

Swiss events

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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-

facturing the "Viggen" jet fighter, in which the Swiss Air Force is interested. He was also received by the Commander in Chief of the Swedish Army and assisted at various exercises by the Swedish armoured forces and paratroops. He found the time for a little sightseeing and

spent a day visiting Stockholm and its surroundings before leaving back for Zurich. He paid a courtesy call to Mr. Olov Palme, the Swedish prime minister. He was accompanied by his wife, and by the training and armaments chiefs of the Swiss forces.

SWISSAIR REPORTS CONTINUED PROFITS

Swissair's Annual Report for the business year 1972 shows that Switzerland's national carrier remains one of the most profitable and efficient in the civil aviation business.

Despite a slow-down in the growth of passenger traffic and a general tendency towards over-capacity with the introduction of wide-bodied aircraft, Swissair's total revenue increased by 6.5 per cent and amounted to nearly 1.5 billion francs, 1.2 billion of which was attributable to passenger traffic (nearly all scheduled services) and the remainder to miscellaneous operations and other income. This includes technical services and interests from various ancillary ventures.

Depreciation for the year was evaluated at 165 million francs, 122.5 million of which represented the ageing of the fleet. This at present consists of 22 DC-9 twin-engined jetliners, 7 "Coronados", 8 DC-8's, 2 Boeing 747-B's and one wide-body DC-10-30. Seven of the latter aircraft are under order and will progressively replace the "Coronados" on the European routes.

The latter are by far the most profitable and ensures nearly half of

Swissair's traffic revenue. More precisely, Swissair earned 506.5 million francs on its European routes (an increase of 10.6 per cent over 1971), 279.1 per cent over the North Atlantic (5.8 per cent), 55 million over the South Atlantic (11.8 per cent) 117.5 million on Middle East routes (11.2 per cent), 126.8 million to the Far East (3.2 per cent) and 99.6 million on its African routes (an increase of 4.4 per cent).

Total net profit amounted to 41 million francs. After providing for statutory reserves and various Swissair Personnel Schemes, a million registered bearer shares were attributed a dividend of 30 francs less 30 per cent withholding tax, and a marginal 14.4 million francs were carried forward.

Swissair continues to cooperate profitably with three other companies: KLM, SAS and UTA. The four are known as the KSSU group. They fly the same aircraft and share out maintenance work. Swissair is, in particular, responsible for overseeing maintenance of the DC-10's airframe. A new common insurance scheme has helped to cut expenses in this sector by 3 million francs despite generally rising premiums.

Swissair takes great care of its personnel by various incentive and training schemes. As a result, only 11.9 per cent of its 13,707 employees left their jobs during the year under review. Expenditure on staff amounted to 503 million francs (429 million for wages and 75 million on social security contributions which shows that remunerating employees costs at least twice as much as renewing the fleet. Only 22 per cent of Swissair personnel is employed abroad, or three times less than at Zurich Airport. 10 per cent work in Geneva and 4 per cent elsewhere in Switzerland. Flying personnel amounts to 15 per cent of staff, sales 18 per cent, ground personnel operations, 32 per cent, engineering and maintenance 22 per cent and central administration 13 per cent.

THE CANAL THAT IS AS OLD AS THE CHUNNEL

The prospects of a Trans-Helvetian Canal were discussed in Parliament earlier in the year (see "Comment" of last issue) but despite the decades the whole problem had been pending, Parliament voted to give the Government another two years to submit definite proposals.

Ratifying a motion tabled in October, 1971 by the Council of States (Upper Chamber), the National Council called on the Government to submit a bill on inland navigation within this period. The Federal Council was also urged to pursue negotiations with Germany on developing the upper Rhine, to examine possibilities of linking Yverdon to the Rhone and Lake Maggiore to the Adriatic. Meanwhile, no works liable to hinder the eventual development of inland navigation should be carried out on the rivers concerned, and every measure should be taken to preserve them from an environmental angle.

The long span of time given to the Government for drafting of a new bill and the fact that this motion was taken up by the Lower House sixteen months after it had first been voted by the Council of States (!) showed that no one was in a hurry to settle the issue, however great its long-term importance. It could be that the time is not yet ripe for a decision whose "background" has been profoundly modified in the past by unprecedented conservationist concern. Two years are short compared with the decades during which the Swiss have been speaking of a Trans-Helvetian Canal linking the Mediterranean to the North Sea via Geneva and Basle. A flower-boat representing a regular Geneva-Marseilles liner is occasionally displayed at the processions organised during the "Fêtes de Genève". The dream of a Trans-Helvetian Canal is probably as old as similar dreams (which seem nearer to materialise, however) concerning the Cross-Channel Tunnel. The present phase of the controversy was activated in 1957 when a National Councillor asked for an official report on the matter. A first report appeared in 1965. It was rejected by Parliament as too pessimistic. A second report with less negative conclusions appeared in 1971 - it asked the Government not to shelve the case. Private organisations such as the Battelle Memorial Institute produced highly favourable studies on the prospect of Swiss inland navigation.

However, this important question will perhaps only be resolved when the answer is given to another one - which is: How much economic progress do we need, - and when has it reached an optimum?

WELFARE OFFICE for SWISS GIRLS IN GREAT BRITAIN

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