's offspring are a hardy lot and well adapted to their environment. The highest point on the homestead is Monte Rosa (15,210 feet) and the lowest is Lake Maggiore. (Adam is the practical type; he persuaded God to give him some lakes so that he could look at the mountains without having to crane his neck.) These differences in altitude are a tonic and the Swiss is a sturdy soul with a long life ahead of him. One sign of his sound common sense, however, is that he is not opposed to compromise solutions, so he often elects to settle between the mountains and the lakes on the

Alpine plateaux. This is a good place to live and Switzerland concentrates the bulk of its agriculture, industries and principal cities — including the federal capital of Berne — in locations such as these.

In Spring, the glaciers and eternal snows of Switzerland swell the streams into mountain torrents which gradually grow into imposing rivers, two of which are among the most important in Europe. There is the Rhône to the West, with its warm sun, the perfume of thyme and the flavour of olives, coursing directly south to the Mediterranean. The Rhine to the North is romantic and enigmatic, the Germanic river of the Lorelei, of Heinrich Heine and mute castles on the surrounding hilltops. The Ticino flows south, towards Italy, and the Inn heads east to join the blue waters of the Danube.

Life has not always been easy in the Swiss Eden. At the beginning there was a people of mountain peasants who lived from the land and laid aside provisions for the bleak winter months. Then they hibernated, devoting their time to embellishing their chalets with carvings which were, to the critical eye, iconographic in effect. Eve is confident. The Swiss have proved themselves to be hard-working, precise and ingenious and she knows that a more prosperous Switzerland will grow out of these virtues, a Switzerland better equipped to foster and protect its native heritage. The Swiss army, originally small, developed into one famed for its valiant and seasoned warriors. Switzerland, however, by no means cowered behind its shields and ramparts. Every now and then it did venture outside, going over the great mountain passes of the Gottard, the Simplon, the Splügen and the Great Saint Bernard, establishing contact with places and nations throughout Europe. The Swiss soldier, wary of waging war at home, hired out his legendary muscles in the service of foreign princes. This brought Switzerland a few knocks but also a fair share of revenue — not very noble, perhaps, but still helping the country to become more familiar with the outside world. When the Swiss returned to his native land he was enriched — figuratively at least — by his experiences abroad. Swiss craftsmanship and techniques profited immensely by this and an artisan society, the precursor of modern industrial society, gradually came into being. At the same time, however, another vocation emerged. Deeply moved by the horrible suffering of the dying and mutilated at the battle of Solferino, Henri Dunant founded the Red Cross which, as a purely humanitarian charity, was to become a universal and universally respected institution. Switzerland adopted the concept of armed neutrality and its army was never again hired out in foreign service. The Confederation anchored its neutrality in international law at the Congress of Vienna.

In the process of growing up, then, Adam has acquired sagacity and humanitarianism. This sagacity is noticeable above all in his dynamism in adapting to the new industrial era. Adam has now set aside his herdsman's tunic and donned the dark grey suit of the Director General. He sits behind an imposing mahogany desk dictating to his squad of secretaries. But still — next to his battery of telephones we find a tiny *Edelweiss*, a touching reminder of a past which Herr Direktor has by no means forgotten. And even in the age of mass production, the seal of craftsmanship and the personal touch remain. Adam still likes the personal approach to things in general and to Switzerland and Swiss products in particular. He is delighted to see his daughters wearing local costumes going back to the traditional garments of yester-year, dresses of embroidered cotton or locally spun silk.

Adam, settled behind his desk, pulls heartily on a cigar made from prime tobaccos from the valley of Broye in the Canton of Vaud. The third telephone from the left rings urgently. One of the most important naval construction companies in the world is on the line, inquiring about a powerful turbine for a new ocean liner. "Nothing," replies Adam, "could be simpler."

Nothing could, in fact, be simpler. Although a landlocked nation, Switzerland constructs and assembles some of the largest marine engines in the world. Adam might add that he can also provide an effective antidote for seasickness. After all, the Swiss chemical and pharmaceutical industry is virtually without peer.

Yes, the Adam and Eve Corporation now has quite a few strings to its crossbow. In the vast concert of modern industry it plays a significant part in international scientific research. One of its engineers, for example, turned out an adhesive which — literally — sticks together airplanes and space capsules and for which the NASA has had every reason to be grateful, since it contributed to the success of the Gemini programme. And, once again, on the astronaut's wrist, the perennial Swiss watch in all its unparalleled accuracy. Or we might mention the synthetic ruby, a material used widely in atomic research. And so on.

Sad to say, Eve is feeling the strain slightly — ever since Adam started to encourage the tourists. Eve is an excellent housewife, but she is rather jealous of her domain and doesn't really care to have every Tom, Dick and Harry marching in and out without even wiping his feet. On the other hand, tourism is one of the nation's principal industries and the additional revenue does more than help to keep the wolf from the door. Just to make sure the accommodation is up to standard, hotel schools have been set up; Eve keeps a watchful eye on the one in Lausanne in particular, a school which is attended by students from all corners of the earth. She is very proud of the hotel tradition and remembers especially a young man from the Valais — a fellow called Ritz — who left his mountain home to create a hotel dynasty which served as a model for the Hiltons of the future. So, while Adam is checking out statistics on Switzerland's industrial output, Eve pores over a hot stove. Cuisine is an art and Eve does not spare herself in its service.

At the same time, the intellectual and aesthetic aspects of life are by no means neglected. Think back to the Swiss peasant with his alpenstock and chalet, the first Swiss to create a bas-relief. Swiss folk-art is one of the richest and most fecund in Europe; and the cities have produced their share of artists also. One need only mention the skill of Urs Graf, Holbein and his portrait of Erasmus, Hodler's rugged landscapes, the heightened reality of Paul Klee and the emaciated sculptures of Alberto Giacometti. Swiss writers have also made their mark on the world of ideas and social criticism — Jeremias Gotthelf, Gottfried Keller, Madame de Staël, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Benjamin Constant, C.-F. Ramuz, C. G. Jung, Max Frisch, Friedrich Dürrenmatt and countless others have secured themselves a place in literature's Hall of Fame.

Swiss actors and actresses too have found their way in the world of stage and screen. Ursula Andress is very much in the public eye, but we should not forget Michel Simon, Jean-Luc Godard, Gérard Oury and Maximilian and Maria Schell.

Eve now rocks to the strains of Frank Martin and Arthur Honegger under the baton of Ernest Ansermet —

a far cry from the primeval concert of wind and water in the rugged Garden of Eden. But there is still a place in her affections for yodelling and the alpine horn. And also for the works of that remarkable artist Rudolph Töpffer, precursor of modern comic-strips, which decorate the walls of her Corbusier-built home.

Thus, if you wish to see Switzerland in its true light, imagine a pot-pourri of magnificent mountains, limpid lakes and sparkling rivers and, at the same time, of factories, dams, châteaux, suburban communities, magnificent shopping centres, fondue and air-cured ham. It is worthwhile to visit Eden, if only to see some familiar sights once again — the castle of Chillon, Tell's Chapel, the Matterhorn and the Rhine Falls.

Swiss Adam has come of age. In the words of the renowned Swiss Poet C.-F. Ramuz, he may say to his Eve: This evening, in all its beauty, is the evening of our life: you have earned a moment of repose.

Our children have departed and gone out into the world and we are alone again, we two, as we once were long ago. And here they are: Adam and Eve, two small figures sitting on a wooden bench, contemplating their world — Switzerland. They have come full circle. The way has been long but often beautiful. Two small figures who, in the twilight of their lives, can afford themselves the luxury of forgetting time.

R. Creux and H. Chevalley.

(Translated by M. B. Gubitz and E. J. Crockett, and created by "Pro Helvetia" Foundation, Zurich.)

BRITISH WEEK IN BASLE CANCELLED

As was reported in the last issue, the British Week in Basle was stopped at the last minute. We reproduce the following from the "Weekly Tribune" in Geneva:

Biafra row stops British Week

The British Week due to open in Basle on Friday, 20th September, has been called off after pressures from a group demanding action against Britain in retaliation for the sending of arms to Nigeria.

Opposition to the trade promotions week took shape a fortnight ago when Dr. Gutzwiller, Vice-President of the organising committee and head of Basle's Tourist Office, withdrew his name on grounds that he could not be connected with anything British as long as British weapons were being used for what he called the "mass-acre" of the Ibo people.

With sympathy for Biafra running high, the Anti-Week campaign gathered steam as a committee formed to back Gutzwiller's position was formed. Among its sponsors were playwright Friedrich Dürrenmatt and the world-famous theologian Basle's Dr. Karl Barth.

On Tuesday morning anti-British Week posters adorned numerous shop fronts.

The same day, the "National Zeitung", initially neutral to the event though pro-Biafran, carried a call for one day of the British Week to be designated "Biafra Day", with 10 percent of the proceeds going to Biafra.

The threats of terrorist action were enough to make merchants think twice and the mighty ACV co-operative strengthened the opposition to the Week by backing out, and the Week was finally called off at the last minute.

Organisers said the event had been cancelled to "prevent any possible friction" which might have arisen were the programme to go on.

The statement was made the day before Her Majesty's Ambassador in Berne, H. A. F. Hohler was to have visited the city on the eve of the Week's opening — to which the Duke of Edinburgh's Royal Regiment band was to lend its talents with marches through the city and a Saturday evening concert in the Swiss Industries Fair Hall.

To this should be mentioned a news item in the "Basler Nachrichten" of 20th September that the British Ambassador and his wife did visit the town after all. There were no anti-British demonstrations, though the visit was inevitably under the cloud of the cancellation. There was a reception at the *Regierunsratssaal*, during which the President of the Basle Government expressed his town's appreciation that H.M. Ambassador had not cancelled his visit. The Ambassador said, whilst regretting the decision, he had been in agreement with the decision not to hold the British Week under the circumstances. The reception was followed by a luncheon at the "Wild'sche Haus" and a visit to CIBA.

FEDERAL NEWS ITEMS

In June, the Secretary-General of United Nations invited Switzerland to take part in increased sanctions against Rhodesia. Early in September, the Federal Council answered that as neutral State, Switzerland was unable to take part in any sanctions. But she had taken steps to prevent any extension of the Rhodesian Trade and of crossing the policy of sanctions of UN.

The Federal Council has worked a new draft for the tobacco law which was rejected by the Swiss electorate in May. The main alteration is that no price control limit of five years is contained. Thus, if the new draft is accepted, there will be no price control, but some relief in taxes is proposed for small tobacco dealers.

When the British Protectorate of Swaziland became independent on 6th September, Switzerland acknowledged the new State and delegated the Swiss Ambassador in South Africa to the Independence Celebrations.

The Swiss Government has made an agreement with U.S.A. regarding social insurance. A new agreement has been arrived at between Switzerland and Malaysia regarding civil aviation.

At the Interparliamentary Conference in Lima, at which parliamentarians from 70 countries took part, the Swiss delegation of nine National Councillors and two Councillors of States was under the leadership of *Ständeratspräsident* Emil Wipfli.

Among foreign Statesmen who visited Switzerland recently, were the Minister for Development and Tourism Moshe Kol from Israel, the Italian Foreign Minister Medici, German Foreign Minister Brandt and the Swedish Defence Minister Andersson.

The Federal *Fahrzeugkontrolle* has been made fully automatic. In this connection, a new form has been issued with instructions as to reporting every vehicle which now has a *Stammnummer*. This number is essential for identification.

For every 1,000 inhabitants in Switzerland, there are 20 employees in the Federal Administration. The increase between 1950 to 1967 was from 91,118 to 118,182.