

Swiss events

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COMMENT

THE FIGHT AGAINST DRUGS

In its last Annual Report, the Federal Council discloses some alarming figures on the growth of crime and drug abuse among the young in Switzerland. In 1969, 521 persons were convicted for drug offences. There were 2,313 the following year, and 3,680 in 1971. The rising proportion of teenagers convicted is just as striking: They accounted for 47 per cent of reported cases in 1969, 60 per cent in 1970 and 75 per cent in 1971.

The Swiss Government suggests the following interpretation: "It is obvious that family ties have been loosened in many cases and teenagers are frequently left to themselves. It is often when they are confronted with emotional difficulties in their families, their school and their work that they lack the advice and understanding which would help them to overcome these difficulties."

To fight against this deteriorating situation, the Federal Council put forward the following proposals:

1. Transformation of the environment and the essence of teenage life. Parents should be urged not to abandon their children as frequently as they tend to do. At this level, it is the cantons which come into play, via cantonal educational departments.

2. Revision of anti-drug laws. This has already been started. Sentences against drug traffickers will be made more severe, whereas "consumers" will benefit from supervisory measures and care units.

3. Creation of a Study Group entrusted with working out a common plan of action at every level—federal, cantonal and communal. The decision

for such a scheme had already been taken in principle by the conference of cantonal education chiefs in March 1971.

The most striking point of this report is that, coming from so high up, it is remarkably "human". The Federal Council and the Department of Justice and Police, which have jointly drafted this part of the document, do not confine themselves to figures and abstractions, but put their fingers at the heart of the troubles: the deterioration of family life. This involves the disappearance of mutual understanding between parents and their children; growing doubts on the value of the family and marriage; the absence of purpose of having and rearing children; the loss of bearings of parents; the failure to fit the family in the construction of a society in which it is worth living. It is in fact the equivalent to pin-point the trouble on society's absence of purpose.

Altering the law will only marginally affect this drugs business an almost universal trend—because laws are the conscious reflection of what a society wants to be. Although they influence it, the executive of a country and the law-makers do not constitute this society. If a sizeable part of the population creates an "anti-society", the laws which define the original and traditional society, will only be abided

to by deterrents, such as embodied by the police.

Drugs are a case in point. Society has condemned them so far, and so have many responsible people who think in terms of the values of this society. But this is debateable. The principle underlying the use of drugs is "pleasure". The days are well past when pleasure was condemned. One may object that drugs are an "artificial" form of pleasure, but this is perfectly debateable, as a large slice of life is perforce "artificial", and because many respectable civilisations have in the past honoured the virtue of drugs. The other point is danger to health. There again, opinion varies according to belief in society taboos. While no one in his right mind will praise the virtue of hard drugs derived from opium, it is arguable that those derived from cannabis (pot) are no more harmful than a couple of glasses of wine. But the decision whether this statement is true (and even the findings of the scientist about this) depends on the purpose of society.

The solution to the drug problem will therefore require a consensus on the purpose of society, and to start with, a revival of social conscience. Among the young it will require a belief that there is only *one* society.

(PMB)

SWISS EVENTS

FEDERAL

The promotion of women

Late in February, the "Weltwoche" had an article written by a woman on the promotion of women in the Swiss public service. It pointed to several discrepancies between the principles sanctioned by the Swiss people in February 1971, when they gave women the right to vote on federal issues, and the attitude of the administration in respect of female promotion. The Confederation came out as a rather "imperfect" employer.

The statistics given in the article show that of a total of 110,000 public servants (federal administration, the Post Office and the Railways), there is one woman for seven men. When the first five categories of the salary scale are considered, one finds only one woman for 160 men. This is confirmed by the Federal Directory, which has the names of only 18 women out of 2,800 high officials.

Administrative personnel officers naturally have an answer for this situation. They explain that female public servants with the ability to aim for

the top jobs are harder to find than shorthand typists, and when they are available, they are more difficult to replace once they leave their jobs to care for their families. Marriage deprives them of permanency, which is a serious handicap in the federal service, where promotion is usually based on length of service. When they return to work after having reared their children, they start at where they have left off and lose all chance of promotion.

According to the author of the article, Miss Ursula Wolfbuehl, these reasons only partially explain the state of affairs in the public service. Having interviewed a number of female staff, she became convinced that higher federal executives were biased, consciously or not, and would tend to appoint a man rather than a female rival with equal ability to a particular post. Despite the many principles laid down by administrative heads of department, these prejudices tend to make them expect more sustained work, more punctuality from women than from male employees, who would be more readily forgiven for errors and eventual laxity. Moreover, feeling themselves in a

position of inferiority on account of their sex, women fail to have the face to assert themselves and often accept defeat. A woman civil servant complaining about her status was told: "You must surely know that we are in a male republic".

Women's rights are in fact to be a highly topical subject this spring, when the National Council and the Council of States will be asked by the Federal Council to ratify Switzerland's agreement to an international convention, sponsored by the International Labour Organisation, laying down the principle of "Equal Pay for Equal Work".

A round table on this theme was organised in Geneva by three women's organisations: The Radical Feminine Group, the Liberal Women's Association and the Christian-Democrat Women's Association. Three lady organisers explained: "We do not wish to be considered as suffragettes, women's lib or feminists. There are no grounds today for being a suffragette. We must co-operate with men. This is the normal thing, as we are complementary to one another. We insist on this point and stress that we do not intend to fight with the other sex".

Old Age Pension

The National Council has passed by 131 votes and no opposition the 8th Revision of Old Age Pension, as recommended by the Commission on Pensions and the Federal Council, after a long debate. It is expected that the

Council of States will vote overwhelmingly in favour of the new package.

The new, revised old Age Pension provisions are necessarily complicated. However, it emerges from the debate that, starting on 1st January, 1973, the simple Pension (without complementary contributions) will vary from a minimum of 400 francs a month to 800 francs a month for the single person. Couples get one-and-a-half times that amount. The rising cost of living will be taken into account and pensions will be readjusted on 1st January, 1975, to between 500 francs and a thousand francs (for single persons). Old people will probably get this coming Autumn a bonus payment equivalent to a month's pension to compensate for rising prices.

The National Council has also adopted a new Constitutional paragraph on Old Age Pension, to be submitted in due course to the electorate. This paragraph sets forth the principle that a retired person should be able to live at the same standard as during active life. It sets the aim that payments from the so-called "first pillar" of old age, public Old Age Pension, and the "second pillar", employer pension funds, should together represent for the retired person an income equivalent to 60 per cent of earnings upon retirement. The "third pillar", private savings, annuities, insurance, etc., is that part of old age welfare which the individual can plan by himself.

The Communists (with five national councillors) want a solution

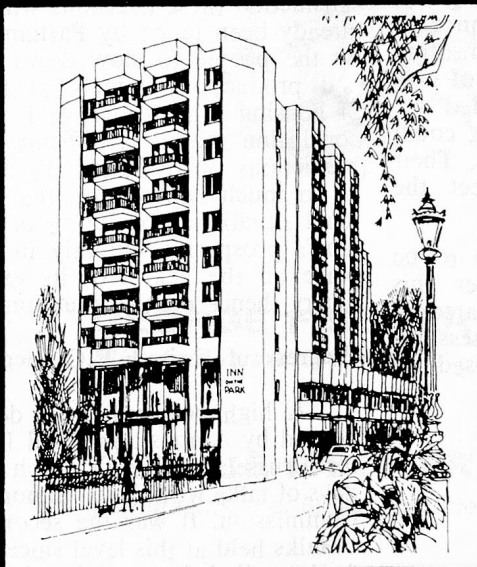
whereby the State should control all three pillars and secure the material welfare of every ageing citizen. The people will be given a chance to make their choice.

51 people "unwanted" in 1971

Forty left-wing terrorists, five spies, two right-wing extremists and four arms dealers have been banned from entering Switzerland in 1971. This total of 51 undesirable persons compares with the 38 who were officially declared as such the year before. This shows once again that there is no field of activity which is not marked by "growth". These figures, published by the Federal legal authorities, do not explicitly say who these "terrorists" were. It is understood that they included anarchists whose presence in Switzerland didn't portend particularly favourably, and Arab commandos of the kind that have already blown up two Swiss airliners.

Two of the "spies" had been connected with the Frauenknecht affair (sale to Israel of the blueprints of the Swiss-built "Mirage" fighter) and the other three had been involved with the less publicised "Selmair Affair", in which Romanian Embassy officials had been charged with obtaining secret information.

The four arms dealers mentioned had been involved with shipment of arms for the IRA. They are David O'Connell, Moira McGuire, Lawrence Freeman and Ernest Koenig.



Vintage Room

Standing at the Piccadilly end of Park Lane, the Inn on the Park was recently named 'Hotel of the Year' by Egon Ronay. The Vintage Room, on its first floor, could equally be said to be deserving of the title 'Restaurant of the Year'. It specializes in presenting succulent steaks and traditional Ribs of Scotch Beef . . . the meat faultless . . . the service impeccable. Its subdued and intimate decor, continuous dancing from

9-0 until 3-0 a.m., and easy parking, make it an ideal after-theatre rendezvous. While at lunchtime, it is rapidly becoming a 'club' for those who appreciate good food luxurious surroundings and today's greatest rarity – personal service.

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Switzerland recognises Bangladesh

The Federal Council decided by the middle of March to recognise the new state of Bangladesh. The decision was a delicate one, because Switzerland is entrusted not only with serving as diplomatic intermediary between Pakistan and its former eastern province, but also with ensuring the security of 93,000 Pakistani prisoners in Bangladesh. The exact reasons that finally prompted Mr. Graber to opt for recognition belong to the secret history of diplomacy. It appears, however, that the main factor was the difficulty of supervising the welfare of Pakistani prisoners, as laid down by the fourth Geneva Convention. It was by recognising Bangladesh that Switzerland could best accomplish this mandate. The situation was made more tricky by the fact that the Pakistani prisoners now in Bangladesh are no longer the responsibility of the Indian forces (which have left the country) but are guarded by the Bangladesh difficult for Switzerland to see that these prisoners were humanely looked after if she hadn't first recognised the new state of Bangladesh.

A difficulty still remains, however. It is that Bangladesh hasn't (understandably) yet had time to sign the 4th Geneva Convention, which lays down the procedure applicable to the case of the Pakistani prisoners. There are in fact certain grounds for concern about their fate (hasn't Sheik Mujib recently promised to put on trial 1,500 of them?).

Switzerland having recognised Bangladesh, it became necessary to placate Pakistan. This dicey job, and the task of working out the details of Switzerland's supervisory role in prisoner-of-war camps with the Bangladesh Government, was entrusted to Mr. René Keller, our former Ambassador in London and Head of the Division for International Affairs at the Political Department. He left for Bangladesh on Saturday, 25th March.

At the same time, a Swiss Ambassador at Dacca was speedily appointed. He is Mr. Othmar Rist, until then General Consul at Hamburg. He is already in Bangladesh.

The Pfuertner Affair

The Pfuertner Affair in Fribourg was raised at the National Council by an independent delegate from Zurich, Mr. Koenig, who tabled a question to the Federal Council. He asked whether a religious order (in this case the Dominican Order) could have a supervisory role, and whether if this were the case, a cantonal university could benefit from subsidies. The Federal Council, quoting the laws of Fribourg and the Federal Law on University Aid answered affirmatively both these points.

DEFENCE

The Cavalry again

In the last sitting of its Winter Session, the National Council examined problems related to the organisation of Civil Defence in the context of "Total Defence". Mr. Georges Thevoz, a liberal councillor from Vaud and a member of the Parliamentary commission on military affairs, raised the matter of the Swiss Cavalry, or more precisely, the Dragoon Corps, whose disappearance has been expected for the past two years.

"The prospect of phasing out the Dragoons is a cause of concern not only to the circles where cavalry forces have been traditionally recruited, but also among all those who attach importance to the technical equipment and psychological aspect of national defence", he said.

According to Mr. Thevoz, now is certainly not the time to do away with the cavalry, when "certain people, by their behaviour and assertions, tend to diminish the Army and instil doubt in its use and efficiency". Mr. Thevoz complained that the Military Department, which under Mr. Gnaegi's general management had announced last May the incorporation of Dragoons in the mechanised units, had acted as though Parliament had never existed. He also contended that cavalry, owing to the difficult terrain upon which it was called to fight and the system of militia defence, conserved its relevance.

In answer to his question, Mr. Gnaegi recalled that the phasing out of the Dragoons had been planned in the framework of the reorganisation of the forces and the purchase of new material. The extra men needed for those services, said Mr. Gnaegi, could only be found in the Dragoons. Their disappearance would not affect the Army's potential.

A federal message is due to be published on this matter later this year. The cavalry will be debated in Parliament during its Spring sessions and Mr. Thevoz has promised to counter attack on this occasion.

The Villard Affair

Following a refusal by the Clerk of the National Council to admit the Socialist and Pacifist councillor Arthur Villard in the Parliamentary Committee on Military Affairs, the Socialist Group at Parliament will table a motion altering the procedure hitherto adopted and demanding that the parties should be solely responsible for electing their representatives to the various committees.

Basle Theology Professors support the "32"

Two professors, four lecturers and thirty-three students at Basle's theology faculty have taken a position in favour of the 32 clergymen and priests who had publicly announced their intention of avoiding military duties, and thus unleashed an angry speech by Mr. Rudolf Gnaegi, Head of the Military Department. Although the theology professors did not subscribe to all the arguments put forward by the dissenting clergymen, they were in favour of allocating the money used in defence to help the needy overseas.

ECONOMY

OECD Report on Swiss Economy

The Organisation for Economic Development and Co-operation has published a 90-page report on the Swiss economy. The Report's judgement is reserved as to the country's economic health. It notes that the Swiss rate of inflation of 6.5 per cent in 1971 is the highest ever recorded since the war. Gross National Product, rising at 4.5 per cent a year, is expanding at the same rate as last year. Operations on current accounts have slowly deteriorated, ignoring the influx of capital brought about by monetary uncertainties.

The reports say that Switzerland's economic statistics are insufficient. Inflation, being primarily due to excessive demand, should be checked by a policy tending to regulate demand. The Report expects the pressures of demand to continue, but notes with satisfaction these decisions which have already been taken by Parliament and by the people to slow down demand and production, namely in the field of housing. The Report ends with the conclusion that it is difficult to make predictions on Switzerland's economy, as so much depends on the international situation. The future of Switzerland's prosperity will rely in the first place on the health of its export industry, hence on the situation abroad.

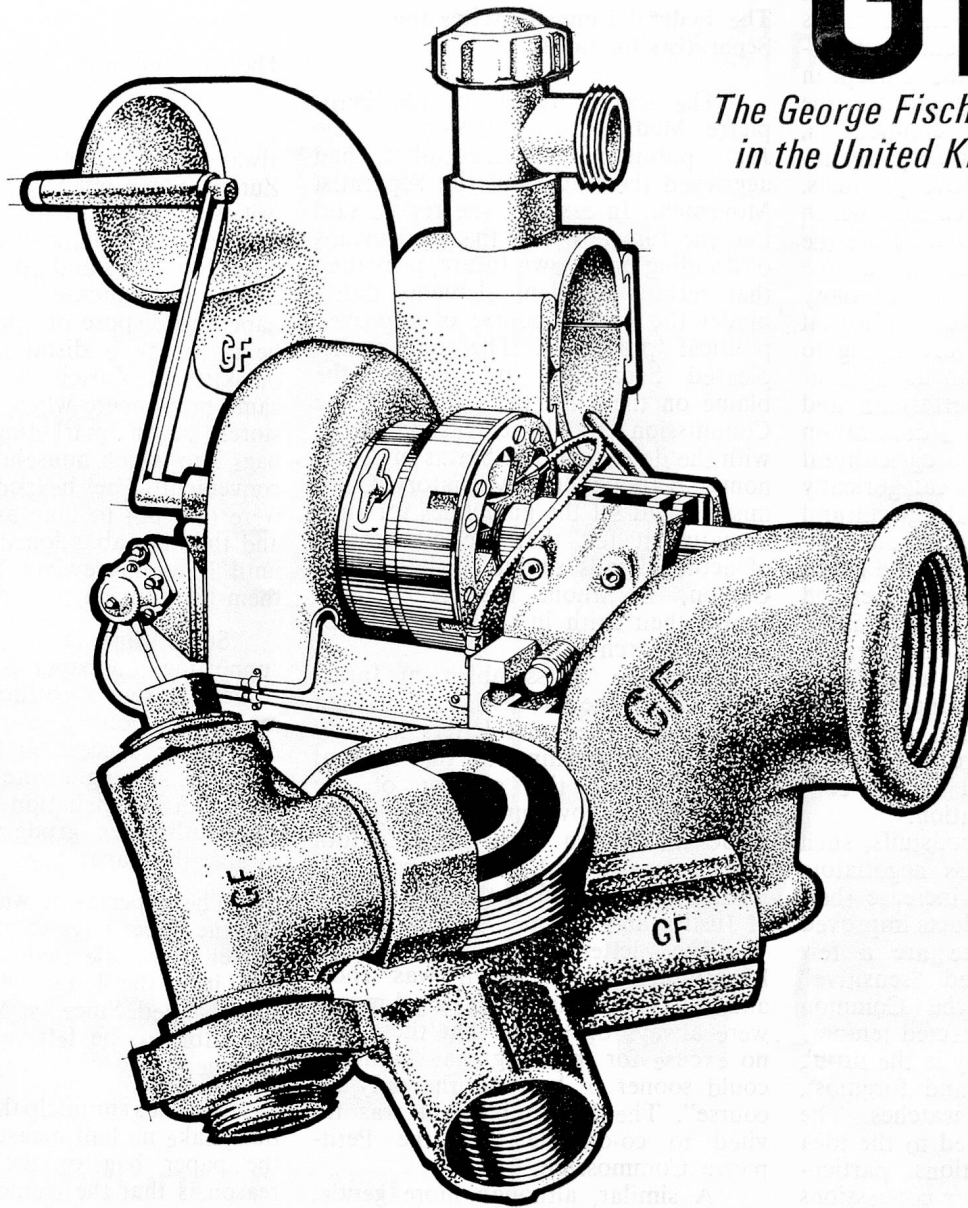
Progress of Swiss-E.E.C. negotiations

A high powered Swiss delegation headed by Ambassador Paul Jolles left for Brussels on 16th March for two days of talks with the Common Market Commission. It was the second round of talks held at this level since Switzerland applied for associatship to the Community, although contacts have been constantly maintained at technical level.

At the end of the conference, Mr. Paul Jolles held a Press conference in which he underlined the progress that had been achieved. A number of problems had already been resolved by the experts and could be set aside. Others were of a purely formal nature and

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presented no difficulties. The Common Market Commission will draft a report of the talks, rounding up the present situation of Swiss-E.E.C. negotiations, said Ambassador Jolles. There were still a number of contentious problems which had been tricky from the outset. Positions on this score were still at variance, but edging nearer to each other. Mr. Jolles named the domains where disagreement still subsisted between Switzerland and the European Community, namely: Agriculture, the problem of commercial competition, foreign labour, watch industry, manufactured foodstuffs, sensitive products.

Although the agreement which the two parties aim to reach before the beginning of next year, when the E.E.C. will be enlarged, is essentially a free trade agreement on industrial goods, Swiss negotiators are trying to include other issues, such as agriculture in the package. Switzerland and the Community agree on a declaration of intent to expand their agricultural trade. But Switzerland has categorically refused to grant unilateral agricultural concessions. Any agreement on agriculture, said Mr. Jolles, must be based on reciprocal concessions. Switzerland rejects the Community's position, whereby it would like to exchange industrial concessions for agricultural ones. As there are many opponents to an agricultural deal within the Community itself, it is more than likely that the Federal Council will be content with general declaration.

On manufactured foodstuffs, such as Swiss chocolate, Swiss negotiators want the Community to increase their offer and grant these products improved preferential tariffs. There are a few industrial items, so-called "sensitive" products, from which the Common Market wishes to be protected temporarily by a three year delay in the lifting of tariff barriers. First and foremost, these products include watches. The Swiss are strongly opposed to the idea of freezing tariff reductions, particularly in view of its earlier concessions on the definition of origin.

Finally, the agreement sought by Switzerland and the E.E.C. will embody an emergency procedure, such as safeguard clauses on competition. The

Community wishes to have recourse to such safeguards without prior consultation with her eventual associate. This notion was rejected by the Swiss delegation.

JURA

The Federal Council invites the Separatists for talks

The second report of the Petitpierre Mediator Commission for the Jura, published last December, had aggrieved the leaders of the Separatist Movement. In essence, the report said that the Jura now had the legal means of deciding on its own future, providing that certain dissident elements didn't hinder the normal course of approved political procedure. The report displeased Separatists by placing the blame on them for the failures of the Commission, and by entrusting Berne with the definition of a Status of Autonomy. Although the Mediator Commission had set the guidelines for such a status, it felt that the elaboration of actual details should be left to the Canton, in whom the people had shown their faith in the vote of principle of March 1970.

Both the "Rassemblement Jurassien" and the Jurassian Christian Democrat Parties sent letters in early January, complaining to the Federal Council about the content of the Report. The Government's reply was made known on 15th March. Both parties were invited for talks with Mr. Hans Furgler, Head of the Department of Justice and Police.

The letter addressed to the Rassemblement Jurassien was short and curt. It underlined that legal means were always open and that there was no excuse for implying that "violence could sooner or later be the only recourse". The Rassemblement was invited to co-operate with the Petitpierre Commission.

A similar, although more gentle, letter was sent to the Jurassian Christian Democrat Party, which is equally in favour of Separatism, and invites a delegation to see Mr. Furgler.

Spokesmen for both parties were

disappointed with the letters. Mr. Roland Bueguelin, General Secretary of Rassemblement Jurassien, said that the "tone and the content of the letter were unacceptable and could lead to a dangerous situation".

CANTONAL

The dustbins and Zurich

Disposal of domestic waste has always been a highly topical issue in Zurich. Some ten years ago, the authorities refused to carry away anything that was not contained in an "Ochsner" dustbin of a standard design. If one had an old suitcase or a pile of newspapers to dispose of, then these had to be driven to a disposal plant on the outskirts of Zurich. The problem became more acute when the large chain stores began marketing large paper bags into which household waste could conveniently be heaped in. Dustmen were told not to take away these bags and they lay abandoned on pavements until irate housewives finally dragged them back inside their flats.

Some time later a Zurich daily, supporting the paper bags, invited its readers to sign a petition to the Communal Council. The petition had a resounding success and several local delegates sensing a vote-catching issue, tabled an interpellation to the Council. The authorities grudgingly consented to give the paper bags a trial period.

The experiment was so successful and the paper bags so much easier and lighter to handle than heavy dustbins, that it is the latter which have now been banned. Since 1st March, dustbins are liable to be left untended on the pavement.

Zurich's municipal services obviously take no half measures. It is either the paper bag or the dustbin. One reason is that the tremendous increase in the volume of domestic waste has forced them to rationalise. In 1955, 55,000 tons of domestic waste were picked up a year in Zurich. Today, this volume has surpassed 160,000 tons.

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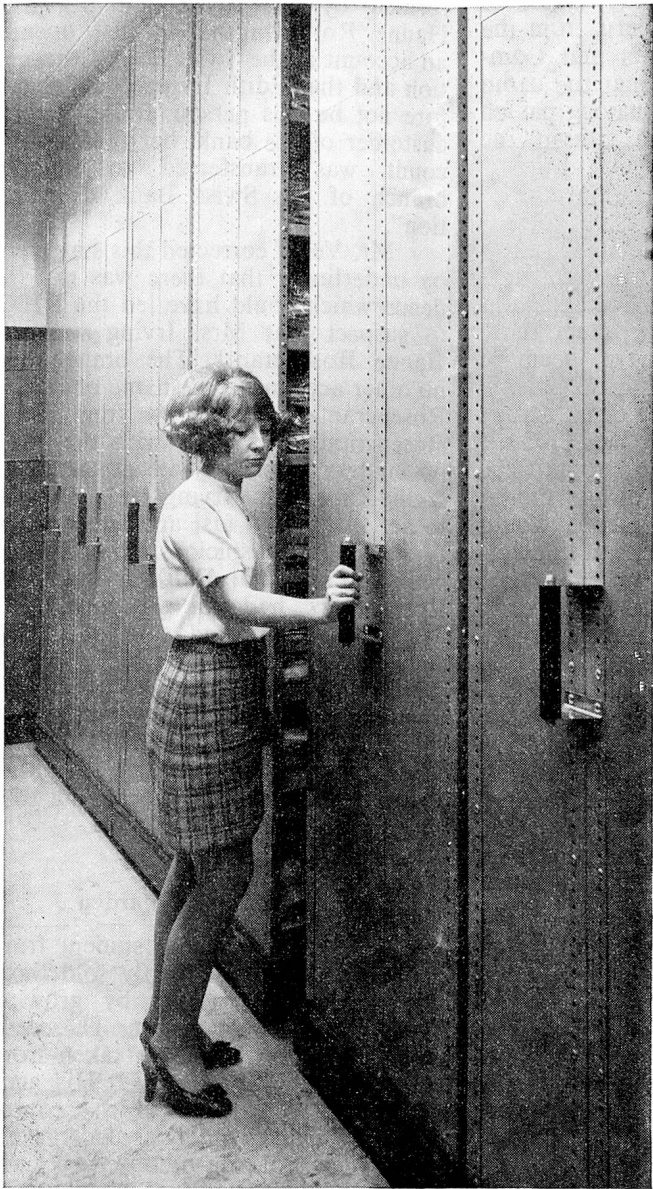


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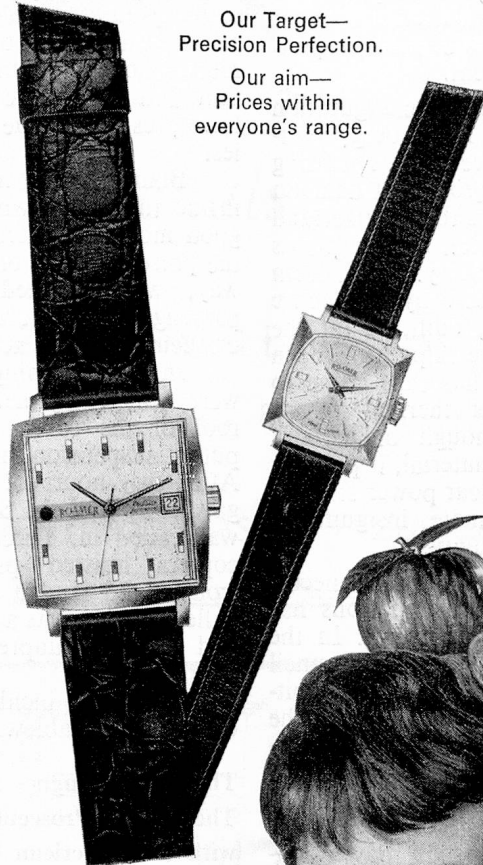
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Trouble at the Beznau power station

Switzerland's only operational nuclear power station, "Beznau I", has been causing concern to its owners, the North Eastern Generating Board. Power production has been interrupted on several occasions during 1971 and has reached 1.2 billion kilowatt-hours, just over half the predicted output. Beznau I has been at a standstill since 24th December last. Although repairs have so far been carried out under guarantee by the contractors, the shortfall in production has resulted in heavy losses to the company and negotiations on this unexpected situation are under way with a consortium of firms responsible for the equipment.

With the imminent inauguration of "Beznau II" and Mühleberg, Switzerland will soon have three operating power stations. The growth of demand has made it imperative that Switzerland should have at least ten similar plants by the end of the century. Apart from minor projects, no new hydro-electric dams are now being built, as all the interesting sites of the Alps have been exploited. The time has thus come to concentrate on either thermal, or on nuclear power. Although oil is still cheaper than fissile material, it pollutes the atmosphere. Nuclear power stations are clean and emanate insignificant amounts of radio-activity.

The problem posed by the necessary cooling of these installations has agitated Swiss conservationists. In the spring of last year, the Federal Council took the surprise decision of prohibiting the use of rivers, particularly the Aar and the Rhine, for cooling purposes and recommended the device of the cooling tower instead. This led to delays in the construction of the Kaiseraugst and Leibstadt power stations. In the former case, it was feared that the high cooling tower, emanating a considerable amount of heat in the atmosphere, would give rise to a perpetual fog in the area, setting astir the conservationists of Basle and Schaffhausen.

The French being apparently less particular about these things, a consortium of three Swiss electricity generating boards (West Switzerland, Berne and North Eastern Switzerland) have set up a joint venture company with a capital of 60 million francs. This outfit will lend the French Electricity Board 30 per cent of the capital required for the erection of the Fesselheim power station in Alsace, in exchange for which the company will have a right to 30 per cent of its future power output.

The Schilthorn Cableway incident

The cabin of the Schilthorn aerial cableway at Murren was blocked with 68 passengers for about 20 hours after its haulage cables had become inexplicably entangled. The exact cause of

the incident is not yet known and is being investigated by experts from the Department of Transport and Communications. It appears that the cabin swayed excessively after having passed a supporting pylon and caused the cables to cross over.

"Owing to the excellent morale" in the cabin, the management of the Schilthorn cableway decided to allow the 68 skiers to remain the night in it and repair the vehicle the next morning. The usual procedure under those circumstances would have been to allow the passengers to escape through a security hatch by sliding down a rope to the ground and safety. However the cabin was immobilised some 200 metres above the flank of the mountain and this route of escape would have presented some technical difficulties.

Blankets were hoisted from below inside the cabin, where discipline and good mood prevailed, thanks partly to the presence of an official of the Cableway, who directed operations. The passengers had a cheery night but few of them managed to get any sleep.

In the morning, two mechanics were hoisted by helicopter on to the roof of the cabin and attempted to put its suspension mechanism in order. After two hours of vain efforts, they gave it up and the Swiss Aerial Watch was called in. Three "Alouette" helicopters hoisted passengers out of trouble and landed them safely in the valley in what was a particularly tricky, and perhaps unprecedented, rescue operation.

A similar incident had happened on the same cableway in 1969.

The Irving-Hughes Affair: The Zurich Prosecutor dissatisfied with the American charges

Mr. Peter Veleff, Prosecutor of the District of Zurich, is angry at the indictment against the Clifford Irving couple, who pleaded guilty to writing a false biography of the millionaire Howard Hughes with intent to defraud the publishers, McGraw Hill, of 650,000 dollars. This sum, which was to have been originally paid out to Howard Hughes from a Swiss bank, was taken by Mrs. Edith Irving and placed in another bank.

The Zurich prosecutor is angry about the assertions of the indictment, which are uncomplimentary of Swiss banks. These give the impression to the American public that an important Swiss bank has breached etiquette in its dealings with Edith Irving, who had opened an account under the name of Hanne Rosencrantz. The indictment states, "On 30th December, or thereabouts, Edith Irving withdrew 22,800 Swiss francs from an account at the Swiss Bank Corporation in Zurich and transferred the sum, via cheque No. 064 503, to Mr. Dieter Rosenkranz. It was then that the accused was in-

formed by the bank that the true Hanne Rosencrantz had just opened an account at the Swiss Bank Corporation and that Edith Irving could therefore not be this person. Being a good customer of the bank, her falsified account was transferred to another branch of the Swiss Bank Corporation".

Mr. Veleff corrected this statement by underlining that there was no evidence which could have led the S.B.C. to suspect that Mrs. Irving was not Hanne Rosencrantz. The branch had no other account to the name of Hanne Rosencrantz, although the true Hanne Rosencrantz had dealt with the bank on matters unrelated with the Hughes-Irving case. Mrs. Irving had managed to act sufficiently fast and smartly not to attract any suspicions. Another discrepancy was that Edith Irving, alias Rosencrantz, had not withdrawn, but deposited the alleged sum of 22,800 francs on 30th December.

Although the Irving couple are now committed for trial in America, the Zurich prosecutor has maintained his extradition demand against Mrs. Irving, whom he wants to put on trial in Zurich for fraud.

He grows hashish in his garden . . .

A secondary school student from Aarau produced and partly sold three kilogrammes of hashish by growing Indian hemp in his garden. The seeds of his new crop had been taken from commercial bird-grain bags. His activities were discovered in the course of an enquiry in a drug case in Aarau's cantonal school. He admitted to having sown the grains in his garden in order to carry out an experiment. He hadn't however, resisted the temptation of selling some 500 grammes of his production to an unknown person from Zurich for 1,300 francs. He had wanted to give the money to a collection in favour of Pakistan, but had been involved by the enquiry before being able to carry out his generous gesture.

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SWITZERLAND ABROAD

Spartaco Vela and his descendants

Some years ago I read in a Swiss publication a short report about the life and the work of the great Swiss Sculptor Vincenzo Vela and his wife Sabina. Some of his creations and historical relics are to be found in the Museum of Ligornetto, once his residence, and donated to the Confederation by his son Spartaco. From that publication it appeared that with the death of Vincenzo Vela, his brother Vincenzo and his son Spartaco, the male line of the family had ceased to exist.

How far from the truth! It always surprised me that all these years nobody really seemed to care about this family or tried to follow matters up as it would have been only normal to assume in the case of such a great name. I am ever so glad, that through special circumstances, I may be able to make my modest contribution towards this family's history.

Spartaco Vela was at heart a painter and in this he was encouraged by his friend Gambia, also an artist-painter, but his parents insisted that he should dedicate more of his time to sculpture. Spartaco was overshadowed by the greatness of his father and by the result of his short life it is clear that he was of a weak character and very submissive to his parents. Spartaco met a young girl in Milan, Giuseppina Serra, later Mrs. Rampazzini. She posed for him as a subject in many of his earlier paintings. Love followed and it is supposed that there was a religious marriage. As a result of this union a son was born to them in Milan on 6th October, 1881, and Spartaco gave him the name of Regolo-Vincenzo, which proves again the liking of the Vela family for Roman names.

Many letters are in the possession of his descendants, showing how in the course of years love changed into bitterness. Spartaco depended entirely on his father for his finances. Giuseppina was a very possessive mother and was always complaining of not seeing Spartaco enough. To cut a long story short, she brought her son up alone, encouraged him in his studies and gave him her name Serra. Spartaco, in his will, left him a yearly life donation of 2,000 Sw. Fr. later changed into Lire.

Regolo-Vincenzo, son of Spartaco and Giuseppina grew up to be a good and successful man and concluded his studies with a degree in civil engineering. As such his activities covered many fields. Construction of railways and roads in Sicily, Corsica and Abyssinia during the Graziani campaign; and then for many years he worked on tunnels and water-dams for the power stations in the valleys of the Serio and Brembo in the Province of Bergamo; and later on at fortifications and other works of national import-

ance. He married twice. From the first marriage he had one daughter, and from the second one with Miss Madeline Tosio, born in Quimper, Bretagne, France, but originating from Poschiavo, Switzerland, four sons and one daughter, Laura, my wife.

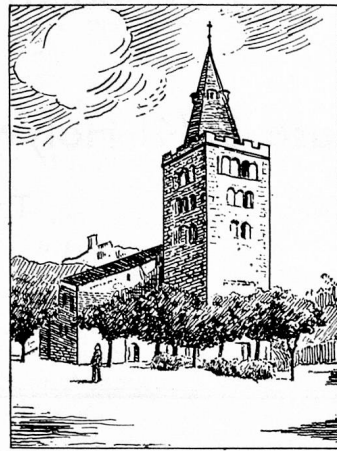
The sons and daughter created their own families and their numerous sons and daughters, my nephews and nieces, progressed well, several obtaining recognition and good positions as doctors, scientists, professors, etc. Now some of their offspring are forming families and the youngest generation is already putting in its appearance. It is interesting to note that some of these descendants have inherited the gifts of

the Vela. Here you see Giorgio Serra, a grandson of Spartaco, who since early childhood has practised sculpture and painting.

If for reasons unknown to me the Vela family has renounced to recognise officially their descendants, nevertheless the fact remains that they are still loved and revered by many of their own blood, up to this very day. The young generation all living abroad, true "Ausland-Schweizer" seldom miss the occasion, when in Switzerland, to visit the Museum in Ligornetto, against payment of an entrance fee, and lay some flowers at the family tomb of their ancestors.

Ermanno Berner

SWISS CATHEDRALS



**SION
NOTRE DAME DU GLARIER**

In spite of the centuries and the calamities which have overwhelmed it, particularly in 1778 and 1788, Sion has remained one of the most interesting Swiss towns by the number and variety of its monuments.

The actual cathedral, the church which originally had the name of Notre Dame du Glarier, has lost its antique character. The chancel itself only dates from the 15th Century and was only partially completed by Cardinal Schinner. The bell tower alone, one of the most ancient in Switzerland has survived all the transformations of the edifice. It is a high square tower of the 11th and 13th centuries, of Roman style (Carolingian period), embattled and coifed by a pyramid built of bricks, which is also the top storey of the tower, and an elegant hexagonal spire.

The nave, vaulted with ogives, was terminated at the beginning of the 17th Century. The chancel, adorned with stalls of the 17th Century, is decorated behind the high altar with a triptych of gilt wood representing the Assumption.

None of the churches of Sion look as having been built to serve as a cathedral. The church of St. Theo-

dore, which is close by, reconstructed by Cardinal Schinner, already existed in the 13th Century.

It is believed that when the Episcopal See was established in Sion, Notre Dame de Valère became the cathedral and was transferred later to Notre Dame du Glarier, which is the cathedral today.

Though not as high as its northern neighbour, (Hill of Tourbillon), the Hill of Valère is no less picturesque, thanks to the edifice and the towers that crown its summit. The church and the manor stronghold, the church especially, are considered as the most ancient historical monuments of the Valais and Switzerland. Its name is attributed to the Roman Valeria, mother of Titus Campanus, prefect of the Emperor, and whose Mausoleum was at the foot of the hill.

The bell tower, a strong defending tower with battlements, is now protected with a quadrangular roofing. This church, or that which preceded it, probably between 999 and 1032, was originally called Sainte-Marie de Sion, and then Sainte-Marie de Valère, and was probably the bishopric's cathedral before this became definitively the role of Notre Dame du Glarier.

(P.S.)

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