

Personal

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This means, however, nothing more than this, namely, that in an age in which the main orientation is toward world-encompassing dimensions and the formation of large-scale political organizations and spheres, the prevailing opinion being that only large geographical areas guarantee feasible and rational economic operation, tiny Switzerland has to a certain extent furnished proof to the contrary. Our small scale enables us to operate in certain respects more profitably and rationally than many a larger economy. This factor must be borne in mind whenever the Swiss reserve with regard to such endeavours as the Common Market of six European States is subjected to criticism. The main argument of the champions of that idea, namely, that the real task is to create a more rational economic condition by means of a large customs area can in many respects be refuted by the actual practice of the Swiss.

These observations from the field of economics have their counterpart in the cultural sphere. To be sure, certain crises arising in modern culture have impinged upon our people just as much as upon other nations. As far as they are connected with the question of mass culture, it may be affirmed that differences of opinion embrace more social groups than is the case abroad. Where, for instance, is the problem of television seriously discussed? In our country it occasioned a federal and (in Basle-City) a cantonal vote. The same applies to the various problems connected with the film industry.

Also other consequences of modern technology are being thrashed out in public discussion. The construction of highways, the building of modern airports, the exploitation of the last remaining water power locked up in the Alps and its consequences for conservation often give rise to vehement controversies. All this is proof that the Swiss are not a people to rush into the future heedlessly.

Critics refer to this as rustic backwardness or simply regard it as the fear of the little man in the face of an unpleasant and inevitable development. There may be a certain anxiety involved here, whereby we must immediately proceed to inquire whether fear of the consequences of technological civilization is an entirely unknown phenomenon among other nations. The basic motivation underlying our discussions on the relationships between special Swiss conditions and technological progress is not fear, but rather a determination not to be swept along helplessly in the tide of events.

We come at this juncture to the last point, namely, the question concerning the power of moral resistance of the Swiss, caught up as they are in the tumultuous rush of developments. On this point many Swiss and foreign observers entertain both open and tacit doubts. The Swiss are on occasion depicted as cheerless, despondent, and all too anxious about their material security. Any reply to this question as to who in the long run will be proved right, the optimists or the pessimists, can only be of theoretical value. A nation can only prove its worth when the exacting test has become reality.

In spite of this reservation we should like to point out one thing: the way in which the allegedly sluggish Swiss reacted to the uprising in Hungary and to its bloody suppression reveals, in an entirely unexpected manner and with astonishing spontaneity, the fact that in the hearts of thousands the fundamental values on which our culture is based are very much alive. The excitement of that time was not artificial, but elementary. It proved that in our country a vigorous minority exists which has retained its awareness. Has it, however, ever been any different throughout our long history? What we fervently hope on this 1st of August, and have good reason to hope, is that this staunch core of our nation, which is what really matters, will resist all the influences of modern decadence, so that a new generation will preserve Switzerland and in the future keep it free, receptive to new impulses and vigorous.

PERSONAL.

We regret to announce the passing away of Mr. J. G. Bachmann, of 53, Cranley Road, Westcliff-on-Sea. The deceased was a Honorary Member of the City Swiss Club, having been a member for over fifty years.

We extend heartiest congratulations to Mr. & Mrs. F. Zogg, of 58, Hightrees House, Nightingale Lane, S.W.12, who will celebrate their golden wedding anniversary on Tuesday, August 26th, 1958.

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