

Letter from Switzerland

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has doubled in Switzerland over the past twenty years. With 193 branches, 85 of them under complete foreign control, the network of foreign banks in Switzerland accounts for 12 per cent of all banks in the country.

Switzerland is well equipped in banks as there is one branch for every 1,410 persons. This level is hardly higher, however, than the density recorded in the 1920's. After having dropped at the end of the war, the number of bank offices has picked up over the past ten years, partly because of the growth of foreign institutions. There are at present 540 registered banks in the country (excluding mutual funds and mutual lending institutions).

Another surprising feature is that the "big three" (Swiss Bank Corporation, Swiss Credit Bank and Union Bank of Switzerland) account for only 12 per cent of the number of branches. The first three British banks control 81 per cent of all branches in Britain.

Von Roll AG celebrated 150th Anniversary

The engineering firm *Von Roll AG* (main factory at Gerolfingen, Solothurn) will celebrate its 150th Anniversary on 31st May. Von Roll AG, one of the most important names of Swiss engineering, is a world leader in the construction of aerial cableways, pipes and heavy hydraulic gear.

The Swiss factories employ 6,768 workers and achieved a turnover of 521 million francs last year. The group employs 8,244 workers in all and registered a 769 million franc turnover. Its balance sheet tops 477 million francs and the group realises a turnover of 93,000 francs per employee.

Over two million francs will be spent on charitable foundations and a considerable bonus will be awarded to employees and shareholders for the Jubilee Year.

TOO MANY DOCTORS IN SWITZERLAND

Several University professors have sounded the alarm at the danger of an imminent surfeit of doctors in Switzerland. Although there are at present rather too few doctors, the situation will change drastically in a few years time, when a great number of ex-medicine students will be looking for permanent jobs as doctors. Fifteen years of studies are required to become a qualified doctor. As the sudden upsurge in student enrolment, and particularly in medicine, began in 1962, a large output of doctors is expected from 1977 onward.

One doctor for 500 inhabitants is considered the norm of a modern and prosperous community. To keep to this norm, the four universities of French-speaking Switzerland should not produce more than 200 doctors a year. But Lausanne alone accepted 200 new medicine students in 1972.

Too many doctors will conduce to

a scramble for state-financed specialities such as public health or factory hygiene officers. Others will strive for insurance consultancies or tend to prescribe unduly elaborate treatments so as to maintain their income at a high level. The standard of living of doctors could probably not be maintained and pressures for state-run medicine would be greatly increased. To produce so many specialists would in the short term overburden the universities and be detrimental to the competence of future doctors. The general health of the public might suffer from such a situation.

Former Ambassador in London chairs signing ceremony

Nine countries including Switzerland and Britain signed an agreement creating a European Laboratory for Molecular Biology. The agreement was signed at the CERN (Centre européen de recherches nucléaires) near Geneva at a ceremony chaired by Mr. René Keller, former Swiss ambassador in London. Switzerland will be custodian to the instruments of the agreement. The new research institution will have its headquarters at Heidelberg. Laboratories will be erected at Hamburg and Grenoble. The agreement follows the creation of the European Conference for Molecular Biology in Geneva in 1969.

Molecular biology is a fast growing

science and highly publicised since most people have probably heard about the "genetic code" and DNA molecules and so forth. Molecular biology aims at unravelling the very core of life.

Pierre Jaccoud faces rebuttal by Appeals Court

The Appeals Court of Geneva has rejected a suit by Pierre Jaccoud, former President of the Geneva Bar, to dismiss the members of the *ad hoc* appeals bench who have been given the task of reviewing his case. Pierre Jaccoud was charged 16 years ago with the murder of a Mr. Zumbach, at Plan-les-Ouates, near Geneva, who was the father of his mistress' lover. This bungled attempt at killing a "correspondent" was the most important case of the mid-fifties. Jaccoud was jailed for seven years but has consistently denied the charges. Various attempts at having the case reviewed are progressing slowly, and it was because of this slowness, and the alleged partiality of the *ad hoc* examining judges, that Jaccoud had wanted to impugn these magistrates last December. This having been refused on various grounds (that it would conflict with case law was one reason put forward) Jaccoud has appealed to the Federal Court. He is ageing and in bad health and wants his name to be cleared while he is still alive.

LETTER FROM SWITZERLAND

THE PEOPLE OF ZÜRICH REFUSE TO PAY FOR A TUBE – CAN THIS DECISION BE LEFT TO LAYMEN?

Sunday, 20th May, was again one of those days – the fourth since we settled down in Switzerland 7 months ago – when the men and women of voting age were called upon to cast their votes. There was one federal matter to be decided – the abolition of articles 51 and 52 in the federal constitution – and in several cantons and many boroughs there were also more regional and local items to be settled.

Articles 51 and 52 of the federal constitution contained a prohibition of the order of the Jesuits and of the foundation of other religious orders and new monasteries. It was felt that these two articles were totally antiquated, especially in the present times of ecumenical rapprochement between the churches. Both the Federal Council and the two chambers of the Federal Parliament in Berne had recommended abolition – the National Council with a large majority and the Council of States unanimously – and the result of the federal vote showed that 55 per cent of the voters were in favour of abolition, and 45 per cent and 5 cantons and one half-canton were against. The result as such – abolition of an anachronism – was certainly satisfactory, even though a 45 per cent minority voted against and thereby showed that many Protestants

still mistrust the Roman Catholics. However, at last the members of all confessions have now acquired the same rights vis-à-vis the state.

The voters of the Canton of Zürich were also called upon to vote on a project for which the cantonal authorities and most political parties had made enormous propaganda – in fact 500,000 francs of the taxpayers money had been spent on propaganda in favour. It was a project for building an underground railway underneath the town of Zürich, connecting Kloten (with its airport) at one end and Dietikon at the other. At the same time it was planned to extend and intensify a number of the existing Federal Railway Lines in and around the agglomeration of Zürich and serving such towns as Uster, Winterthur and so on. The project was called "U and S", in which denomination U stood for "Untergrund" and S stood for "Schnellbahn" or "Fast Railway". A planning commission had worked on the project for several years and the whole scheme was to be modelled on the existing solution in the agglomeration of Munich in Germany. The Confederation would have paid a proportion of the cost, the Federal Railways another part and the taxpayers in the Canton of Zürich were asked to vote in favour of a credit of 600 million francs.

As it was calculated that it would take 15 to 18 years until the "U and S"

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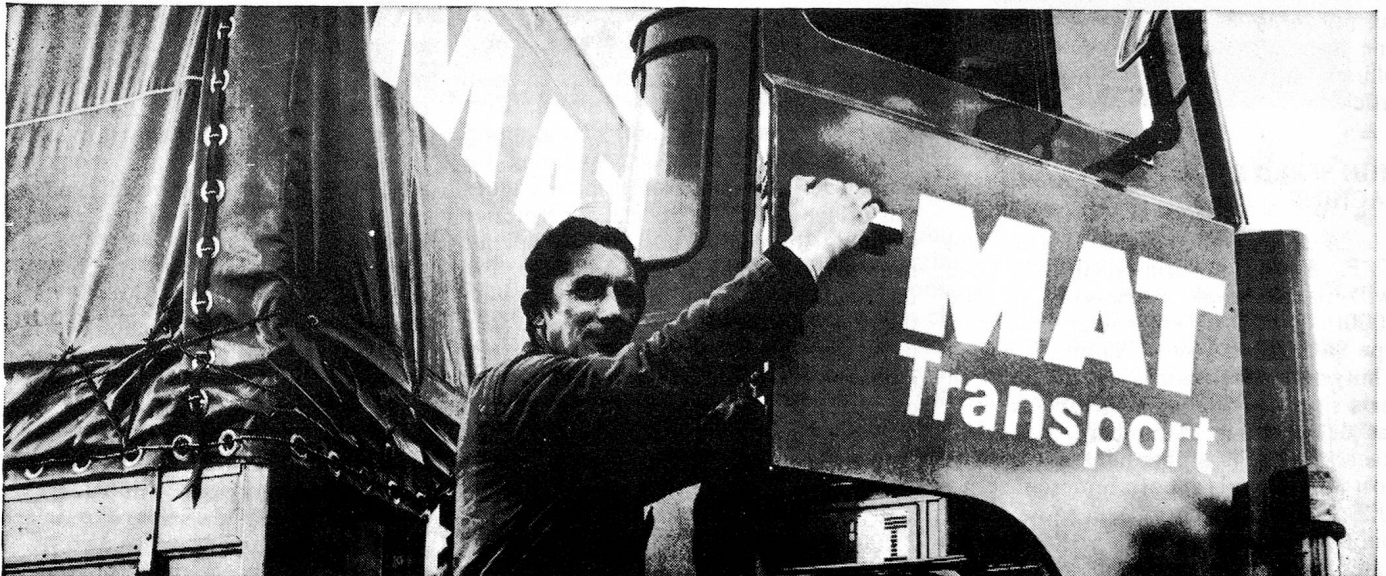
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could be put into service, the figure of 600 million francs would, with the cost-inflation running at between 7 and 8 per cent per annum, as at present, possibly have doubled or trebled by the time the first U or S-train could run.

The project has been decisively rejected by the voters, in Zürich town by 101,021 against 67,832 votes, and in the rest of the canton by 234,230 no against 177,362 yes. There the matter will rest for some time to come. A new project will now have to be worked out to solve the traffic problem of Zürich and the thousands of commuters who daily go to town and leave again in the evening. Many of those who live outside but work in Zürich go there by car as early as 6 a.m. because otherwise they find no parking space for their vehicles. They then go to some of the many new

restaurants which serve breakfast at that unholy early hour and proceed to work by 7 o'clock. It is a fact that some of the main thoroughfares of Zürich are sometimes hopelessly clogged up by traffic, comparable to Hyde Park Corner or Piccadilly Circus at peak time. So obviously some solution will have to be found as an alternative to the "U and S" which the population has now rejected. Of the outcome of the federal vote concerning abolition of confessional inequality or discrimination was more or less a foregone conclusion, the "U and S" proposal was not. Feeling had run very high and during several weeks before voting day every household had been bombarded with propaganda literature for and against.

In Great Britain the ultimate decision whether, for example, the

London Ring Road Motorway Scheme is being put into effect — with everything it means — rests with the Greater London Council and the Central Government. In Switzerland on the other hand, it is the men and women of voting age who decide whether Zürich is to have an underground railway or not. Whether this system of very direct democracy is a good thing or whether it would be better to have such problems to be decided by experts seems to me to be an open question.

And here, to conclude this letter from Switzerland, is a dismal news item. In some boroughs in the canton of Zürich, amongst them Küsnacht, the postal deliveries will be reduced from 2 to 1 a day as from 4th June, with none at all on Saturdays.

Gottfried Keller

TECHNICAL ITEMS

NEW SWISS GADGET: THE ELECTRIC NAIL FILE

At the International Exhibition of Inventions and New Processes in Geneva, a silver medal was awarded to a firm at Court (Berne, Switzerland), for the battery-run nail file which it recently invented. Called Quicklime, this precise and inexpensive little instrument allows one to file one's finger and toe nails in record time. It is driven by a small motor running on a battery and fitted with an everlasting sapphire grinder impossible to wear out. As the file works without any perceptible vibration, nails are filed perfectly smooth, without any risk of the nail polish getting chipped. The Quicklime can also be used for flattening calluses and corns or pushing back the cuticle.

HIGH SPEED EMBROIDERY MACHINE

A short while ago, the textile firm of P. Keller at Jonschwil (St. Gall, Switzerland) took possession of the 1,000th automatic embroidery machine, type SS 55, made by A. Saurer at Arbon (Thurgau, Switzerland). It is only 18 years since the first machine of this series was delivered, in December 1955 to be exact. Since then it has been sold for the most part abroad (exports represent about 90% of the total output) in some thirty countries, mainly France, the United States and Japan. About the same time as the delivery of this 1,000th machine, the firm also presented its latest creation, a very high speed automatic embroidery machine. This very modern machine, which is endowed with all possible technical improvements, possesses in particular a capacity of output 30% than similar machines at present on the market. Its frame, which measures 14 m long and 3 m high (i.e. just under 50 ft. long and 10 ft. high), makes 170 linear movements

per minute. A special device has been devised to avoid vibrations, so that the 1,048 needles work with a precision of 1/10th of a mm. One is amazed to discover that this huge automatic machine working at a tremendously high speed is powered by an electric motor of only 2.5 h.p.

SWISS RESIN FOR A BRAZILIAN BRIDGE

The builders of the fifth longest bridge in the world are using a Swiss epoxy resin for assembling the 3,200 prefabricated concrete elements forming the roadway of the new bridge in the Bay of Rio in Brazil. This bridge, on which work has been going on for some months now, will connect the town of Rio de Janeiro to that of Niteroi. Consisting of identical sections placed alongside each other and each spanning the water over a distance of some 5¼ miles, this bridge called for special construction methods making it possible to operate from several points at the same time. For the roadway of the bridge, 86.6 ft. wide, the system chosen is the cantilever system based on prefabricated voussoirs, a technique perfected and put into use in several countries, in particular in Switzerland for the construction of the viaducts for the Simplon motorway. Each prefabricated voussoir weighs approximately 110 tons and is 42 ft. wide; there will be a total of 3,200 elements of this kind in all, stuck end to end. In order to obtain the necessary adhesiveness, the builders chose an epoxy resin specially designed for concrete, based on a Swiss formula and supplied by Ciba-Geigy Quimica Co. Ltd., at Sao Paulo. This adhesive, used for gluing the prefabricated elements together satisfies all mechanical and thermal requirements; since the laying of the first voussoirs last summer, the adhesive which is delivered to the site in pre-gauged packages, is submitted to the most search-

ing checks at each stage of advance of the work.

SWISS SNOW-PLUGHS FOR SOUTHERN ITALY

Rolba Co. Ltd. (Zurich, Switzerland), which specializes in the manufacture of snow-clearing machinery, and Flug- und Fahrzeugwerke Co. Ltd., Altenrhein (St. Gall, Switzerland) have just delivered 3 large machines to the Italian railway company Ferrovie Calabro Lucane. These self-propelled snow ploughs can plough through walls of snow 8 ft. high over a width of 11 ft. and project the snow to a distance of over 115 ft. The total installed power of each of these ploughs is about 600 h.p.

INTERNATIONAL ROLE OF THE SWISS ELECTRICAL INDUSTRY

In the construction of electrical machinery and appliances, Switzerland plays an important role, even on the international level; according to statistics issued by UNO, this country comes 11th with 2.5% of the total world exports. In certain fields, its position is even considerably stronger. An OECD survey based on the power of the machinery exported indicates as Switzerland's average share of world exports for the years 1965 to 1969, the following figures: hydro-alternators and hydraulic turbines, 12% each; steam turbines, 17%; turbo-alternators, 14.5% and gas turbines, 9%. In Switzerland, this industrial sector has some 50,000 employees, including those working in related fields like telecommunication technique or cableworks. The manufacturing programme is a very large one. A few concerns manufacture machinery for the production of electricity (turbines and generators), others specialize in the construction of transformers and, in particular, high and low voltage coupling equipment. In the sector of circuit-breakers and measuring transformers for very high voltages, as in the field of electric meters, Switzerland even takes the very first place on the international level. In view of the fact that on