

News from Switzerland : snippets... May 2000

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Forthcoming events...

June 3 - 5; AGM of the Society in Auckland. I'm sure an excellent time will be had.

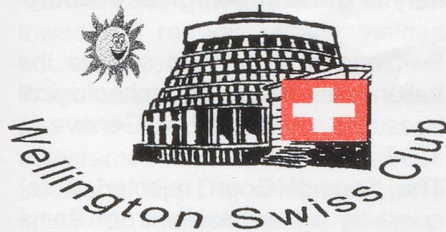
June 11 : Cards at 1-15 pm.

June 18 ; Championship Shoot at 1-00 pm. - Shooting committee members remember you have a meeting afterwards.

June 25 ; Cards again..., at 1-15 pm

July 2 ; Anniversary Shoot, Great meal of sauerkraut and sausages. Excellent day..., come and give the Shooting Club your support.

July 9 ; Cards at 1-15 pm.



wellington@swiss.org.nz

SHORT NEWS = GOOD NEWS

Work on our new Club house is in progress.....!

A detailed report will follow in next month's issue of HELVETIA

Forthcoming Events...

People belonging to the European Forum are again organizing the popular **Variety Show and Dance Evening.**

Members of the Swiss Community who attended last year, had great fun and enjoyed them-selves. Get organized and make up a party to book a table!!!!

The evening is on **Saturday 10 June 2000 at 7pm** in the Lower Hutt Town Hall.

Tickets adults \$12.- children under 14 years \$6.-

Supper will be provided, BYO Drinks Great raffle prizes

All proceedings go to the **Mary Potter Hospice.**

Contribution from M. Sørensen

News from Switzerland Snippets... May 2000

No increase in post office prices

Sending letters or parcels will not get more expensive for the time being. The communications ministry rejected a request by the Post Office for a sharp price increase from July. The ministry said further consultations were needed before a final decision on a possible price hike is taken. The Post Office expressed disappointment and said it expected a loss in revenue of up to 100 million francs.

Security committee votes to purchase Swedish tanks

The security committee of the upper house of the Swiss parliament has come out in favour of buying 186 Swedish tanks, and of channeling nearly two billion francs into this year's armaments programme. Speaking after late-evening vote, the president of the security commission, Pierre Paupe, said an army without weapons would cease to be an army. The committee's decision to boost military spending falls in line with the Swiss army reforms being pushed by the defence minister and president, Adolf Ogi.

Company founded for four-nation high-speed rail link

The railways of Switzerland, France, Germany and Luxemburg have announced the creation of a joint-stock company aimed at linking the four countries via high-speed trains. The project's goal is to shorten the train-ride from Basel to Paris from five to three and a half hours, and to knock more than two hours off a Paris-Frankfurt trip by 2006.

New Hodler painting to be auctioned

A new painting attributed to the renowned Swiss artist, Ferdinand Hodler, has been discovered in Germany. Experts said the work of art, which shows the Mönch mountain in the Bernese Oberland, was kept in a private collection. It was apparently done in 1911 as part of a series depicting mountain landscapes. The work was to be on auction in Zurich later in May.

Two in five people pray every day

A new survey shows that two in five people say prayers every day. Ten per cent of those questioned said they never pray. The survey also shows that just over 70 per cent of people believe in God, but that the number of attending worship has been decreasing over the past three decades.



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Demands for immediate closure of chemical dump

The authorities in canton Jura are demanding the immediate closure of a chemical waste dump. They said the site near Bonfol was contaminated and chemical substances were leaking into the ground water. The chemical industry, which used the site in the 1960s and 70s, said the leaks had long been fixed. Environmental concerns have also been raised in neighbouring France about the dump, which contains more than 100,000 tonnes of waste.

Violent criminals behind bars for good

A Swiss pressure group says it has collected enough signatures for a proposal aimed at keeping violent criminals behind bars for good. The group handed in the signatures to the federal authorities in Berne. It advocates life imprisonment for sexual offenders and other violent criminals judged to be too dangerous to re-enter society. The initiative which was launched in 1998 still has to be discussed in parliament before it can go to a nationwide vote.

Canton Jura wants to attract more residents

The authorities in canton Jura have presented plans to attract more residents over the next 20 years. The government said the future of the canton depended on getting an additional 11,000 people to settle in the region and stop the younger generation from moving away. The measures, which still have to be debated by parliament, include incentives for businesses to create more jobs in the area.

Drive to halve number of strokes in Switzerland

Strokes affect 12,500 people in Switzerland every year, but with the right preventive action, such numbers could be halved. With this in mind, the Swiss Cardiology Foundation has opted to make strokes the centre of its campaign for the next two years. The most common cause of a stroke is the blockage of an artery in the brain. It's the third greatest cause of death in adults, after heart problems and cancer. The campaign underlines the importance of regular medical check-ups.

Zurich and Geneva: European airports with most delays

The airports of Zurich and Geneva have the worst record in Europe regarding flight delays. That's according to a report just out by the Association of European Airlines concerning the first three months of this year. The findings state that nearly a third of all planes taking off from Kloten or Cointrin were delayed by more than 15 minutes, compared to a European average of one in every five.

Italy to get archeological treasure

Switzerland is to hand over to the Italian authorities an archeological treasure, confiscated in Geneva in 1995. The Federal Court rejected a request by an art dealer from Rome who's accused in Italy of robbery and dealing in stolen goods. The court said the archeological items were key evidence for the justice authorities in Italy. The treasure, worth up to 50 million francs, includes frescoes, vases, necklaces and busts.

Illegal working rises to new high in Switzerland

Illegal working in Switzerland is expected to rise to a new high this year, accounting for almost nine percent of gross domestic product. A new study says illegal workers will earn around 35 billion francs, up from 32 billion in 1999.

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Only Partially Peaceful May Day Demonstrations

With fine spring weather, participation in Swiss May Day rallies was moderate. In Bern, last year's all-time low of only 800 people was significantly exceeded. In Geneva, too, the estimated 5,000 participants was well above last year's level. But in Lausanne, Neuchâtel and La Chaux-de-Fonds, trade unions managed to mobilise only a few hundred souls. Zurich's crowds were smaller than in previous years, but as in previous years, the unlicensed demonstration by several hundred "autonomous" individuals which followed the regular parade yielded hours of street rioting.

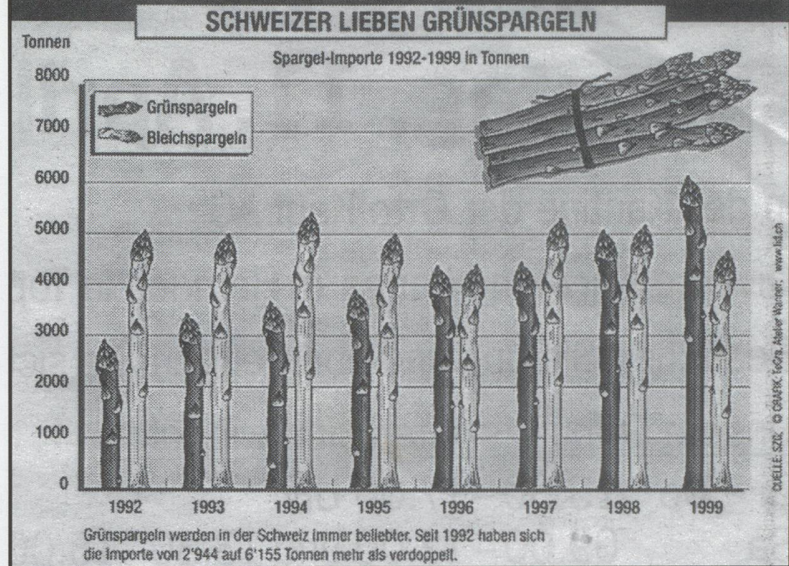
There was massive property damage and "fascists", photographers, cameramen and spectators of the traditional May Day celebration were attacked. The police used tear gas, water cannons and rubber shrapnel against the rioters and arrested several dozen people.

On Bern's Federal Square, Vasco Pedrina, president of the Construction and Industrial Union, called for resistance against attacks on the welfare state and demanded the introduction of a minimum wage. In Zurich, Paul Rechsteiner, head of the Swiss Federation of Trade Unions, accused the Federal Council of planning to use revisions in the old-age pension systems to cut back on social programs. Speaking in Bienne, the head of the parliamentary faction of the Social Democratic Party (SP), Franco Cavalli, attacked the accusation of "near-fascism" recently made against the SP by Christoph Blocher of the Swiss People's Party (SVP);

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*Springtime in Switzerland = asparagus-eating-time !
The Swiss population is steadily switching their preference from the traditional 'white asparagus' (grown under the soil) to the green asparagus (grown above the soil).*

While the Swiss imported 2944 tonnes of 'green asparagus' in 1992, these imports have climbed to 6155 tonnes in 1999.

Controversial Gene-Tech Study by WWF

A study commissioned by the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) and presented to the media has concluded that adopting gene technology in Swiss agriculture would come at a considerable cost to all farmers. According to the study by Basler and Partners, a consulting firm, using genetically modified seed grain would bring no economic advantages.


Along with other organisations, the WWF regards the study as strengthening the demand for a moratorium on gene technology. The demand is addressed mainly to the two houses of parliament, which is expected to take up legislation in the autumn session on genetically modified organisms in Switzerland. The WWF-commissioned study has come in for fierce criticism from the gene-tech industry. In a statement, organisations characterised the study as tentative, one-sided and unscientific. Gene-tech advocates point to findings by the Institute for Agricultural Study at the Federal Institute of Technology in Zürich. This study projects higher agricultural revenues from the use of genetically modified plants.

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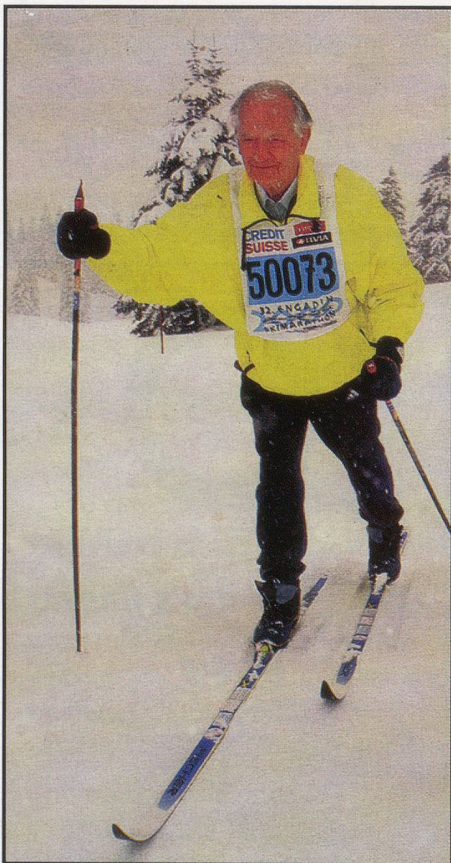
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Walter Birrer of Wolhusen LU, recently celebrated his 91st Birthday by taking part in the 42 km long ski-marathon in Engadin/Switzerland. He was the oldest competitor, but by no means the last. He has recently hiked to the top of mount Pilate and was none the worse for wear.

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Something to ponder....

The paradox of our time in history is that we have taller buildings, but shorter tempers; wider freeways, but narrower viewpoints; We spend more, but have less; we buy more, but enjoy it less.

We have bigger houses and smaller families; more conveniences, but less time; we have more degrees, but less sense; more knowledge, but less judgment; more experts, but more problems; more medicine, but less wellness. We have multiplied our possessions, but reduced our values.

We talk too much, love too seldom, and hate too often. We've learnt how to make a living, but not a life; we've added years to life, not life to years. We've been all the way to the moon and back, but have trouble crossing the street to meet the new neighbour. We've conquered outer space, but not inner space; we've cleaned up the air, but polluted the soul; we've split the atom, but not our prejudice. We have higher incomes, but lower morals; we've become long on quantity, but short on quality. These are the times of tall men, and short character, steep profits, and shallow relationships. These are the times of world peace, but domestic warfare; more leisure, but less fun; more kinds of food, but less nutrition. These are days of two incomes, but more divorce, of fancier houses, but broken homes. It is a time when there is much in the show window and nothing in the stockroom!

Author unknown!

*Sincere
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to
Agnes & Walter Steiner
of Huntly, on the
60th Wedding
Anniversary
to be celebrated on Saturday
17th June 2000*

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