

Swiss events

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the nation has more pressing needs than jet fighters. We hope that these will never be used. Moreover, the risk of a war in Europe is at present remote.

But what is true of fighter planes is surely true of other military equipment. The Government apparently considered aircraft in a different light from other mechanised material for which it has not hesitated to spend heavily. However, forces equipped with efficient guns, lorries and armoured vehicles would be helpless without a proper air cover.

With the exception of our 57 Mirage III-S interceptors, the bulk of our fighting air force still consists of "Venoms" and "Hunters" built in the early fifties. The "Hunter" cruises at only 500 m.p.h. and can reach 600 m.p.h. in a dive. One fails to see how such a plane could be a match for modern fighters three times as fast and equipped with air-to-air missiles.

Why should aircraft be sacrificed to ground equipment? If the necessity of a modern army is acknowledged, then this army should be modernised all round. Mr. Gnaegi argued that buying sophisticated jet fighters would harm the "credibility" of Swiss neutrality. But the other costly weapons of the Army are also anti-neutral.

Much of this inconsistency reflects the dilemma of small countries trying to reconcile military credibility with their modest means. Military officials pressing for more defence funds claim that it is no use having an army if its equipment is inferior to the weapons put in battery by a potential enemy. This argument was the mainstay of the campaign launched by these circles when the Swiss people were called in the early sixties to decide on an initiative depriving Switzerland of all nuclear weapons. The anti-initiative posters showed a soldier with his hands chained.

Now it is the Government whose hands are chained by the fear of going all the way into making the Swiss army an efficient deterrent. By not buying a new aircraft, it has remained half way along the road. Its call for more strategic thinking is only a temporary way out.

In our view, the Swiss army, as indeed the army of any small country, can't possibly frighten off a potential invader. This is equivalent to putting in doubt the military use of our Army, however many millions the Confederation may spend. It is not contrary to patriotism to argue that "Hunters" and "Venoms" are symbols of limited military relevance. Yet they are necessary as the outward trappings of a national defence system. It is, after all, too early to disarm unilaterally. This can only be carried out on a multilateral basis, and that is why Switzerland is keenly interested in the

forthcoming European Security Conference.

Although our country appears to the tourist as the best defended in the world (with all these fortifications and the troops one meets on every train journey), Switzerland in fact spends less on its defence than any other modern country in the world excepting Iceland. Ignoring the loss of production through regular individual military commitments, Switzerland spends about 2½ per cent of its national income on defence. This is why the outcry of those dissenters who talk about a waste of money on guns is unfounded. Switzerland has enough money to buy a few guns and offer butter to the Third World.

The real reason for the existence of the Swiss Army is not to defend

the country against the outside but against the inside. The Army gives consistency to our nation. It is a vital part of the Swiss framework, a bond uniting people of every social background; a school in civic duty; a symbol of service to society; and one of the last remaining bulwarks of our values.

This is why the Army should be preserved and made as democratic as possible—and why the Declaration by the so-called Thirty Two should be rejected. The Thirty Two only see the symbols of death emanating from weapons. But weapons also breathe vigilance, discipline and unity. But to carry this symbolism, weapons need of course, not be of the most sophisticated and the most costly kind.

(PMB)

SWISS EVENTS

FEDERAL

The Confessional articles

The National Council voted by 121 to 3 in favour of a Government project calling for the abrogation of the two constitutional articles forbidding Jesuits from carrying out their ministry in Switzerland, and banning all new convents and religious orders. But the vote was not so clear-cut and smooth as the above tally seems to indicate. There were various counter proposals, all of which were rejected. These were: to substitute the suppressed articles' two addendas on religious freedom; to take this opportunity to do away with two other "confessional articles"—those preventing ministers of the Church from sitting at the National Council and preventing the Catholic Church from instituting new dioceses in the country; to submit the abrogation of the two articles under examination separately to the people. These proposals were turned down in successive votes.

The Munich aftermath

A few days after the massacre of the Israeli team at Munich, Interpol warned the Swiss authorities that a group of four or five Arab terrorists were planning to blow up refineries and industrial installations in Basle, Zurich and Geneva. Every customs office was immediately armed and surveillance doubled. Officers carried guns during the day and double-checked every Arab national crossing the border. No arrest was reported.

In another development, the American magazine "Newsweek" claimed that the attack on the Olympic Village had been planned in Switzerland. The magazine said that Mr. Daoud Barakat, who is officially the Yemen Press Attaché at the United Nations in Geneva, and, unofficially, the Representative of the Organisation for the Liberation of Palestine, played a major role in preparing the attack. "Newsweek" alleged that he had also taken part in previous raids by the

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Black September organisation responsible for the Munich attack.

This was promptly denied in a Palestinian statement, which stressed that Mr. Barakat was in charge of information on Palestinian affairs, but not remotely linked with the Black September organisation. He is believed to be a moderate supporter of El Fatah, but has never hidden his Palestinian origins.

In Zurich, the Association for the protection of German-speaking writers, the most important association of writers exiled by Hitler during the war, appealed urgently to the Federal President "that the Geneva office for the Organisation for the Liberation of Palestine, which was unaccountably allowed to open ten months ago, be closed and its Arab staff expelled".

Landesmuseum becomes federal preserve

The City of Zurich has decided to hand the management of the National Museum (Landesmuseum) to the Confederation. The building housing the museum and the adjoining land have thus become federal property, but the Confederation has assumed the running of the Landesmuseum, including the obligation of building an annexe. The city of Zurich, where the Museum is going to stay, will pay 6 million francs a year to the Government in compensation for the obligations which it has undertaken.

Federal deficit

There will probably be a 10 per cent rise of Turnover Tax and an equivalent rise in Federal Income Tax (formerly called the National Defence Tax). This should raise 453 million francs more for the 1974 financial year and about 600 million francs for the following year. The Federal Council has racked its brains trying to balance the 1973 Budget and show a good anti-inflationary example. Projected expenditure would have in-

involved a 511 franc deficit. The Government has tried to make the necessary cuts on about 40 items to bring the Budget back into balance. It was a difficult attempt as about 80 per cent of all expenditure has been voted by Parliament and is fixed by law.

The Arms Export Referendum

The Swiss people rejected on 25th September an initiative calling for a ban on all arms exports with the exception of a few neutral European countries, and accepted instead a Government proposal passed in June providing for stricter arms export controls. 37.7 per cent of the electorate turned up at the polls: 593,205 voters rejected the initiative, and 584,726 accepted it. All the French-speaking cantons, Tessin, Aarau and the two half-cantons of Basle accepted the terms of the initiative, whereas the great majority of German-speaking Swiss rejected it. After the Tessin, the Jura showed the strongest support for the arms-ban initiative. Results obtained during this referendum closely reflect the outcome of the "anti-atomic" initiatives of 1962 and 1963. Not unnaturally, the cantons with important arms factories, in particular Zurich (Oerlikon, contraves) Nidwald (Pilatus), Thurgau (Mowag) and Schaffhausen (SIG), rejected the initiative.

CANTONAL

Zurich tube taking shape

Developments for the construction of a Zurich underground railway linking Kloten to Dietikon are coming to a head. The town's executive council will present the Great Council with proposals to spend 570 million francs of cantonal money on this project and on a planned Federal Railway line up the Zurichberg. Total cost for the underground railway were evaluated in October 1971 at 1 billion 710 million francs. This expenditure is to be shared equally by the Confederation,

the Canton and the Communes concerned (Zurich, Kloten, Opfikon, Schlieren and Dietikon). The Confederation is prepared to contribute 570 million francs to the Zurichberg railway if the Communes concerned accept to assume their part of the expenditure.

Death of Geneva National Councillor

Mr. Raymond Deonna, a leading Geneva figure, was killed with his wife in a car accident between Lausanne and Geneva. He had represented his Canton at the National Council between 1948 and 1951 and since 1971. He was Leader of the Liberal group at the Federal Assembly. His funeral was attended by a crowd of several thousand mourners. He will probably be succeeded by Dr. André Gautier, a liberal delegate to the Great Council whom he defeated at the last elections to the National Council.

End of the 1972

Disarmament Conference

Because it is going on for most of the year, year in, year out, even the people of Geneva forget that an Assembly of considerable bearing on the future of mankind is pursuing its labourious task in their city. The Disarmaments Conference closed its 1972 Session during the first week of September at the UN European Headquarters after beginning work in February on ways of banning war gases, chemical weapons and nuclear tests of every kind.

Unlike the two previous years, when the Conference ended its sessions in a position to submit proposals to the UN General Assembly on banning bacteriological warfare and storing nuclear weapons on the sea-bed, delegates failed this year to reach any agreement. But their American and Russian co-presidents agreed that some progress had been achieved on technical details. This work will stand



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the Conference in good stead as it reopens in February next year.

MODERN LIFE

Death on Swiss roads

A conference of doctors and educationalists held under the auspices of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique in Berne heard papers on the rise in the death toll on Swiss roads. A speaker revealed that the number of fatal accidents on Swiss roads had risen by 26 per cent between 1968 and 1971, an increase second only to that of Belgium (36 per cent). Then came France, Austria, Holland, Great Britain and Japan (13 per cent), Norway (11 per cent), Germany and Italy (8 per cent). The number of fatal accidents had remained stable in the United States and actually decreased by 3 per cent in Sweden.

Both these countries have installed speed limits for many years. But more particularly, they have developed school education on road behaviour.

In the U.S., school children between 15 and 16 follow courses given by police officers and professionals. Driven in fours in a police car, they are taught the principles of correct driving and the meaning of road signs during a 45 hour course.

Young people may obtain their driving licence at the age of 16 but have to take a new test every four years.

Angry fishermen on Lake Neuchatel

The fishermen on the Fribourg side of Lake Neuchatel are angry. An intercantonal agreement limits the meshes of their nets to a minimum of 27 mm. As the catch has been dismal this year and their livelihood consequently impaired, the fishermen have asked their Estavayer delegates to the Cantonal Great Council to table a motion demanding increased meshes. They want the size to be reduced to 23 mm.

Current regulations are naturally designed to protect the fish population of the lake. Smaller nets would increase catches for this year, at the expense of catches in following years. There is some disagreement on the state of Lake Neuchatel's ecology. The fishermen claim that there is an overabundance of small fishes and do not accept official statistics according to which 80 per cent of catches in the lake are made by private anglers. The authorities have offered to subsidise them with a 60 centime per kilo grant, but this they have rejected.

Insurance ombudsman

Swiss private insurance companies have set up offices in Zurich, Lugano and Lausanne to examine complaints by insured persons. This office will be run by a national "ombudsman", Mr. Raymond Broger, State Councillor, Landamann of Appenzell Inner-Rhodes and member of the Mediatory Commission for the Jura. The Ombudsman idea is already applied in insurance in Denmark. Mr. Broger's role will be to receive complaints from people who consider having received inadequate compensation or unfair settlement, to examine these complaints and make recommendations to the insurance companies concerned. He will naturally be entitled to ask all the relevant information from these companies. This service will be available to everyone. All that will be required is to call the Ombudsman's nearest office or drop a line. Mr. Broger has said that he will continue to assume his responsibilities as State Councillor and Landamann, as well as his other functions.

BEHAVIOUR

The Tretien murder

A sensational trial took place in the Valais. A 28-year-old man was

accused of having murdered his two children and attempted to get rid of his wife by driving his car into a 200 metre deep gorge in April last year.

The accused was driving his family on the road bordering the Trèges Gorges, near the village of Trétien, in the Valais. He missed a small bend and his car went hurtling down the ravine. He managed however to eject himself before the vehicle picked up momentum. His wife was miraculously saved but seriously wounded. His two children crashed to their deaths.

The enquiry soon showed the inconsistencies of the accident theory and the man's testimony became suspect. He explained that his steering wheel had jammed and that, realising that his vehicle had gone out of control, had had the presence of mind to jump out. In view of his known conjugal difficulties and his debts, the enquiry concluded that he had sought to murder his whole family and start a new life. The defence maintained that he was in a state of extreme depression and had wished to throw everything overboard in a sudden fit of dismay. But a burst of conservation instinct had impelled him to scramble out of the car for his life. These arguments did not convince the jury and he was sentenced to life imprisonment.



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