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The Number One Ski Nation



By winning eleven medals at the world championships in Vail (USA) – 3 gold, 5 silver, 3 bronze – the Swiss downhill

skiers not only met high expectations, but also exceeded them and at the same time confirmed their position as 'downhill ski nation number one', a title they have held since the 1985 world championships in Bormio. And this, although the Austrians got closer to them than for a long time. Our picture shows the Swiss gold medallists Vreni Schneider, Martin Hangel and Maria Walliser (from left to right). (Photo: Keystone)

Globetrotting Swiss

The Swiss undertook seven million trips abroad in 1988 and spent 1,180 Francs per journey on average. That is seven per cent more than in 1987 making a total of 7.8 billion Francs which went abroad as exports. The

most popular holiday destinations were Italy, France, Spain and England, with the USA already in fifth position. The absolute percentage winner was the USA with an increase of 31 per cent.

'Heimatschutz' breaks new ground

The town of Winterthur is to receive the Wakker Prize for 1989 in June. It is to be honoured in this way for the protection of its workers' settlements (our picture) and villa quarters of the 19th and early 20th centuries. The Heimatschutz (SHS) is setting a new precedent with this choice: It is the first time since the introduction of the prize, worth 10,000 Francs, in 1972, that the SHS has not honoured a commune for an old village centre or an historical old town with its picture postcard

polish. Winterthur is receiving recognition for maintaining several quarters and settlements, which are scattered throughout the whole city and which have an especially important residential value. They all date from the time of the industrialisation, an age which has been neglected to date by those who award prizes, although it has characterised today's era to a greater extent than that of rural-feudalism. (Photo: Heimatschutz)



Column: 'Switzerland without an Army'

The Slaughter of a Holy Cow?



On 26th November 1989 the Swiss will go to vote on the people's initiative 'for a Switzerland without an army and for a comprehensive peace policy'. The people's initiative, which was submitted with 111,300 signatures, quite simply wants to abolish the Swiss army. The first sentence of Article 17 of the Federal Constitution would thus become: 'Switzerland has no army'. For this reason the initiative will no doubt be turned down.

The number of negative votes will be a gauge of the will of the Swiss people to defend itself.

The Young Socialists gave birth to their idea in 1982 and founded the 'Group for a Switzerland without an army', which immediately found support within pacifist circles and in groups on the left wing of the political spectrum. The Young Socialists attack the traditional bonds between the people and the army in their voting campaign. They see the Swiss military system as 'an instrument of repression by the ruling class' which is 'anti-democratic and anti-female' and which 'militarizes public life'. They contradict the official line of our foreign policy, which is that the army acts as a deterrent, helps to maintain the credibility of perpetual armed neutrality, and is thus an important part of our security and peace policies.

How seriously are such arguments to be taken? Swiss military readiness is being questioned more than ever before at a time in which the military climate is changing visibly, and in which those year-groups being called-up are those who were born during the boom and who have been more impressed by the Vietnam war than by the Hungarian Uprising.

The Swiss army is no longer a 'holy cow'. Opinions have changed fundamentally fifty years after the mobilisation in 1939, and over forty years since the end of the war. The understanding that wars can no longer be won has grown and influences the attitudes of the young, even towards an army purely for defense purposes like that of the Swiss. Polls reveal that the readiness to defend the nation is not being questioned, but that drill and service, expense and equipment are being questioned in the age of the nuclear and conventional overkill, and this could have a paralysing effect on the readiness to defend. When Swiss are asked where one could economize in the federal budget, a frequent reply is in military expenditure. Serious investigations also reveal a lack of information, especially within the younger generations who know extremely little about the army's duty of deterring a potential enemy and about the goals of our foreign, security and peace policies. They know even less about the increased peace and mediating efforts of our diplomats. Sincere pacifist arguments against the army, which are more like a declaration of faith, should not be jeered at. However, the abstruse arguments of the Young Socialists about the anti-democratic army and of the anti-social 'school of the nation' will be to no avail. They



don't touch the question of 'yes or no to national defense'. Also the reservations of the Social Democrats in the Federal Parliament – lack of civil service and excessive defense expenditure – are no arguments for the initiative.

The question is simply whether or not we want an army for self-defense. Considered like this, the assertion of the Young Socialists that our militia army could not defend us in the case of war, and could not have done so during the Second World War, is no longer relevant.

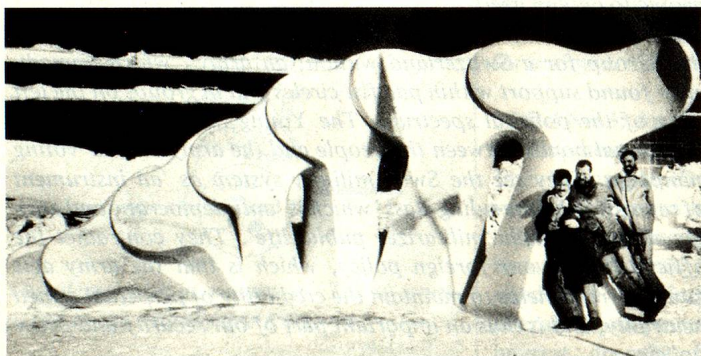
Only very few question the will for self-defense. Our armed forces are even used as an example by renowned peace and conflict researchers, since a credible neutral state would hardly be conceivable without its own defensive army. It is true that war has become an abstract idea in the highly developed industrial states, in Japan, in North America and in Europe, and that East and West are at present prepared to 'thin down' their armies. These, however, are principally statements of intent: The potential to destroy is as

strong as ever. Threats and the character of war have changed completely, especially if you look at the embers of conflict in the Third World. Peace and conflict researchers warn today against one-sided steps towards disarmament. The Norwegian, Johan Galtung, sees the defensive character of the Swiss army as an ideal which could serve the great powers as an example of how to reduce their armies to being purely defensive. Hardly a State is really able to do without the army as an instrument of political power. It is not possible to have order without some form of power instrument. Whether an army would be put into action today against strikers or opposers of nuclear power does not depend on the army as such, but on the current understanding of democracy.

Those in favour of the initiative should not necessarily be marked as 'left-wing idiots'. The initiative opens one's eyes and adds to one's knowledge about our classical security and foreign policies: Army reforms can be discussed separately at some other time.

Bruno Schläppi

'Goldplated' Snow Sculpture



Swiss gold medallists, not only in alpine ski competitions: Urs Schmidt from Belp (BE), Richard Wyss from Berne and Bruno Tanner from Dagmar-sellen (LU), from left to right,

won the gold medal with their snow sculpture in Quebec, Canada. They portrayed 'Man's way through life from the helpless newborn to the adult'. (Photo: Keystone)

Hermann Burger dies

The Swiss author Hermann Burger (our picture) took his life in March at the age of forty six. His novel 'Brunsen' which was to be the first of a four volume series called 'Brenner', was published

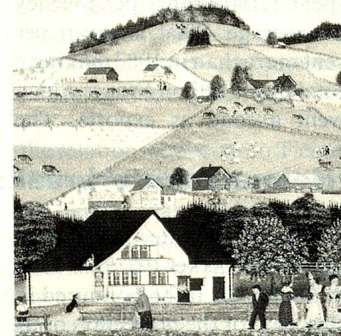


shortly before his death. Burger was known as a language virtuoso, as a self-willed verbal artist with a love for extraordinary subjects. His works included the novels 'Schilten' – for which he received the Swiss Schiller Foundation Prize in 1978 – and 'Die künstliche Mutter' (1982) as well as the collection of Short Stories 'Diabelli' (1979) and 'Blankenburg' (1986). 'Traktatus logico-suicidalis – über die Selbsttötung' (about suicide) was one of the essays included in his more recent works. (Photo: Keystone)

The New Book

An Appenzell Childhood

Albert Manser, who is totally committed to the traditional painting of his native Appenzell and to the examples of naive art, has in his children's book 'Little Albert', created a work which also greatly appeals to adults. In 19 colour pictures (our photo) accompanied by short texts, the artist portrays his own childhood in Appenzell. The excellent portrayal of the seasons and the traditions deserve a special mention. The book has been acclaimed as one of the 'most beautiful books of 1987'. It is also available in



French ('P'tit Albert'), and in German ('Albertli').

Albert Manser. Little Albert. The Story of a Farmer's Boy from Appenzell, Switzerland. Atlantis Kinderbücher by Pro Juventute. SFr. 24.80 (available through the Secretariat for the Swiss Abroad).

Telegrams

■ Swissair is expanding its network and as of this summer flies to 108 cities in 67 countries. New destinations are Izmir (Turkey), Lyon (France) and Ljubljana (Yugoslavia).

■ The Swiss chocolate industry exceeded the billion turn-

over mark for the first time last year.

■ 702 people became AIDS infected in Switzerland in 1988, which is twice as many as in the previous year.

■ Foreign residents in Switzerland exceeded the million mark again at the end of 1988 for the first time since the early seventies, the exact figure being 1,006,530 people.



Kopp Affair – The Consequences Spread

Investigations are now fully underway after the embarrassing resignation of Federal Councillor Elisabeth Kopp in January 1989. The Federal Assembly has initiated a Parliamentary Investigation Commission (PUK), which has been endowed with full authority and has the task of throwing some light on the political, administrative and managerial aspects of the Kopp Affair. The Commission's Report is expected some time this summer. It is only the second time in the history of the Federal State that such a commission has been appointed. (A similar body investigated the Mirage Affair in 1964). Further, in its March session Parliament lifted the im-

munity of a Federal Councillor for the first time in its history. (Immunity being the protection against criminal prosecution of a Federal Councillor). This cleared the way for criminal proceedings against Elisabeth Kopp, which should clarify whether the former Minister of Justice made herself guilty of breaking the Official Confidentiality Code or any additional offences.

The Affair was triggered off with a telephone tip made by Federal Councillor Elisabeth Kopp on 27 October 1988, in which she told her husband to resign from the Executive Board of the Shakarchi Trading as it was under suspicion of laundering drug money.

Folklore Magazine

In an age of global information we are all in danger of losing our perspective of our own surroundings. As Swiss abroad you know a great deal about far away lands, their beauty and their problems, and because of this you experience the increased desire to become involved with your own roots. 'Popularia', the magazine on Swiss folklore, devotes itself above all to typical Swiss traditions and their origins. 'Popularia' is, however, also a platform for literature and Swiss folk art. Thanks to Wysel Gyr lyrical folklore is also by no means neglected. This journal presents in colour a most popular link with the homeland. Request your free specimen copy from: 'Popularia', Hohle Gasse, CH-4323 Wallbach.

Convention on Contaminated Waste

The search which has lasted for years to find a global consensus to reduce the transportation of contaminated waste has ended resulting in the Basle Convention of last March. Switzerland played an important role as promotor. The agreement grants each country the right 'to forbid the import of special, and other, wastes for disposal purposes'. Bilateral agreements between those countries having signed the Convention and those who have not, are only permissible if they include conditions 'not less environmentally acceptable than the conditions in the Convention'. A Secretariat based at Geneva is to be established for surveillance.

Skeleton World Championships

Daredevil men in the ice chute



St Moritz witnessed a grand performance of men on high speed sledges during the first weekend in February: The second world championships in bob-run skeleton were held there!

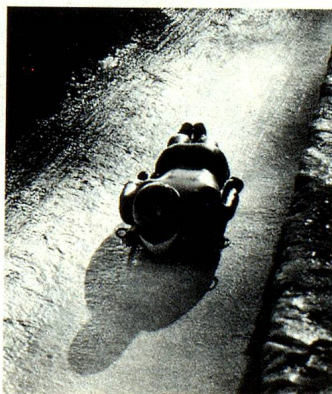
For decades one thought of the skeleton sport solely in connection with the famous Cresta-Run, which was built in St Moritz at the end of the 19th century by the Englishman Bulpett. The Cresta-Run has flat, not exces-

sively raised, curves, the sledges are mobile on roller cushions. In addition to this, racing with rigid skeleton sledges was initiated on the normal bob-run about thirty years ago, and that is the topic of this report. Bob-

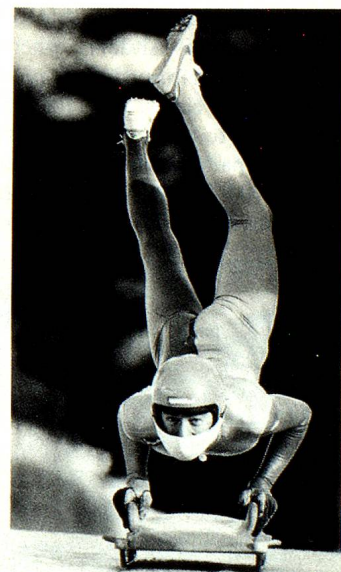
run skeleton athletes are to be found today on every bob-run in the world. They reach top speeds of up to 130 km per hour, wear plastic coated aerodynamic suits and must be top fit to be able to compete amongst the leaders.

Alain Wicki in a class of his own

The exceptional talent in the Swiss team is Alain Wicki – 27 years old, 174 centimetres small and 65 kilos in weight – the son of Jean Wicki, who won the gold medal in the four-man-bob in Sapporo. The law student,



Wicki in action on the bob-run in St Moritz.



Alain Wicki jumps onto the sledge: Skeleton is a very spectacular sport.

who has a natural understanding of movement and the law of physics, showed his class in St Moritz: The Regensdorfer became the supreme bob-run skeleton world champion with best times in all four runs, having previously won the world cup.

Text and pictures: Karl Hofer