

Last minute information

Objekttyp: **Group**

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

Band (Jahr): - **(1969)**

Heft 1573

PDF erstellt am: **25.04.2024**

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stazione di Lugano 1500 rondoni che sono poi stati rimessi immediatamente in libertà nella campagna luganese. L'operazione si è ripetuta domenica

mattina in Valle di Blenio dove altri 220 rondoni giunti alla stazione di Bellinzona con treno diretto delle 6.38 sono stati portati e successivamente

liberati. Questa "emigrazione forzata" d'uccelli si è rivelata quanto mai provvida.

Poncione di Vespero.

LAST MINUTE INFORMATION . . .

Questions in Parliament: The Federal Council was asked what the Government intended to do about the firms which had increased exports to Rhodesia; these had risen by 29%, although the Government had agreed that there should be no increase. In their reply, the Federal Council stated that no undertaking had been given. As Swiss exports to Rhodesia still had not surpassed 1% of the country's imports, trade with Switzerland did not influence the economic embargo decreed by the Security Council. The increase in Swiss exports last year was in the main due to a one-time delivery of disinfectants and pesticides. The firm in question had been warned, and exports in the first few months of this year had gone back again.

The Federal Council has given the *Swiss Red Cross* a further 230,000 francs for aid abroad, mainly for the care of foreign children in Switzerland, help in North Greece and the Tibetan assistance scheme in India.

For the first time, an official *Yugoslav delegation* has visited Switzerland. The Foreign Minister and his advisers had talks with the Swiss Government, which covered trade relations and European security. Yugoslavia imports chocolate, cheese, machinery and chemical and pharmaceutical goods. An agreement has been signed with a Geneva firm for 195 electric locomotives. Some 100,000 Swiss tourists visit the country annually. Switzerland imports meat, wine, fruit, honey and maize, leather goods, textiles and skis. At the moment, 15,000 Yugoslavs study or work in Switzerland. After this first official visit to Switzerland, the Foreign Minister expressed deep satisfaction with the outcome of the talks.

A friendly visit was paid to Switzerland by the *American National Governors' Conference*. This trip was organised by "Pro Helvetia". The

Government received the visitors, and they returned "as good friends of Switzerland".

The Minister of Agriculture and Cattlebreeding of *Paraguay*, visited Switzerland. He was received by Federal Councillors Schaffner and Celio and continued his journey to the Ticino to visit his Commune of origin, Mezzana, whence his family had emigrated at the end of the last century. The Minister is a grandson of the famous natural scientist Mose Bertoni.

The Federal Council broke with tradition and did not visit the home Canton of the President of the Confederation for their *Annual Outing*. Instead they visited the new tourist centre of the Gruyère, Moléson-Village, and later the Lake of Geneva district, where Minister Carl Burckhardt received the Government on his estate at Vinzel.

The new head of the *Federal Office of Agriculture* in the Swiss Department of Home Affairs, is Ingr. agr. Jean-Claude Piot of Bournens/Vaud. The new *Rector of the ETH* is Prof. Dr. Pierre Edouard Marmier; a Fri-bourgeois.

The first commercial *school of parachutists* was opened at Locarno-Magadino.

Dr. med. Paul J. Keller, Zurich, was awarded the "*Schering Prize*" by the Swiss Society of Obstetrics and Gynaecology.

The *Berne Prize for Literature* has been given to Friedrich Duerrenmatt.

A young woman architect, Miss Susanne Wettstein, has won the *federal competition* for a students' settlement on the Hoengerberg in Zurich.

Miss Brigitte Kundert who died last autumn and who had run a small shop in Glarus, has left over *five million francs* to various public institutions.

(Agence Télégraphique Suisse.)

THE SWISS AND HIRE PURCHASE

Among Western European countries, Switzerland makes the least use of hire purchase facilities. At the end of 1968 the total of such loans in Switzerland worked out at an average of only Fr. 163 per inhabitant compared with Fr. 282 in Great Britain, Fr. 239 in Belgium, Fr. 218 in Austria, Fr. 209 in West Germany and Fr. 200 in France. However in Switzerland, between 1963 and 1968 hire purchase loans increased 100% to total about 1 billion Swiss francs. During the same period the Swiss national revenue increased by 45% and private consumption by 41%. Nevertheless, at the end of 1968, hire purchase loans represented only 1.6% of the national revenue and 2.4% of private consumption. Furthermore these loans corresponded to only 1.8% of bank savings deposits last year. It should also be noted that the average age of borrowers has dropped continually during the past few years. At present it is between 34 and 35.

(O.S.E.C.)

LARGE MONETARY COVER FOR IMPORTS INTO SWITZERLAND

From a report issued by the Union Bank of Switzerland comparing monetary reserves with figures for foreign trade, it appears that in spite of a slight drop compared with the previous year Switzerland has the highest level of imports covered by monetary reserves in the whole world. In 1968, the proportion was 87.6% compared with 88.1% in 1967, that is to say that imports in 1968 totalled 19.4 billion francs as opposed to 17 billion for monetary reserves. West Germany had a figure of 53.5% compared with 46.9% in 1967, for imports valued at 86 billion francs. The United States totalled 141.9 billion francs' worth of imports for a cover of 47.6% compared with 55% in 1967.

(O.S.E.C.)

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