

# Letter from Switzerland

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## Trade unions firmly against wage control

The Swiss TUC (Union Syndicate Suisse) has almost unanimously rejected Government proposals to maintain a certain degree of wage control within the framework of its fight against inflation. Holding a special congress to discuss four federal decrees due to be extended by the people on 3rd December, the Congress turned down by 199 votes to 22 all idea of wage control. Speakers acknowledged that wage control had so far been practised only in some limited cases with no bearing on the means of the working community. But they stressed that this could pave the way for more demanding legislation making the working class carry the brunt of the struggle against inflation.

The trade unionists gave their support to the three other decrees. These concern credit restrictions, a clamp-down on the building trade and a reduction of fiscal facilities for investments.

## Current proposals on political rights for Swiss abroad attacked by a Geneva daily

Current plans for enabling the Swiss abroad to vote on federal issues under certain circumstances have been scathingly criticised in a recent article by the *Tribune de Genève*. These plans are contained in a report prepared by a special working group chaired by Minister A. Jaccard, Head of the Section concerned for the Swiss Abroad at the Political Department. The conclusions of this commission have been known to Swiss abroad for nearly a year. They are essentially to allow those compatriots who happen to be in Switzerland at the

time of a vote to go to the polls, if they so wish, and if they have registered beforehand. The report of the Jaccard group, which had been commissioned by the Government, will serve as a basis for a future debate on the subject in Parliament. According to the *Tribune de Genève*, none of these who championed more extensive political rights for Swiss abroad were admitted to the working group. In particular, a Swiss society in Paris who had asked to send an observer to some of the group's sessions met with a polite refusal. The Geneva daily claimed that the Jaccard Report was "ambiguous" and "confusing". It stressed that its "restrictive" proposals were "lacking in imagination" and amounted to the introduction of a "poll-tax" in favour of those who either had the money to journey to Switzerland or who lived near the border.

This point of view was shared by the official representatives of the Swiss of Britain at the organisation of the Swiss abroad. Those who spoke at Berne on behalf of the Swiss-British societies which had examined the problem called for a cancellation of the whole project. When the London Group of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique discussed the issue in 1971, it was generally accepted that introducing the right to vote in "Fifth Switzerland" was neither practical nor desirable. The Government is opposed to the idea of fully-fledged Swiss voters abroad for a number of reasons which were explained at the 1972 Assembly of the Swiss Abroad by Mr. Nello Celio, then President of the Confederation.

own first ascent of that "elusive peak", which she had been wanting to climb from schooldays onwards, the Matterhorn. While, naturally, the Swiss alps play a great part in this book, the story nevertheless takes one also to the French mountains, to the Dolomites, to Wales and the English Lake District — where quite some rock climbing can be done — to Turkey and the Pacific Coast of America, from New Zealand to Alaska — on and on, higher and higher, to peaks seemingly more and more inaccessible. It is a marvellous story of courage and sacrifice, of struggle and achievement, told by one who has many such achievements to her own credit, told with inside knowledge and much feeling. It is also a story which should put an end, once and for all time, to that silly saying that the female sex is the weaker one of the two. "Women on the Rope" is a book well worth buying, reading and enjoying.

## "Hospitable Zürich 1973"

During the last two years a number of new hotels have been built in and around Zürich, some quite spectacular in size and with a kind of pop-art intérieur, offering 4,000 additional hotel beds. But according to official statistics the average occupation of hotel beds during the first 8 months of this year shows a retrogressive tendency, which varies between minus 4.4% and minus 17.4%. Several factors seem to have contributed to this for the hotel-keepers somewhat disquieting state of affairs: the devaluation of the American dollar, the increased competition in the international field, with countries like Spain and Yugoslavia drawing more and more tourists to their generally sunny shores.

In order to combat this tendency the Zürich Hotel Proprietors Association, the Zürich and the Swiss National Tourist Offices and Transworld Airlines have co-operated in inviting some 38 American Travel Office Agents and Tourist writers to a stay in "hospitable Zürich". They have been lodged in 10 different hotels, received by the Mayor of the town, they have been dined and wined, have been shown what is called "Zürich's nightlife" and have also been taken to the lake of Constance, to the waterfalls of the Rhine, to St. Gallen and to various other attractive places.

The operation "Hospitable Zürich 1973" was part of a collective effort on the part of the Zürich hotel proprietors to become better known in the United States of America. Preparations are, it is said, well advanced to popularise week-end trips to Zürich as well as, glancing ahead, an "Alpine Highlife Summer 1974" and, in co-operation with Swissair, special journeys from the USA to "Cultural Europe".

Several of the leading Zürich hotels

# Letter from Switzerland

## Women on the Rope

"Women on the Rope" is the title of a new book, dealing with the feminine share in mountain adventure, published by George Allen and Unwin Ltd., and written by that prolific writer Mrs. Cicely Williams. She is, as so many of her friends in the Swiss Colony know, the wife of the Right Reverend the Lord Bishop of Leicester, as well as a life-long friend of Switzerland. I forget how many times Cicely Williams has visited Switzerland, but it is typical of her to have written this new book in memory of the late Bernhard Biner who for more than thirty years was not only her mountain guide, but also her friend. The author, who has quite a number of eminently readable books to her credit, among them a specially charming one called "Zermatt Saga", is, of course, an experienced mountaineer herself, who, on the late Bernhard Biner's rope, has climbed most of those grandiose peaks around her beloved Zermatt.

Her most recent book has been described as one for mountaineers, for social historians and for fireside

## by Gottfried Keller

connoisseurs of good story telling. While agreeing with all these statements, I think it should also be said that this work is the result of careful and exhausting research and study both in libraries and in hotel archives, where Mrs. Williams had to work her way through old hotel registers. True, she has had assistance in compiling her material, assistance which she gratefully and handsomely acknowledges, but in spite of this the main work was hers.

I expect that few people know today that women's share in mountaineering adventure goes back to 1808 and has — so far — culminated in female participation in two Everest expeditions. Cicely Williams's knowledge about mountains, mountain climbing and mountaineering adventures and happenings is as immense as her style in telling the tale is endearing. The stores of female climbing exploits, some in male company, and some "Ladies only", quite a few very dangerous ones indeed, make fascinating reading. The same can be said of Cicely Williams's description of her



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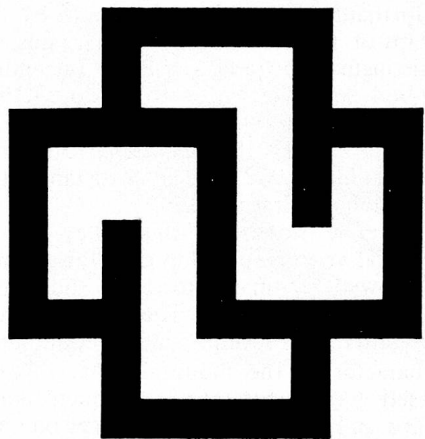
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have, moreover, come to an agreement to the effect that in view of the devaluation of the dollar they will not increase their prices in 1974.

All this seems to show that the Zürich Hotel Proprietors consider a big Publicity – or Public Relations Operation as necessary. It is a fact that some 3 or 4 years ago it was sometimes extremely difficult to find suitable hotel accommodation in or very near Zürich and booking well in advance was indispensable. Occasionally people without advance bookings had to be sent as far as Stäfa or even Rapperswil. But today things are different and competition in the international tourist-accommodation market makes itself felt. Nor is this all. The Association of “Kur- und Verkehrsdirektoren” – in other words those in charge of local tourist interests all over the country – have just held their general meeting in the course of which a resolution, addressed to the competent authorities, has been unanimously adopted. In this resolution they express their grave concern about the constant reduction of the number of those who are admitted as “saisonniers” in the hotel trade. This, they argue, is bound to lead to a deterioration in the quality in the whole hotel and catering trade, which in turn is doing damage to the image of Switzerland as a tourist country, both internally and abroad.

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On a different level it should be put on record that the first 108 refugees from Chile – a total of 200 is to be admitted according to a decision of the Federal Council – have now arrived in Switzerland. 23 of them are citizens of Chile, some 30 are Brazilians and the remainder are citizens of Uruguay, the Argentine and Haiti. They are in the care of the Swiss Red Cross and have, for the first 2 months, been taken to welfare centres in Pully and Glion, as well as Altstätten near St. Gallen. The aim is to get them acclimatised first and afterwards

to find work and suitable homes for them with a view to integrate them totally into the Swiss way of life.

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Finally it may interest a number of readers to know that the Swiss Cavalry does not now exist any more. A last report and farewell ceremony has taken place in the historic little town of Avenches (Aventicum) some days ago, in

the presence of some 50,000 spectators, among them high officers, politicians and other well known personalities. The absence, however, of the Chief of the Federal Military Department, Federal Councillor Gnägi, was very much noted and commented upon. As one of the Zürich papers commented: “Since this son of a peasant has had to disband the cavalry regiments, he is not so popular any more”.

Gottfried Keller

## A DRIVE ACROSS THREE PASSES

### The St. Gotthard

The Gotthard, first of all, owes its importance to its commercial value, it is a first rate commercial road, whereas the Nufenen and the Furka are tourist roads. As to strategic importance, the St. Gotthard ranks first; it is the transalpine route of Central Switzerland to the Tessin and Italy.

Starting our journey from Hospental, situated between the confluent of the rivers Furkareuss and Gotthardreuss, the splendidly constructed road ascends the last slope of the St. Gotthard group amidst flowered pastures to the barren Vale of Gams, on the left of the Gotthardreuss, to the road windings of Mätteli, where one enjoys the superb view of the Urseren Valley and the Spitzberge range, to the snowy summit of the imposing Galenstock and the Furka, and on the glaciers of Pizzo Lucendro ahead of us.

Passing various small lakes and the barren summit of the Pass and busy traffic of the wonderful new highway that we experienced two years ago, we went straight on to the Hospice and the ancient and impressive Val Tremola, the

“Valley of Turmoil”, one of wildest and most interesting gorge of the Alps. The road has more than 40 bends before rejoining the new highway winding its way down to Airolo with a magnificent view of the Valle Leventina.

Airolo, 1175, with excellent hotels and restaurants, is a favourite holiday resort in summer. Airolo is at the southern entrance of the great railway tunnel, and to ease its heavy traffic, a second tunnel Göshenen – Airolo is today in course of construction (see map).

### The Val Bedretto

That part of the higher valley of the river Tessin (Ticino) between Airolo and the Nufenenpass. The Val Bedretto is limited in the North by the powerful masses of gneiss and granite of the Gotthard Alps, and in the South by the Alps of Tessin – among the first ones, we distinguish above all the Pizzo Lucendro, 2,964 and the Pizzo Rotondo, 3,192; among the second ones, the Poncione di Vespero, 2,717; the Madone, 2,756; Pizzo Cristallina, 2,912, and at a distance, the Poncione di Braga, 2,864.

The slopes of this valley are in general very steep and in their lower parts furrowed by many torrents, slides and trails of avalanches. The Val Bedretto presents a severe and redoubtable character of the mountain that reveals itself even in summer by frequent landslips and ruptures of rocks. Yet one encounters beautiful Alpine scenery, meadows enamelled with flowers of bright colours, and beautiful larch and fir-tree forests lower down the valley.

Fontana, 1,200, 5 km from Airolo, is the first and only village on the right bank of the Tessin. Villa, 1,364, is a village which has much suffered from avalanches. In 1972, the church was carried away; it was reconstructed with the actual bell-tower much admired today; it is pentagonal, but the angle facing the mountain is prolonged and very pointed to break the avalanches. This danger has much diminished since protective works were made on the mountain slopes of Val Bedretto. An

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