

Liechtenstein, break with Switzerland

Autor(en): **[s.n.]**

Objektyp: **Article**

Zeitschrift: **Helvetia : magazine of the Swiss Society of New Zealand**

Band (Jahr): **61 (1995)**

Heft [2]

PDF erstellt am: **13.09.2024**

Persistenter Link: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-944998>

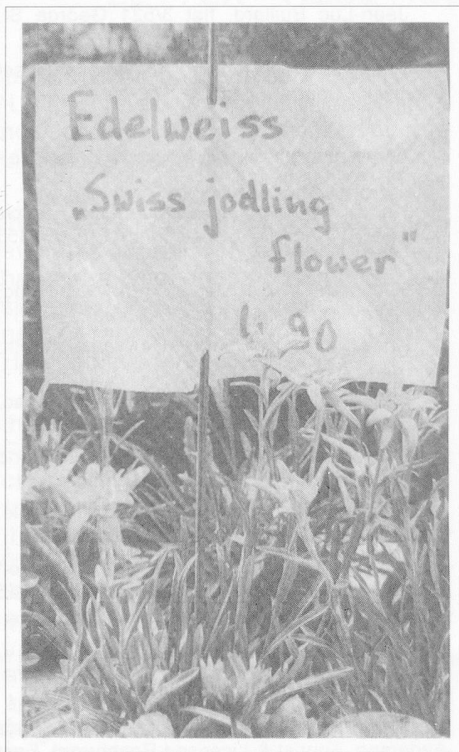
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JODLING FLOWER



Jodlers beware. You seem to have some stiff competition. According to the picture, some clever person has invented an Edelweiss that can jodle too. How well it can do that, the story does not say, but, in the hands of a good singing teacher, the Edelweiss might well put all you jodlers out of business. It would be interesting to find out what sort of a repertoire the Edelweiss would have.

One glimmer of hope yet for you jodlers: we understand that the Edelweiss has not yet mastered the art of playing the accordion or the "Hackbrett", nor that of "Fahnenschwingen", so you guys may still have a chance to survive for a little bit longer.

Now relax! It is apparently only a publicity stunt by some crafty tourist promotion manager. But for you jodlers, it surely must have come as a bit of a shock to find that you were almost upstaged by a simple but beautiful flower: our beloved Edelweiss.

POOR MR. SACHER

He is no longer the richest man in Switzerland. He has sadly been overtaken by his "step-children", Vera Oeri-Hoffmann and Lukas Hoffmann, owners of Hoffmann-La Roche, the big pharmaceutical firm in Basel. These two people, with a combined wealth of some 10 billion SFR, have pushed poor Mr. Sacher into second place. The third richest person in Switzerland follows with a mere 6 billion SFR. The richest Swiss manufacturer is Stephan Schmidheiny who owns most of the ex Brown Boveri empire plus Landis & Gyr as well as Merkur. His brother Thomas, who is a cement manufacturer and who is worth some 2 billion SFR lies only in 26th position. 24 out of the 50 richest people in Switzerland are foreigners.

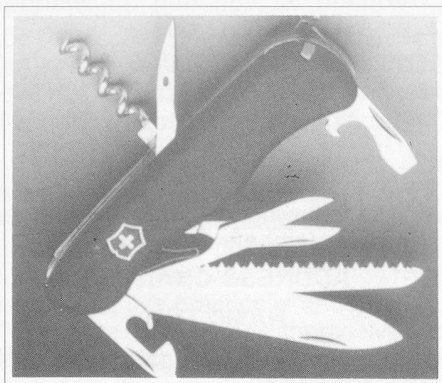
SWISS ARMY KNIFE MADE IN CHINA

The traditional Swiss officers' army knife is fighting unfair competition.

A cheap imitation knife made in China has been allowed by a US Court to be sold in the USA under the name "Swiss Army Knife". It is red like ours and has the Swiss cross and the name "Swiss Army Knife" embossed on it. It is of course much cheaper than the real thing but its quality is no match to the Swiss product.

The US Court was of the opinion that the words: Swiss Army Knife were general, everyday words and did not constitute a brand name, the same as a sausage called "Frankfurter" does not necessarily have to come from Frankfurt, nor a Chinese Gooseberry from China, nor a Waldorf Salad from New York, nor a sedan car from Sedan in France.

Despite all this, it still goes against



the grain of any good Swiss to think that some cheap imitations of our army knives are being peddled in the USA. To cheer you up here is the latest about the real McCoy.



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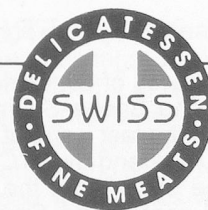
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Victorinox, makers of the renowned Swiss Army Knife, have a new model on the market featuring a 8.5 cm long blade which clicks automatically into place as it is opened. This new locking device can be deactivated by pushing back a slide on the right-hand side of the handle.

This locking knife also features an excellent pair of scissors and a woodsaw, as well as several other tools such as a dual function can opener and screwdriver, a cap lifter, wire stripper, cork screw and reamer. The knife also contains tweezers and a tooth pick. This knife is 111 mm in length, making it slightly longer than the traditional "Swiss Army Knife".

LIECHTENSTEIN, BREAK WITH SWITZERLAND.

Further to our article in a previous Helvetia magazine, herewith some more information on this issue.

For over half-a-century now, there have been the closest possible links between Switzerland and Liechtenstein. Shortly after World War I, the Principality entered into a customs and currency agreement with the Confederation. While retaining its sovereignty, Liechtenstein opened its borders to Switzerland and switched its currency from the Austrian crown to the Swiss franc. While Liechtenstein is far from being a satellite, the Government in Vaduz has traditionally done its utmost to co-ordinate its policies with those of Berne and avoid differences with its much larger partner.

In 1992, things took an unexpected turn. On December 6 of that year, the Swiss electorate voted against membership of the European Economic Area (EEA), the extended free-trade body comprising members of the then European Community (EC) and the Euro-

pean Free Trade Association (EFTA). It had been assumed that Liechtenstein would follow the Swiss example. But exactly a week later, a majority of Liechtensteiners came out in favour of joining. Did this mean divorce? Would frontier posts go up on the Rhine bridges? Or was the Principality to become a hole in the fence between Switzerland and the surrounding European market?

Two years later, both sides feel it will be possible to find a compromise. After long negotiations, last October saw the signing in Berne of an agreement containing the necessary revisions to a wide range of bilateral treaties drawn up between the two countries since 1923. These cover everything from the customs union itself through patent protection and the approval of pharmaceuticals to postal and telecommunications services, aliens-police activities and the reciprocal treatment of the signatory countries' own citizens.

But for Liechtenstein to belong to the EEA and at the same time keep up its traditional open-frontier relationship with non-member Switzerland means that something will have to give. While the October agreement guarantees that it will still be no more than a flag that separates the two territories, there has to be at least a loosening of the ties between them.

There is admittedly a chance that the whole thing may never happen. The revision of the treaties with Switzerland and amendments - included in a so-called adjusting protocol - to the text of Liechtenstein's original EEA treaty will necessitate another referendum in the Principality some time this year. Should the electorate decide not to confirm the Government's move in either of these fields, the question of membership would become a dead letter - even though the other EEA members have accepted Liechtenstein as of May 1, 1995.

Another possible development, but some years down the road, would be for Switzerland to change its own mind about European integration. Were this to happen, it would probably see the Swiss bypassing the now minuscule group of EEA countries outside today's European Union (EU) and applying directly for EU membership. But the Liechtensteiners, together with their otherwise "Europe-minded" prince Hans Adam II, have always ruled out the possibility of going into the Union. So it is just conceivable that Switzerland might one day overtake its neighbour in the field of European integration.

There is continued and substantial opposition within the Principality to the 1992 majority decision, not least from those who fear too much of a break with Switzerland and too many duties consequently having to be taken over by the authorities of Liechtenstein - with the limited resources of a 30,300 inhabitant mini-State. However, the most likely development will be that Liechtenstein stays together with Norway and Iceland as the little group of non-EU members in the EEA, while Switzerland remains outside both bodies.

According to last October's agreement, the Swiss will continue to look after Customs controls on Liechtenstein's own borders, goods destined for the Principality being given special EEA treatment at the frontier post of Buchs and Schaanwald. At the same time, Swiss duty will initially be paid on the bulk of Liechtenstein-bound merchandise which enters Switzerland elsewhere - but restituted to its recipient through a newly-formed Liechtenstein Customs Office in Vaduz.

The Swiss Government has also gone out of its way to see that Swiss citizens - who account for a good 15% of Liechtenstein's population - are not discriminated against in favour of EEA citizens. The borders of the Principality will not, as many local opponents to the EEA fear, be thrown open to the rest of Europe after the 1998 deadline.

Will Swiss companies now pack up and move over the Rhine to set up house in Liechtenstein, with its better access to the EU? Probably not as such moves would be ruled out by considerations of high costs and the lack of space. Whatever the case, most Liechtensteiners feel that joining the EEA would give them more rather than less sovereignty. While the country would become less dependent on Switzerland, it would, by staying outside the EU, retain many of its existing rights. By far the most important of these is the fiscal independence which has made the Principality into a major offshore centre.

In any case, Liechtenstein has gone it alone, without the Swiss, more than once without losing the special relationship. Most important has been its entry into the United Nations - something Switzerland also voted down.

P.S. Incidentally Liechtenstein is the only country in the world to have parking meters accepting three different currencies: German, Austrian and Swiss.

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