

Home news

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HOME NEWS

JURA

The *Rassemblement Jurassien* called on Bern to organise without delay a plebiscit in the Jura allowing its population to choose between complete separation from Canton Berne and a new status of semi-independence. The call was made at the *Rassemblement's* Popular Assembly during the *16th Fête du Peuple Jurassien* at Délémont. The plebiscit is planned under an amendment of the Cantonal Constitution supported by the people in March 1970, but Bern is holding back on the vote until plans for transforming the Jura into new regions are finalised. The *Rassemblement's* call, and its reminder that a choice will soon have to be made, was partly aimed at the people of the southern areas of the Jura, bordering on Biel, who have opted for a continued attachment to Bern.

Bern was awarded domination over the Jura at the Treaty of Vienna in 1815 as a compensation for the loss of Vaud, conquered by the armies of the French Revolution in 1798. The Jura problem stemmed from the historic treaty which recarved the map of Europe with a

thought for the Confederates who had, after all, been deeply involved in the Napoleonic wars. The *Rassemblement's* statement was rejected by the other two parties in the Jura, the *Union des Partiotés Jurassiens* (pro-Bernese) and the *Mouvement pour l'Unité du Jura* (a middle of the road movement accepting an intermediate solution known as "status of autonomy" for the Jura). The first of these two organisations accepts a plebiscit but not under the terms of the Separatists, who claim that all the Jurassians living outside the Jura area should vote. The Third Force considers that a plebiscit would be premature.

The Separatists are centered in the three northern French-speaking districts of the Jura (Délémont, Porrentruy and Franches Montagnes) whereas the *Union des Partiotés Jurassiens* take root in the Southern districts of Saint Imier, Moutier and Courtelary. These districts have a strong German-speaking immigrant population. They are also the most industrialised of the Jura and would make life difficult for the three Separatist districts if they decided to let them form a new Canton, this being a possible eventuality.

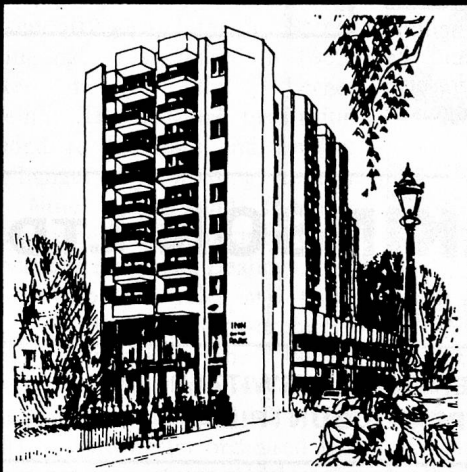
The *Union des Partiotés Jurassiens* have made a surprise move by appealing to the World Council of Churches in a letter to its General Secretary, Mr. Philip Potter. In a somewhat turgid style, they

bring the world non-Catholic body aware of the existence in the Jura of "linguistic and racialist sectarianism".

UN membership to be debated by special committee

A committee has been set up to examine the consequences of Switzerland's possible membership to the United Nations. The fifty members of this consultative body have been named by the Federal Council. Eighteen are French Speaking, three Ticinese and the remainder German-speaking. They have been selected from wide sectors of the community. Many are known for their support to UN membership, others for their staunch opposition. The committee, which was due to hold its first session towards the end of September, is chaired by a former ambassador, lawyer and parliamentarian: Mr. Edouard Zellweger, who has also been a leading UN official in Laos. The decision to set up this committee was taken by Parliament and will in effect delay concrete steps towards UN membership, an issue which has been in the air for many years. The idea of naming a committee on whose recommendations the Government will act is typical of Berne's caution on any decision relating to permanent neutrality. The reason why Switzerland has abstained from joining the UN is that she might be compelled to take sides in either condem-

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ning a fellow-country in a resolution or taking part in sanctions. This would not be a neutral attitude. Most recent statements by Swiss leaders claim that the time is not yet ripe for UN-membership and that the idea has to mature. At all matter via a referendum. There has been a strong vindication of neutrality of late. Mr. Pierre Graber, Head of the Political Department, has repeatedly said that neutrality constitutes a capital for peace and positive influence in the world which should not be tampered with.

Middle-East crisis highlights dependence on oil

The Middle East crisis has not triggered off a new Swiss diplomatic initiative. The Federal Council held a special meeting but went no further than to confirm its support to the International Red Cross and its humanitarian role in the conflict. But the past troubled weeks have highlighted Switzerland's vulnerability to any turning-off of the oil taps. It is commonly believed that Switzerland, with its many hydraulic dams, can rely on ample supplies of electrical energy. However, electricity accounts for only 16 per cent of the country's energy requirements. 78 per cent comes from petrol and oil and only 6 per cent from coal. Due to the absence of coal, Switzerland is one of the only countries of Western Europe depending on petrol for over 50 per cent of its energy requirements. Any interruption of Arab oil exports would therefore have dramatic consequences for Switzerland.

SWITZERLAND OUT OF THE WORLD CUP

Switzerland was beaten 2-0 in the second leg of her World Cup qualifying match with Italy. The match took place at Rome's Olympic Stadium before a crowd of 80,000. The Swiss played brilliantly during the first half-hour, taking advantage of the unsettled game of the home team. But a penalty awarded to the Italians following a foul by the Swiss half-back Schild on the left-winger Riva put an end to this encouraging performance. After this first set-back, the Swiss never recovered their initial

brilliance while the Italians improved and moved into the attack. But the game slowed down and its level declined. The Italians scored again early in the second half through a deflected shot by the left-forward Causio whose trajectory the Swiss goal-keeper had misjudged. The match put an end to Switzerland's justified hope of re-entering the World Cup. She had drawn with Italy (finalists at Mexico in 1970) and easily disposed of Luxembourg and Turkey.

THREE FEDERAL COUNCILLORS RESIGN

Three federal councillors have resigned. Mr. Roger Bonvin, President of the Confederation and Head of the Department of Transport and Communications, Mr. Hans-Peter Tschudi, Head of the Department of the Interior and Mr. Nello Celio, Head of the Department of Finance, have announced their decision collectively. They will leave office at the end of the year. Mr. Celio had already expressed the wish to leave office last year.

For Party Political reasons, Mr. Celio's departure has more or less compelled Mr. Bonvin to follow suit. But Mr. Bonvin, who is ending his second term as President of the Confederation, had intended to leave the Government in the near future anyway. Mr. Tschudi, the "doyen" of the Federal Council, which he joined in 1959, has firmly decided that the time is ripe for him to leave. He was elected President of the Confederation in 1965 and 1970. Mr. Celio, who was elected to the Federal Council in 1966, only three years after having joined the National Council, had been President of the Confederation last year. Speculations are rife over the three men's successors. It is generally assumed that Mr. Celio's successor will be French-speaking (Mr. Chevallaz, former Radical Mayor of Lausanne is considered as one of the most probable contenders) because a successor to Mr. Bonvin will probably not be found among the French-speaking factions of the Christian Democrats. The successors to the three resigning federal councillors must belong to the same parties and the same linguistic groups so as to preserve the traditional political and linguistic balance of the growing coalition.

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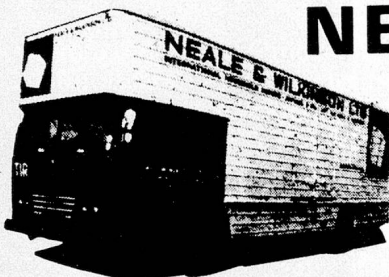
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