

A pocket knife conquers the world

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NEWS IN BRIEF FROM THE TAGES-ANZEIGER

Swiss Army trucks sold to Croatia for SwFr 2000 each. The bargain basement price is due to the fact that the environmental protection legislation does not allow these vehicles to roam Swiss roads.

★ ★ ★

Unemployed people now number 41,606, or as many as there were in 1939, a sharp increase over the last year.

★ ★ ★

The Federal Council forbids increase in premiums for Health insurance. In the last decade, the costs in the Health area have doubled.

★ ★ ★

The spraying with pesticides from helicopters of vineyards in the western part of Switzerland has run into protests from environmental groups. In the eastern part such spraying has never been allowed.

★ ★ ★

Mountain Railways, until very recently a real success story - have fallen on hard times - mergers seem to be the order of the day.

A POCKET KNIFE CONQUERS THE WORLD

The Swiss Army Knife is 100 years old. In 1886, the Knife was first distributed to Swiss soldiers.

The knife is identified with Switzerland as much as the watch industry or the Matterhorn. Reader's Digest describes it as one of the most useful tools in the world. The 'Neue Zurcher Zeitung' called it the symbol of Swiss masculinity and the 'Blick' the miracle weapon from the pocket.

The very first knives were actually produced in Solingen (Germany) because there was no suitable industry in Switzerland to manufacture them. October 1891 was when the knives were first produced in Switzerland by Carl Elsener, Schwyz. Now there are two manufacturers involved, Wenger in Delsberg produces about one third and Victorinox in Ibach near Schwyz two thirds, and 90% is exported.

Victorinox employs 900 people and produces 50,000 knives a day. The 'officer' knife makes up about 35% of the production.

There are more than 100 models, the Swiss Champ with 29 tools including a watch, is so far the highlight.

The knife has not only conquered the world, but also the cosmos. Members of Northpole and Himalaya expeditions as well as space explorers are issued with the 'knife'.

The German army issues the knife to its soldiers and the Nigerian Airforce ordered a special model with a bent blade to enable parachutists to cut through knotted lines in their parachutes.

The New York Museum of Modern Art and the State Museum of Applied Art in Munich have assured the Swiss Army Knife museum honours.