

Swiss events

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SWISS EVENTS

FEDERAL

The problems of the Socialists

The Swiss Socialist Party has lost five seats at the Federal Elections. As the Conservative parties (Freisingning Christian Democrats and Agrarian) enjoy the absolute majority with 114 seats, the Socialists are reduced to the role of an opposition party, although they traditionally have their two members in Government. The problem for the Swiss Socialist Party is to make its stand quite clear. It is presently fragmented into many tendencies ranging from the complacency of the compromising and bourgeois Bernese Socialist Party, to the aggressivity of the Geneva Socialist Party, which has joined forces with the Labour (or Communist) Party during the elections. Before the Elections, there was a fleeting project of coalition between the Socialists and the Christian Democrats. This idea fell through but didn't indicate that the Swiss Socialist Party had very firm left-wing principles. The Party must now choose between a continuing attitude of compromise with the middle-class, or show more aggressivity. Whatever it decides, it will not have much influence on the decisions of Parliament, which is overwhelmingly Conservative. However, if there is to be a worthwhile opposition, it is necessary for the Socialists to distinguish themselves from their opponents. But some feel that the Swiss system of government is averse to the notion of opposition.

ARMED FORCES

Planning Air Defence

The days when a "Hunter" jet fighter could be purchased for about three million francs, although hardly more than ten years past, are definitely over and so are the days when Switzerland's national defence budget ran at about a billion francs. The 1972 defence budget adds up to 2.3 billion francs and will rise by an extra 400 million francs during the succeeding two years.

It is not only the relentless rise of the cost of living that has been responsible for this budgetary expansion. It is also the increasing complexity of a military equipment requiring more development work and more advanced technology. But first and foremost, one should ask the question: Are we going to maintain an Army which can be taken seriously?

If yes, then are we ready to pay the price? If the answer is yes again, then the armed forces inevitably have to embark on a never-ending path of technical development. At a time when the choice of a new combat aircraft for which an expenditure of 1.3 billion francs has been earmarked has not yet been made, it is necessary to foresee the expenditure of a few additional billion francs in modernising the country's air defence system.

Switzerland's anti-aircraft defence relies presently on 450 AA guns of 34mm calibre and about 2,500 light 20mm guns. According to military circles, this could produce the flack density of North Vietnam and compares well with the anti-aircraft defences of western European countries. To this must be added the electronic hardware which has come into service lately and whose three pillars are the *Mirage* interceptor fighters, the *Florida* early-warning system and batteries of *Bloodhound* guided missiles.

This, however, is not sufficient for Switzerland's defence experts. The new gadgetry will force an eventual aggressor to medium-high altitudes insufficiently covered by present AA defences and will induce him to paralyse our radio communications by jamming them. Secondly, our ground forces, which are equally necessary to frustrate any airborne aggression, will be completely exposed to enemy aircraft once our weak air force is put out of action. The reason is that the bulk of the anti-aircraft equipment of which Switzerland dispose is designed to protect fixed targets and is inadequate for the effective protection of mobile troops. There is therefore a serious capability gap between our relatively dense but immobile 20mm and 35mm armaments (whose ranges are respectively 1,500m and 4,000m) and the long-range anti-aircraft Bloodhound missiles. What is needed therefore is a system ensuring protection in the 5 to 8 kilometre range and this would require upgrading the present anti-aircraft material. Its range should be extended and units made both more mobile and attack proof.

The Military Department has been examining these requirements since the middle sixties. This led to the development of the anti-aircraft tank and to the perfecting of ground-to-air missiles. In 1970 the Commander of the Air and Air Defence Forces, Colonel Eugen Studer, was formally entrusted by the General Staff to undertake the planning of a complete overhaul of the Swiss anti-aircraft defence system. He was

SWISS WRITERS UNITE

There are more writers than can be kept alive by a dwindling market for novels. The novel is no longer in favour and an author (when he is not called Alistair Maclean) can be happy if 2,000 copies of his book are sold, half of which go to public libraries and earn a few hundred pounds. Most new books are ephemeral works giving the reviewers of the "Sundays" something to write about and then left to fossilize in the library of the British Museum. This is the unfortunate fate of even the writers with literary ambitions. Success comes sooner from biographies, art books and specialised works than from literature.

Pro Helvetia has published a list of 48 major German-Swiss writers, each of whom have produced an average of six books. No doubt that the majority of the public they cater for would be incapable of naming even ten of them. It is reckoned that in the western world people read two books a year. With a market of barely three million German-speaking people, none of these 48 prominent writers can possibly have a large audience. It is true that they can look to a growing weekend press and television for their survival. The high state of the economy and the resulting advertising keeps a flood of publications going. But this is no longer literature.

It is against this background that the Society of Swiss Writers held its annual meeting in Biel and decided to give financial support to the members on its professional writers register not able to sustain themselves by their writing. The Society will also be less selective to new members in respect of quantity and quality of output and voted to admit young amateur writers. The writing profession has to organise itself against rough times it is facing.

asked to examine possible concepts, to compare their advantages, and take account of commercial considerations. He was asked to rely as little as possible on the Swiss adaptation of basically foreign systems.

This study was completed in the course of the present year and yielded a good dozen concepts which were examined by the Federal Military Department. The systems put forward varied considerably in cost. One was budgeted at 500 million francs and considered as Switzerland's minimal requirement. Another global system was planned to cost over 2 billion francs and was obviously beyond anything the country could afford. The financial leeway for a refurbished anti-aircraft system lies between 500 and 1,000 million francs. The various ideas of the report will be examined by the Armaments Service and Air Force General Staff as the basis for a new policy. It is officially hoped that a renewed air defence system will be put into place by 1980.

The technical level of such studies can be grasped when one considers the specifications of an anti-aircraft tank. It must have high mobility, very long range, small vulnerability, high combat autonomy, fast mechanical reaction, devices to distinguish friend from foe, all-weather capability, insensitivity to interference, protection against ground troops, a high supply of ammunition, simple handling and maintenance. It is furthermore costly to test the effectiveness of sophisticated weaponry owing to the expenses involved, as in the case of missiles.

A major problem is the technical competence of militia troops. The technicians who manufacture the 35mm Bührle anti-aircraft gun consistently obtain better results than the troops that handle them over the years. Colonel Studer, Head of Air Force and Air Defence, considers that there should be about 5,000 professional men among the 50,000 troops under his

command.

The new Air Defence policy to emerge from the studies of the Military Department will embody a mixed system of missiles and classical 35mm and 20mm guns. But the new material will most likely be purchased abroad. Swiss experts are examining the performances of the French "Roland" and "Crotale" missiles and the English "Rapier". A delegation has visited Sweden. The Bührle anti-aircraft tank for which the Germans have shown interest, will also be taken into consideration. The renewal of the Air Defence system will be carried out in stages but it is expected that the first deliveries of new material will begin in 1975 already.

(Tages Anzeiger)

The military department buys British bridges

Mr. H. P. Schulthess, Head of the Armaments Service, has signed a delivery contract with representatives from the British Government for medium girder bridges to be used by Army engineers. The purchase of this material was included in the 1971 budget and the contract is valued at 8.3 million francs. This type of bridge can be quickly placed across obstacles 50 yards wide. The first two bridges will be delivered at the beginning of next year and the total delivery will be completed by the end of 1974.

(ATS)

COMPANY NEWS

Swiss watch company takes over American firm

The Société Suisse pour l'Industrie Horlogère (SSIH) has taken over the Sheffield Watch Company, an American firm with plants in Switzerland, the Virgin Islands and Guam (Pacific).

SSIH, which comprises Omega, Tissot, Aetos and others, is Switzerland's first watch group. It produces 10 million watches a year, valued at 500 million francs and employs 7,600 people. It has 160 agents and 28 affiliated companies in 12 countries. It comes in 22nd place among Swiss companies and is the world's third largest watch manufacturer after Time (USA) and Seiko (Japan). Sheffield Watch Company produces about 2 million pin-lever watches a year. It had run into liquidity problems and was seeking a major partner to safeguard its viability. SSIH has also taken a controlling stake in the American Hamilton Watch Company, a competitor particularly well known in Great Britain, Belgium, Germany and Canada where it has subsidiaries.

Hamilton, with a total turnover of 56.6 million dollars, was behind the brands "Hamilton", "Vantage" and "Buren". The company also produces silverware and electronics. It had made a loss of 23 million dollars during its last financial year. The new agreements will facilitate SSIH's penetration in the American market and it is possible that the company will shift some of its production to America as a result of the recent import surcharge. Watch industry circles are satisfied at this new development. It makes a change from the regular takeover of Swiss watch firms by American companies in the past.

Shoe factory closes down

The Walder & Co. AG shoe factory at Bruttisellen, Zurich, is to close down at the end of the month and its 130 employees, 70 of whom are foreign, are to be made redundant. Walder AG had been part of the German group, Dorndorf GMBH, since 1970. Its closing down is a consequence of the difficulties generally faced by the Swiss shoe industry. Shoe imports have risen

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almost four times more sharply than exports during the past ten years. The Swiss consumer no longer attaches the same importance on quality shoes as he used to and prefers to buy a cheap foreign pair, costing on average 15 francs, rather than a Swiss pair, costing an average 40 francs.

The shoe industry is labour intensive and cannot cut down its labour requirements beyond a certain level. About 50 per cent of the costs of the shoe industry are for wages. With the high demand for manpower many employees of the shoe industry have moved into other and higher paid branches of industry so that plants like Walder AG have been losing about nine per cent of their payroll every year. The fact that the factory was in the highly industrialised and prosperous Zurich area didn't contribute towards its viability.

Oerlikon-Buehrle turnover up 25 per cent

The Oerlikon-Buehrle holding ended its 1970-71 financial year with a 25.4 per cent increase in turnover. Total sales rose from 816.5 million francs last year to 1,024 million francs. If account is taken of transactions within the Buehrle group of companies, then the figure rises to 1,300 million francs. Owing to increased costs and higher taxes the net profit is 8.5 million francs and will be transferred to the special reserve, currently amounting to 165 million francs. Buehrle's capital of 10 million francs remains unchanged, and so does the legal reserve of two million francs. The whole concern employs 15,049 employees. It will be reorganised into four departments: Contraves; Balzers; Soldering and Textiles; Hotels, Real Estate and Insurance. Contraves, which was responsible for the development of an anti-aircraft tank with a 35mm gun has reported a 45 per cent boost in turnover. Just over a quarter of Oerlikon-Buehrle's turnover comes from military sales.

ENVIRONMENT

Appeal for Wildlife

Mr. Henri Schmitt, National Councillor, has tabled a motion demanding stricter import controls on furs. He has also asked the Government to initiate an international agreement on the commerce of furs.

The "World Wildlife Fund" based in Nyon, Vaud, has reached a limited agreement with the Swiss Furriers Association forbidding the sale of furs of species in danger of extinction. Animals benefitting by this reprieve are the giant otter, the snow leopard, the tiger and the panther. These measures

have been grudgingly accepted by Swiss furriers, many of whom complain at the diminishing range of furs. Ocelet and jaguar coats are not included in the present agreement and some furriers have been advertising them after the ban on other big game. The Swiss Furriers Association has also agreed to ban leopard and cheetah skins for three years.

Cats suffer an epidemic in Geneva

The cat population of Geneva is prone to suffer from gastro-enteritis when autumn comes. This year the frequency of cases recorded has taken the proportion of an epidemic. The cantonal veterinary surgeon gets over ten fatal cases every day, whereas the number of daily victims of gastro-enteritis should be about three at this time of the year.

Geneva has an abnormal population of errand cats and it is thought that they are responsible for spreading out the epidemic. Cats who have caught the virus can die within 24 hours. Although there is a vaccine, it is usually too late to administer it once a cat has been in contact with others of its species who are potential carriers of the virus. Cats which remain indoors and never see the outside world are not better protected against this disease either because their owners carry the virus on their shoes.

Low ebb of the Rhine

As a result of an exceptionally good summer, the Rhine is at its lowest level since 1818. This has been a cause of worry to the Dutch, who draw most of their drinking water from the river and who are now forced to buy bottled water from Norway. It has also enhanced the risk of pollution as the reduced flow increases the relative effluent contents of the Rhine. Many countries including Switzerland have taken this opportunity of clearing the river banks of refuse. Traffic has been virtually interrupted downstream of Strasburg and Swiss shipowners are already facing problems of supply. Switzerland imports nine million tons of goods via the Rhine and if the drought continues for much longer they will have to be transported by rail and lead to potential price increases.

The worries of Kaiseraugst

Kaiseraugst was a quaint village six miles from Basle suddenly involved in the industrial explosion. When it was first planned to build a 600 megawatt nuclear power station on its communal territory, the villagers enthusiastically voted "yes". But when it came

to give a final decision, they had long been frightened into changing their minds by the prospect of two cooling towers 115 metres high and 90 metres wide spewing 1,800 cubic metres of water into the atmosphere every minute. The general backcloth of "environmental awareness" and the statements by various specialists claiming that the towers would give rise to a perpetual mist in the area added to the villagers' fears.

Now the chemical giant, Hoffman-La-Roche, has made known its intention to build a satellite city with 850 flats over a 17 hectare plot which it owns in the area. This estate will house Roche personnel and also comprise an important research and development laboratory.

The plans for the new city are already known. There will be a shopping centre, an ecumenical church, a bank, a massage institute with sauna, a swimming pool, a library, entertainment premises, sports facilities and two restaurants. It will be a planner's paradise. Roche have all the money necessary to finance it: 180 million francs. But the Communal Council of Kaiseraugst is not used to handling this kind of money and sees the transformation of a village of 1,300 inhabitants into a model suburb of concrete and glass housing several thousands of technocrats with a pinch of anxiety. But Roche will not be able to launch the site without the Council's authorisation.

Basle's industry has already overflowed into the neighbouring countryside. The villages of Sisseln, Schweizerhalle, Stein, Kaisten, Eiken and Rheinfelden have all been invaded by powerful chemical companies and Ciba-Geigy is currently building a satellite city for 5,000 people in the Fricktal.

MODERN LIVING

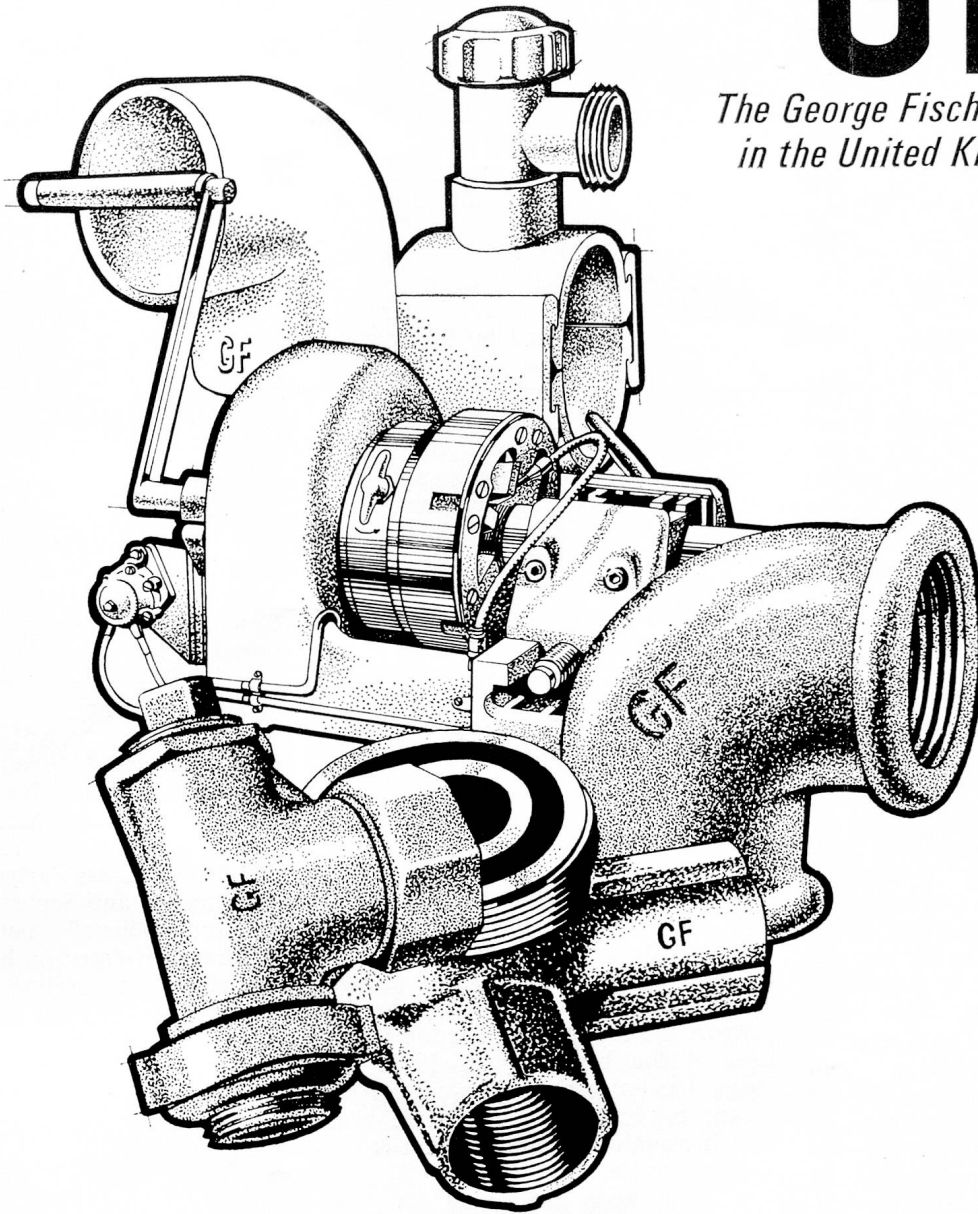
Women's organisations envisage military service

A year ago, four women's organisations decided to examine possible ways to apply the concept of National Service to Swiss women. The organisations concerned were the Federation of Swiss Women's Organisations, the Catholic Federation of Women, the Evangelical Federation of Women and the Welfare Union of Swiss Women. They set up a study group which included Miss Andrée Weitzel, Head of the Women's Complementary Service and a nun among other distinguished ladies. Their work was inspired by the situation arising from the federal voting rights of women. The new political status of Swiss women had, as it were, carried with it the privilege of assuming defence responsibilities.

Although these four organisations still consider obligatory military service

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as somewhat hypothetical, the report which they commissioned does include it among its four main proposals. These are: (1) obligatory military service similar to that which men undergo; (2) instalment of a voluntary organisation at the service of civil defence or the Red Cross; (3) institution of a "voluntary social service" consisting in "preparing women for their citizen's duties"; (4) an obligatory service consisting of a week's basic training for all women below 25 and placing them in a pool of reserves to be used in times of crises.

The last solution was favoured by the women's organisation and will be examined further.

The "All-European" Party

The United Europe issue led to the creation of a new party, the *Europäische Föderalistische Partei*, which took part for the first time in federal elections last October. It was represented in Zurich, Saint-Gall and Aargau. It has a hundred members under the Secretaryship of Mr. Alexander Thaler from Häggenschwil and does not yet enjoy enough popular favour to win a seat at the National Council. The Party is a member of the "Federalistic International" founded in Vienna in 1969 and grouping similar parties from France, Germany, Austria and Sweden.

The Swiss Federalistic Party is of socialist tendency as far as welfare, labour and old age are concerned. It is in favour of a dynamic and living federalism and would like to see the Swiss pattern be adopted in Europe as a whole. The Swiss Federalistic Party wishes a united, federal and neutral Europe, the kind of Europe in which they are prepared to join. They are not willing to compromise on the principle of permanent neutrality unless the surrounding world changes politically and are therefore highly conservative, despite the way they call themselves.

A bus driver becomes National Councillor

The only National Councillor standing for the National Action Party in western Switzerland is a 49-year-old bus driver from Berne who was born of a Tunisian father and a Swiss mother. Mr. Georges Breny is therefore a naturalised Swiss campaigning against the excess of foreigners in the country and, to add to the paradox, he is not even living in the canton which he represents, which is Vaud. He plans nevertheless to make a serious study of his constituency. To a newspaper reporter he explained that Switzerland should not be made to suffer from her neighbour's absence of birth control. A Lausanne daily, com-

menting on his surprise nomination, entitled its leader "*De Trolleybach . . . en Schwarzenbus*".

LABOUR PROBLEMS

Foreign manpower

There are just under 700,000 registered foreign workers in Switzerland. The Italians, with 340,213 workers, account for 52% of the total. The Spaniards come second with 132,024 workers, then the Germans (50,229), the French (50,176), the Jugoslavs (29,234) and the Austrians (18,903). The remaining 39,701 foreign workers come from more distant countries such as Portugal and Turkey. Their total number has increased by 995 persons in a year, which shows that the official limits have proved effective. The number of yearly permit workers has decreased to 391,814 whereas those of seasonal and borderer workers have increased by about 17 per cent. Two-thirds of the Italians work in German-speaking Switzerland, a fifth work in the western part and the remainder work in the Tessin. Nearly 70 per cent of Frenchmen work in the French-speaking areas of Switzerland. There has been a decrease in the effectives of Italian and German manpower but a strong rise in the Spanish total.

Rent control

The Swiss Labour Party will support the popular initiative recently launched by a welfare movement aiming at reinstating rent control in Switzerland. It has urged all members to support the signature collection due to start at the beginning of 1972. The Party has strongly militated for the protection of tenants at a time when the shortage of accommodation is particularly acute.

Peace of Labour

The central organisation of Swiss Trade Unions has published a document on trade bargaining whose title reads in English "*The Peace of Labour is not a Corset*". The author sets out to distinguish between "relative" and "absolute" peace of labour and purports to show that employers have wrongly supposed that peace of labour should have an "absolute" character. He defines relative peace of labour as the honouring of a contract, and absolute peace of labour as the preparedness by all parties to refrain from strikes and lock-outs in the event of disputes not covered by the contract.

The author points out that the "absolute" peace of labour, which prevails in practice in Swiss industrial relations, has three major disadvan-

tages. One is that non-unionised workers can start a strike whereas their trade unionist mates have to abstain from imitating them in order to save the principles of absolute peace of labour. On the other hand, the obligation to refrain from industrial action in cases not covered by a collective agreement amounts to signing a blank cheque, as far as the trade unions are concerned.

Finally, the document points out that the right to strike is fundamental and that everyone should be free to abstain from using it at his own discretion. There shouldn't be a machinery preventing workers from availing themselves of this right and the peace of labour shouldn't become a pretext for abandoning the basic principles of trade unionism.

JURA

The Separatists vent their dissatisfaction

The Separatists came out successfully from the federal elections, because the Christian-Democrat National Councillor, Jean Wilhelm, a firm supporter of Jurassian autonomy, has kept his seat and the Jurassian Socialists equally in favour of autonomy have won a seat comfortably. However, Dr. Gehler, a general practitioner of German-Swiss origin who had settled at Bassecourt, in the heart of the Jura, won a seat for the Peasants, Artisans and Middle-Class Party. As Dr. Gehler is a known anti-Separatist, about 500 militant "Béliers" youths and school children converged on his home, shouting abuse and soiling its walls with various missiles. The Executive Council of Berne took the incident very seriously and banned all future demonstrations aimed at political personalities in the neighbourhood of their homes.

CANTONAL

The St. Gothard Hospice for sale

The owner of the St. Gothard Hospice, Mr. Emmanuele Lombardi, has put his property on sale and already received 12 offers from Sweden and Germany. The Hospice and its annexes consist of seven buildings, two shops and half an hectare of ground. It was founded early in the last century by Milanese monks before being bought by the great-grandfather of the present owner in 1850. The reactions to the projected sale were immediate. The "*Tat*" launched an appeal to keep the Hospice in Swiss hands and gathered a thousand signatures. The "*Heimatschutz*" addressed a letter to the Federal Council asking it to undertake everything necessary to keep the St. Gothard Hospice Swiss.

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Appeal for an electoral recount

Four members of the electoral office of Steffisberg, near Thun, have appealed against the outcome of the Federal Elections in their district. They claim that the local Peasants, Artisans and Middle-Class list had been included in the list of the Party's Berne branch and that the Radical votes had been added to the wrong regional list. They demanded that these votes should be considered as empty votes. A Council of States Commission will have to decide whether there is ground for a renewed count. The Federal Tribunal may eventually be called to settle the affair should Parliament not satisfy the appellants, who have also found errors of addition. In one village there had been a mistake involving a hundred votes.

Two communes merge

The Great Council of the Valais has ratified the merger of the communes of Viège and Eyholz. The debate on this issue enlivened the unusually monotonous proceedings of the autumn session. Communal autonomy had its outspoken champions. They claimed that the financial hardships of small communes should not be a reason for forcing them to merge and forgo their individuality. Despite the loss of one commune, the Valais, which with the Grisons has the greatest number of small communes, still has several hundred of them waiting to merge.

BEHAVIOUR

Student solidarity

All the students but two of the Applied Arts School of Biel went on strike in protest against the expulsion of a 22-year-old girl student. She had been accused of being a bad influence among her class. She smoked and knitted during lectures and arrived consistently late. Although she was a gifted student and obtained the best notes at a recent term exam, she was forbidden by the school board from passing her finals. The students decided en masse not to attend their classes until their comrade was reinstated. They accused the school director of lacking tact in his handling of the affair and planned to demand his resignation.

The Bernese have their "Bunker"

The youth of Berne have their own autonomous centre. It is a disused gasometer which they have made habitable and which is the venue for their gatherings. The head of the Cen-

tre, Mr. M. D. Wegmuller, has been charged with possessing drugs and it is feared that the experiment will lead to trouble with the authorities, as similar centres did in Zurich and Geneva. The Bernese "autonomous centre" is split into two groups, one accepting to abide by the standards of the establishment, the other with strongly revolutionary tendencies.

AGRICULTURE

Swiss cows for India

Eleven Simmenthal bulls and 46 calves boarded a Swissair cargo jet for an Indian destination. They will be mixed with Zebu cattle in Punjab. A similar experiment has been conducted since 1963 with great success in the mountains of Kerala. This has prompted the Punjab to receive specimens of the wonder breed. The operation falls within Swiss technical assistance and will cost 2.5 million francs.

(ATS)

MUSIC

Definite statute for the OSR

The Municipal Council of Geneva has given its agreement to the creation of a public foundation for the *Orchestre de la Suisse Romande*. This prestigious symphony orchestra founded and directed by the late Ernest Ansermet was legally a private foundation whose statutes were laid down in 1938. When Ansermet was still alive, the Orchestra managed to survive on private support and public subventions. It enjoyed sponsorship of a Lausanne businessman, Mr. Emile Unger, who raised the necessary funds to send the OSR to the Tokyo "Expo" but who has since died.

The OSR has 110 artists and costs

4.25 million francs a year to run. Three-quarters of this sum is allocated to salaries. The new chief of the Orchestra, conductor Wolfgang Sawallisch, intends to make as many tours abroad as possible and travel expenses will inevitably increase the cost of the orchestra. By becoming a public foundation, the OSR will be able to rely on an income of 7 million francs and increase the salaries of its artists. The Orchestra could not survive on the proceeds of its performances alone, despite its heavy engagements at the Geneva and Lausanne concert halls and its broadcasting commitments.

IN BRIEF

What hatred can do

A 47-year-old man left a time-bomb in a luggage locker of the main railway station in Zurich. Its explosion wounded 14 people, four of whom had to be carried to hospital suffering from concussion and severe wounds from glass debris. The explosion shattered hundreds of windows and the total damage was estimated at over a million francs.

A police spokesman said that the author of the explosion had voluntarily given himself up and had acted out of hatred for the police and Swiss authorities.

Communes seek funds together

The Association grouping the 3,000 communes of Switzerland met at Olten and decided to create a common fund-raising organisation. The idea is that small communes are not in a position to seek loans by themselves in the capital market and should therefore belong to a common fund responsible for raising money in the name of all of them and be responsible towards investors.

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GROUP RESOURCES EXCEED £500,000,000