

# Letter from Switzerland : Nuclear Energy: Swiss Achievements and Projects

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land with the means at their disposal. They are teaching them how to care for their cattle and livestock, how to make a rational use of their milk, how to build cheaply and with *makeshift materials* — cheese-dairies, better roads, bridges which can withstand the heavy rains, and also how to make farm implements in the villages. Thus, the Swiss Aid to Extra-European Countries *starts its work everywhere right at the beginning*. It is true that this is still very limited, but it has made it possible to gain some valuable experience on which subsequent work can be based.

In the present state of affairs it would seem as if this empiric method is the most efficacious of all short-term methods. It may be assumed, therefore, that the considerable sums which the Western World invests in these still backward countries would be better employed if — *at any rate during the initial stages* — they were to be used everywhere for the purpose of generalising the methods adopted by the Swiss Aid. Industries would be set up, in connection with the extension of their application, but only such industries as are intended for covering the most urgent requirements, and this without any other ambition. This method, moreover, has *the advantage of bringing the populations concerned into an active participation in this effort of reconstruction*, because *its results are immediate and tangible*. The generalisation of these methods, however, not only demands a considerable increase in the financial aid granted by the Western World, but also the sending into these regions of not merely a few hundred, but *thousands* of technicians. In other words, the application of these methods requires a personal contribution, a selfless devotion to duty and the necessity for making this aid into a vocation for the generous-minded youth of the Western World, which is ready to answer such an appeal. It is up to the governments to show generosity and to understand that it is the younger generation which can solve the problem and re-establish, by its personal appeal, the confidence which the preceding generations have lost in the still backward countries.

## LETTER FROM SWITZERLAND.

### Nuclear Energy: Swiss Achievements and Projects.

More so perhaps than any other industrial country, Switzerland is largely dependent upon other countries for the raw materials she needs and for her power supplies in particular. Although her hydraulic resources are exploited intensively, they satisfy only about 20 per cent of the total national requirements and some 30 per cent of those of industry alone. Furthermore, in spite of the great efforts to make full use of the hydro-electric resources of the country (at the beginning of 1958 there were as many as twenty-three building or expansion projects under way) and the resultant big increase in the output of current, it is feared that these small percentages will fall even lower during the next few years. The situation calls for decisive action, and Switzerland, after studying the question very thoroughly, is now taking steps first of all to increase the output of traditional sources of energy and then gradually to replace them by nuclear energy.

But it is not only in the field of the production of energy that Switzerland is taking care not to be left

behind in the "atomic revolution". Her industry too, particularly the machinery branch, is going resolutely ahead, doing everything necessary to adapt itself to the new technique, and even to take a prominent part in it, as it has succeeded in doing in other fields. In this connection it is worth mentioning that twenty-three Swiss firms took part in the recent "Atoms for Peace" exhibition which was organised during the Geneva Conference and that a certain number of the exhibits had been manufactured according to entirely new methods.

Obviously, however, the financial means at Switzerland's disposal are limited and cannot be compared with those available to the big industrial countries. Less favoured, therefore, than the latter, Switzerland realised that it was only by co-operating in the international field that she would be able first of all to obtain the uranium she requires and, secondly, in exchange for the results of her own experiments, to profit by the work carried out in other countries. Consequently, she concluded agreements concerning these matters with the United States, France and Canada. The first spectacular result of this co-operation occurred last year with the putting into operation of the first experimental reactor to be installed on Swiss soil, the "Sapphire", which had been made in America and assembled at Würenlingen, in the canton of Aargau, for a private concern, Réacteur Co. Ltd. Another reactor, the "Diorit", is at present being assembled in the same power station.

Among the other experimental factories to be set up in Switzerland, mention must be made of those planned by the Federal Institute of Technology (to complete its instructional and research activities) and by two private companies, Nuclear Energy Co. Ltd. in Lausanne (formed by a number of industrial concerns in the French-speaking part of Switzerland) and Suissatom Co. Ltd. (created by the country's four greatest electrical companies). It is interesting to note that while the last of these atomic piles will be the result of joint Swiss-American collaboration, the other two will be entirely Swiss made.

To return to the above-mentioned co-operation, it should be added that Switzerland is also taking part in two projects recently instituted, under the auspices of OEEC, by the European Agency for Nuclear Energy: the first being an experimental hot water reactor at Halden in Norway (the first of its kind in Europe), the second an experimental works to be built at Moll, in Belgium, by Eurochemie — a European company for the chemical treatment of nuclear fuels. Switzerland's contribution to these two projects amounts to some 8 million francs.

For the sake of completeness, it should be added that last autumn the Swiss people and cantons adopted a new article of the Constitution giving the Confederation the necessary powers with regard to legislation in the field of atomic energy.

Switzerland, therefore, seems to have started on the right road; her first achievements, her plans for the future, and the spirit animating both her scientists and authorities, bear witness to her determination to maintain in the atomic world of tomorrow the position she enjoys in the industrial world of to-day.

OSEC.