

Comment

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illness, Hodler spent August and September, 1917 in Caux near Montreux. The landscapes he painted there – “Mist rising over the mouth of the Rhone”, “Grammont in the morning sun” and the “Waadtiland Alps from Rochers-de-Naye” – have been described as “planetary landscapes” (paysages planétaires). They are supreme examples of Hodler’s massive mountains and cosmic spaces, painted in bold colours in an intense, transparent light.

In his last works Hodler returns to the early paintings of lakes though now

the forms are simplified, specific details have been eliminated and he uses only the simplest colour tones to achieve directness of effect.

The landscapes are the most important part of Hodler’s extensive work. If Cezanne and van Gogh have given us a particular image of the landscape of southern Europe which borders on the Mediterranean and Edvard Munch of the coastal landscape of the north, Hodler has contributed the definitive image of the Alps. No other painting of Alpine scenery is comparable.

Guardian, the Foreign Minister was discussing the Middle East in Geneva with the United Nations Secretary-General, Dr. Waldheim.”

But Mr. Graber’s statement after his meeting with Dr. Zayyat showed that no compromise over neutrality was in the offing. “I felt the need to explain to Dr. Zayyat the unvarying guidelines of our neutral policy, its imperatives and its limits. But, he added, everytime that new developments will give our overtures and will for cooperation an opportunity to come into play, this will be done . . . Egypt has her own views on the Middle East problem which we understand as the Egyptians understand our own convictions”.

Mr. Graber had spoken in this way several times before. He had said the same thing when he came to London in February of last year. Although, as the *Guardian* states, Switzerland is flexing its muscles in the diplomatic sphere, never has neutrality been more forcibly vindicated than today. Every official speech will stress the importance of cooperation and involvement in the world, provided the “imperatives” of neutrality can be met.

A need for change has gradually emerged and been recognized as the nations of the world grew closer together. Switzerland could not remain indifferent to the new relationships resulting from the United Nations, the EEC, the GATT and various international movements. Ever since Mr. Fritz Wahlen, former Foreign Minister, suggested the idea of

COMMENT

IS SWISS FOREIGN POLICY CHANGING?

Mr. Pierre Graber has returned from a journey to Egypt combining an official visit to that country and a special meeting – a kind of diplomatic première with the Swiss ambassadors to 13 countries of the Middle East and North Africa.

Our Foreign Minister was unexpectedly received by President Anour Sadate before having talks with his Egyptian counterpart, Dr. Mohammed al Zayyat. The Egyptian Press interpreted this visit, and the Swiss presence at the preparatory talks for a European Security conference, as pointing to Berne’s more

positive attitude towards international problems. The paper “Al Ahram” claimed that by this apparent shift in diplomatic stance, the Swiss Government was attempting to condition the Swiss public to the inevitability of Swiss entry into the United Nations.

The *Guardian’s* Berne correspondent commented that although the Egyptian newspaper was probably duty bound to arrive at such a conclusion, “the Swiss can hardly dispute the accuracy of the analysis. It comes at a time when the Swiss Government is flexing its supposedly neutral muscles in almost unprecedented fashion”.

To back his claim, the *Guardian’s* Rod Chapman said that Mr. Graber’s Egyptian visit was “by way of a diplomatic overture to the idea that Switzerland would not be averse to playing the role of mediator in the Middle East crisis”.

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sending Swiss troops among the UN's peace-keeping force, various attempts at finding a way out of the straightjacket of traditional neutrality have been sought. So far, the only new elements are a tendency to strengthen alliances with other neutral countries, foremost among them Sweden and Austria; to place the accent on "cooperation and openness"; and to set up various institutions purporting to find new avenues. Thus Mr. Graber fathered a new foreign affairs study group (incurring strong opposition from Parliament, afraid that its own foreign affairs commission should be bypassed; he set up a commission to recommend on entry into the UN (its report is due only next year) and took other technical, but not fundamental, initiatives, such as the recent meeting in Cairo.

Other countries — usually major powers — have instituted regional diplomatic conferences. This was the first time that Berne experimented the formula. A question was raised in Parliament on whether it was necessary for a foreign affairs minister to go to Cairo for talks with diplomats which could well take place in Berne at the annual but optional gatherings of the diplomatic staff.

No particular justification were given for the Cairo meeting other than its practicality and the importance of Swiss diplomatic presence in the area. The decision to hold it had furthermore led Egypt to extend an official invitation to Mr. Graber. However, no conclusions can be drawn from the meeting regarding Switzerland's neutral attitude (to prove it, Mr. Graber will shortly be visiting Israel), and statements to that effect in the Egyptian Press have embarrassed officials in Berne.

The Cairo meeting and several other innovations by the Political Department are an expression of its desire to extend its action in the world, but its options are singularly restricted by its rigid neutral stance.

P.M.B.

SWISS EVENTS

Protection against motor traffic

Lucerne is planning to cut all its waterfront and its town from motor traffic. A first step has been to close the embankment along the River Reuss from all motorcars. This area and its many open-air cafes and boutiques has now become a pedestrians' paradise.

Arosa has implemented even more radical measures since the end of February. From 11.00 p.m. to 6.00 a.m., traffic is forbidden in this Engadine resort in a bid to protect residents from noise. Taxis can obtain special licenses and particular provisions are made for guests leaving or arriving at their hotels during night hours.

Swiss Bank opens branch in Singapore

The Swiss Credit Bank has opened its first branch in the Far East in the thriving city of Singapore. The new branch spearheads Swiss penetration in this growing monetary and industrial centre. The Credit Bank intends to prosper on the growing Asia Dollar market and on a remarkable development of industry prompted by powerful local incentives. Anxious to attract new industries, the Government of Singapore has approached every industrial nation and among them Switzerland. For the past two years, the Zurich office of the Economic Board of Singapore has encouraged several important Swiss firms to set up plants in the small republic. This will require financial services for which a Swiss bank will be appropriately at hand.

The Harrier fails at demonstration

As reported in a recent issue, a Swiss team of experts came to spend most of April in Britain to test the Harrier jump-jet fighter as a possible purchase for the Swiss Air Force. The team had hardly spent a week in Britain that one of its test pilots crashed a Harrier and barely escaped alive by using his ejectable seat and landing by parachute. The event received the most discreet coverage in only one British national daily, but not so in Switzerland, where the accident was related to a previous incident. A year ago, when a Swiss team came to see the plane in action with about forty Swiss journalists at Wildenrath, a British base in the Rhine area, a Harrier crashed and its pilot was killed.

1,723 killed on Swiss roads last year

1,723 people were killed on Swiss roads last year, 50 fewer than the year before but considerably more than in 1965 (1304). 270 of these deaths were due to accidents involving drunkenness; 501 of all the victims were pedestrians and 142 of them lorry-drivers (a 25 per cent increase). The imminence of 100 kmh speed limits was irrelevant as last year's statistics reveal a strong increase of fatal accidents in country roads, and a fall in urban areas. All in all, there were 77,700 crashes causing injuries to 36,700 persons on Swiss roads in 1972. Corresponding figures for Britain were 258,727 accidents, 344,427 wounded and 7,810 killed.

ST. MORITZ PREPARES FOR THE 1974 WORLD SKI CHAMPIONSHIPS

St. Mortiz has invested vast sums of money in preparing for the 1974 World Ski Championships, a two-yearly event as important in skiing competition as the Winter Olympics. Preparations have involved the removal of rocks with the aid of tons of explosives, the re-grading of about 17 acres of track and the removal of 70,000 cubic metres of earth. The event will be staged on the Corvatsch and the Diavolezza. St. Mortiz had been a candidate for the last Winter Olympics,

which were held at Sappore, Japan. Switzerland has organised two previous Winter Olympics, in 1928 and 1948. The latter had cost 1.5 million francs. In comparison, the 1974 World Ski Championships will cost over 10 million francs.

Memorial book to the Rhaetian Railway

The Rhaetian Railway in the Engadine which is 393 km long, is the largest private Railway Company in Switzerland. The Publishing Firm of Orell Fuessli in Zurich have just issued an illustrated volume relating the history of the company and the construction of the railroad (1889-1914). This beautifully realised tome has 180 pages and 257 illustrations. Text and captions are in the four languages.

Bircher-Benner Clinic taken over by the Canton of Zurich

The Bircher-Benner private clinic in Zurich will be taken over by the Canton's health services following the retirement of its present medical management. A new semi-private scheme will be put in operation so as to continue the internationally acclaimed work of this clinic, whose founders have given their name to *Birchermuessli*.

New guide for handicapped shoppers

A guidebook for the use of physically handicapped persons visiting Berne has just been published. It can be obtained at the Federation of Swiss Institutions for Invalid Persons, Postal Box 129, 8032, Zurich. It gives information on the accessibility or inaccessibility of shops, stations, theatres, restaurants, cinemas and museums to handicapped persons, including those tied to a wheelchair. The booklet also contains a map of the town and of its transport services. A similar publication had been prepared last year on Zurich.

QUIET 1ST MAY

Demonstrations and processions were organised in all the main Swiss cities on 1st May, a Bank Holiday in Switzerland. The only incident reported took place in Berne. A scuffle broke out between the main body of trade-union marchers and a fringe Trotskyist group carrying billboards reading "Peace of Labour = Peace for the Bosses". Angered by this militancy, the march organisers asked for the boards to be put away, but the left-wingers carrying them refused to do so. There ensued a scuffle with volunteer traditionalists which was terminated upon the arrival of the Police. The police rounded up the Trotskyists and tore away their billboards.

OFFICIAL VISIT TO SWEDEN

Mr. Rudolf Gnaegi, Swiss Defence minister, payed an official visit to Sweden at the beginning of the month. As a guest of his Swedish counterpart, Mr. Sven Anderson, he toured several Swedish arms factories, including the plant manu-