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NOTE TO SECRETARIES

Next issue of the Helvetia magazine: **APRIL 1996**. All contributions must be in by 15 March. Many thanks for your kind cooperation.

DIVORCE GALORE

In Switzerland, every third marriage ends up now in a divorce. In the 1960's the average was "only" one in every seven. The number of divorces is increasing at an alarming rate: 1967 saw 5200 divorces, 1970 6400, 1975 8900, 1985 11400 and 1994 registered 15630 divorces. One third of these divorces occur within the first 5 years of marriage. The main reason for divorce is usually given as "Zerrüttung" which you could probably translate as "irreconcilable differences".

NOBEL

The table below shows the distribution by countries of the holders of Nobel prizes. It is interesting to see that Switzerland comes ahead of many much larger countries with a far greater population than our country. So there must still be a few very clever people living in Switzerland. For a moment we had thought that they had all migrated overseas.....

USA 197 Prizes Great Britain 84 Prizes Germany 71 Prizes France 46 Prizes Sweden 27 Prizes Switzerland 17 Prizes Russia 15 Prizes Italy 13 Prizes Denmark 12 Prizes The Netherlands 11 prizes Austria 10 Prizes Belgium 9 Prizes

BOURBAKI PANORAMA

Last October, a campaign was launched in Les Verrières (canton of Neuenburg) to save the Bourbaki Panorama in Lucerne, the famous circular painting that depicts the event that took place in les Verrières in 1871. In February 1871, during one of the many German-French wars, over 30,000 Frenchmen from the so called Bourbaki army were overrun by the Germans and forced to flee into Switzerland. Defeated and exhausted, the French army crossed into Switzerland at les Verrières where they were disarmed and interned by the Swiss army. In 1882, Edouard Castres of Geneva, who had witnessed this French debacle at Les Verrières, decided to recapture this event on a huge canvas. In 1889, a specially designed circular building was erected in Lucerne to house Castres' enormous 1100 square metre painting. Over the years, variations in temperature and water leakages have progressively damaged the canvas. The repair job to save this work of art will cost now over 11 million SFR.

The photo shows a very small part of the huge painting depicting the Bernese Bataillon 18 arriving at Les Verrières to intercept the French army.

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VACANT PREMISES

In the canton of Zurich alone, there are 916,000 square meters of vacant commercial and industrial premises waiting for tenants. According to a report, if used up in full, these vacant surfaces would provide sufficient room for 18,000 jobs. On the other hand, even if all these premises could be used overnight and these 18,000 jobs were filled, there would be nowhere to accommodate all these people because the housing vacancies are down to less than 1%. In other words, there are only around 3900 vacant houses, apartments, flats and studios available in the whole of the canton of Zurich. So if the economy should pick up again, how are they going to fill the job vacancies if people have nowhere to live?

AIRCRAFT NOISES

The Swiss Federal Court recently decided that aircraft noises around international airports had already become predictable as far back as 1st of January 1961. Accordingly, only those people who had acquired properties near airports over 34 years ago are entitled to compensation for excessive noises. Those who have purchased their homes after 1961 get nothing at all. Obviously, the Swiss have not yet heard of the noise tax imposed on all passengers arriving at Sydney airport. This tax is being collected in order to pay for the houses near the airport to be made soundproof against aircraft noises, irrespective of when these houses had been built or purchased by the present owners.

