

Letter from Switzerland

Objektyp: **Group**

Zeitschrift: **The Swiss observer : the journal of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK**

Band (Jahr): - **(1974)**

Heft 1688

PDF erstellt am: **21.07.2024**

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verdict of the Swiss people who will be taking part next October in another important referendum on the future of foreign labour in Switzerland.

ENVIRONMENT

Residents in the neighbourhood of Kloten and Cointrin airports are losing patience over the night-flight issue and have formed two separate associations. Residents in noisy areas around Kloten international airport have recently held their Annual General Meeting at Bulach. An overwhelming majority voted in support of new national initiative which would have their rights guaranteed by the Constitution.

The residents around Cointrin airport, have addressed an "urgent question" to the Federal Council asking to know when it planned to carry out its promises to ban night flights completely. The Association, which claims to represent 55,000 people, said that the frequency of flights between 10 p.m. and 6 a.m. at Cointrin had risen from 3,576 in 1968 to 4,901 last year. They said that the health and nervous balance of these 55,000 residents were seriously threatened by these flights, an assessment which they said was backed by authorised specialists.

One possible way to alleviate the noise problem at Kloten and Cointrin is to reduce their traffic by agreements with Basle and Lyon airports. This solution

was put forward to the National Council by Mr. Jean Ziegler, Socialist MP for Geneva. He said future traffic handling capacity should not be found solely by extending Switzerland's two inter-continental airports, but by operating them jointly as single destinations with the airports of Basle and Lyon. Such a solution is actually examined by the Federal Air Office. It would naturally require the co-operation of the French.

A man fires 40 shots at passers-by in Zurich

A twenty-year-old cook kept the Zurich police and the residents of the Badenerstrasse on tenter-hooks for half an hour as he fired some forty shots on passers-by from his garret window. Three persons were wounded, not seriously, and a police car was peppered with five shots.

LETTER FROM SWITZERLAND

To prevent "alienation"

The problem of the number of foreign workers in Switzerland is once again dominating the political debate. On 20th October the population will have to vote on the third initiative concerning the "over-alienation" (what an ugly and gruesome word!) of the country, which, if adopted would reduce the number of resident aliens with working permits by half by 1977. For the economy and for many industries this would be a downright catastrophe — quite apart from the fact that it would be contrary to international agreements, which in turn could provoke retaliatory measures. It would also be almost inhuman and it is to

be hoped — and generally expected — that this third attempt at "ridding the country" of half of its foreign population will be decisively defeated.

But, even though it is difficult to believe, initiatives No. 4 and 5 are already looming on the horizon. Initiative No. 4, launched by James Schwarzenbach's Republican Movement, has collected 53,800 signatures — 50,000 are sufficient — and has been handed in to the Federal Chancellery in Berne. Initiative No. 5 is conceived as a kind of political and moral counter-weight against its forerunners and has been launched by the Movement of Catholic Workers and Employees. It postulates, amongst many other things, social security and the right for every foreign worker, including the "saisonniers" (who are only in the country for 10 months) to have their families by their side. With the exception of the active and passive voting right this fifth initiative wants to put foreign workers legally on exactly the same footing as the Swiss citizens. The collection of signatures for this is just about to begin.

All this shows that the problem of the presence of an admittedly large number of foreign workers amidst a not always very welcoming indigenous Swiss population will be on the agenda for debate and discussion not only during the current year but for some time to come.

The Swiss — and here I am quoting the well-known author Max Frisch — have wanted foreign labour to come in and help produce wealth, and are now forced to admit that these foreign workers are human beings whose rights and dignity they have to respect.

There has recently been a big celebration in Berne to commemorate the 100 years during which the Federal Constitution of 1874 has been in force. Amongst the prominent speakers were Federal President Brugger, the President of the National Council Muheim, a well-known Law Professor and that eminent sociologist Madame Jeanne Hersch from Geneva. In her speech, which she started with the remark that her forefathers had not been present at Morgarten, she praised the Swiss will to independence and self-determination. But there were, she added, still some problems for the solution of which

Acting or the struggle to survive

The 1973-74 Theatre Season in French-speaking Switzerland is over and the theatre-going public of Geneva and Lausanne will have to wait until Autumn for the preparation of a new repertoire. Switzerland has a flourishing theatrical life. Everything may be done on a small scale, but there are a sufficient number of theatres in the main cities to satisfy any demanding public. When the possibilities of the season are exhausted, it is easy for a Genevese to drive to Lausanne for an evening, or for a Zurcher to go to Basle.

In French-speaking Switzerland alone, there are 156 professional and unionised actors. According to an article in the Journal de Genève's Literary Supplement, only thirty-six of these professionals earn more than 30,000 francs a year. Some make as little as 300 francs a year out of acting. Earnings depend to a great extent on individual theatres and the public they cater for. Thus the Theatre de Carouge et l'Atelier in Geneva offer their casts from 1,500 to 2,000 francs a month during the season. At the Comédie, salaries attain 2,000 to 2,500 francs, but at the experimental Théâtre Mobile, all actors require a second job even during the season. The

professional actors and directors of the Theatre Populaire Romand (TRP) net 1,150 francs a month, a sum which attests to their devotion to the theatre. The TRP was founded in Canton Neuchatel and in the Jura some fifteen years ago. It has become one of the driving forces towards opening the theatre for the rural and working classes. It stages highly regular and successful performances in schools and industrial cities like la Chaux de Fonds.

Despite their very small area, with a public half the size of London's, Swiss theatres often display productions of West End standards. Although the French-speaking part of the country falls under the shadow of France, while German-speaking Switzerland has its own identity, neither part of the country is in a cultural vacuum. There is perhaps less competition and fewer stars of the stage, but the importance given to theatre by the authorities of Basle and Zurich, in particular, tend to uphold very high standards even though there is a perpetual conflict between conservatism and avant-garde experimentation and revolutionary.

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neither our laws nor our social feelings were as yet sufficiently developed. Two such problems were the legal position of the women and that of the foreigners. The fact that many foreign workers were denied the most elementary human rights amounted to treason against the spirit of the Federal Constitution. Commemorative celebrations should, above all, lead to a kind of exploration of the conscience and it was to be hoped that the Swiss people would solve these problems as soon as they recognised that in good faith vis-à-vis their history they had to be solved.

These were strong words. But they had to be spoken.

On 7th June, National Councillor James Schwarzenbach had given his prescription for the solution of these topical problems: "Immediate refusal of further entry permits, for foreign workers and their families and immediate prohibition of the granting of further permits of residence".

In this connection one may well ask whether there should not be a clause in the Federal Constitution protecting the country against abuses of the right to launch initiatives – at least by fixing a time-limit before which an initiative which has been rejected by the voters and by a majority of cantons can be launched again. What the Republicans and the "National Action" – the two movements have recently split up – are doing seems to amount to an abuse of democratic rights.

The paper crisis

"And how", I am often asked these days, "is your book progressing?" When, in reply, I confess that it is not progressing at all – because I have not seriously started writing it – most of my friends express astonishment and some even regret.

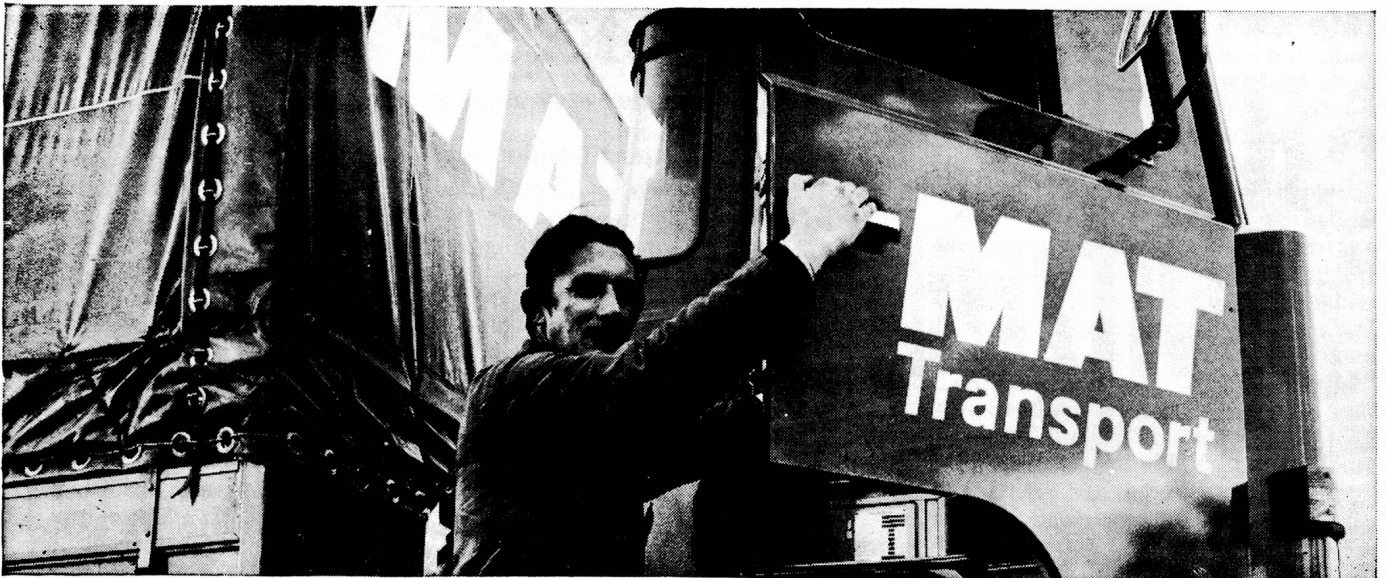
Of course the question whether to reminisce in writing about my 38 years in London has been in my mind ever since my wife and I returned to Switzerland at the end of October, 1972. And on trying to come to a decision, I have always come up against a number of practical problems, some of which I shall explain.

First of all, if I were to start on such a book, should it be written in the German language or in English? Would it – could it – possibly have a market here in Switzerland or even in Great Britain? Had it been written immediately after World War II and had it dealt with some of the admittedly thrilling experiences of a neutral Press correspondent in embattled Britain, the answer would most certainly have been in the affirmative. I did, in fact, have a telegraphic offer from a well-known Swiss publisher a few days after V.E. (Victory in Europe) – day. I accepted it and actually started on the book, but after some 28 typewritten pages I discovered that I could not possibly fulfill my part of the contract and wrote to the publisher explaining the circumstances and asking him to release

me from my obligation. This he did. My reason for giving up was simply this; as correspondent of the Swiss News Agency and of the "Basler Nachrichten" I was so fully occupied writing professionally that sitting down again on the typewriter in the evening, after a full day's work, became an ordeal and an impossibility for me. I had, after all, different interests. I wanted to see friends, to read books, to go to concerts, to enjoy life. Consequently the book, for which there would have been a market then, remained unwritten.

Today – and this is the second and main reason for my not writing it – the world is on the brink of a newsprint and paper crisis. And according to an interesting analysis published recently in the *Weltwoche*, this is going to be a crisis of the first magnitude. Paper and newsprint are not only getting scarce, but becoming more and more expensive, prices having gone up by between 25 and 30% since 1973. This means that one single copy of a well-known Swiss newspaper (The Zurich *Tages-Anzeiger*) will cost between 10 and 20 Centimes more. Using 26,500 tons of newsprint per year, this particular newspaper is thus faced with a cost increase for newsprint alone of approximately 8 million francs per annum! The consequence is obvious: on July 1st, practically all Swiss newspapers and periodicals are increasing their prices.

The scarcity of paper and newsprint has been caused by various factors: a



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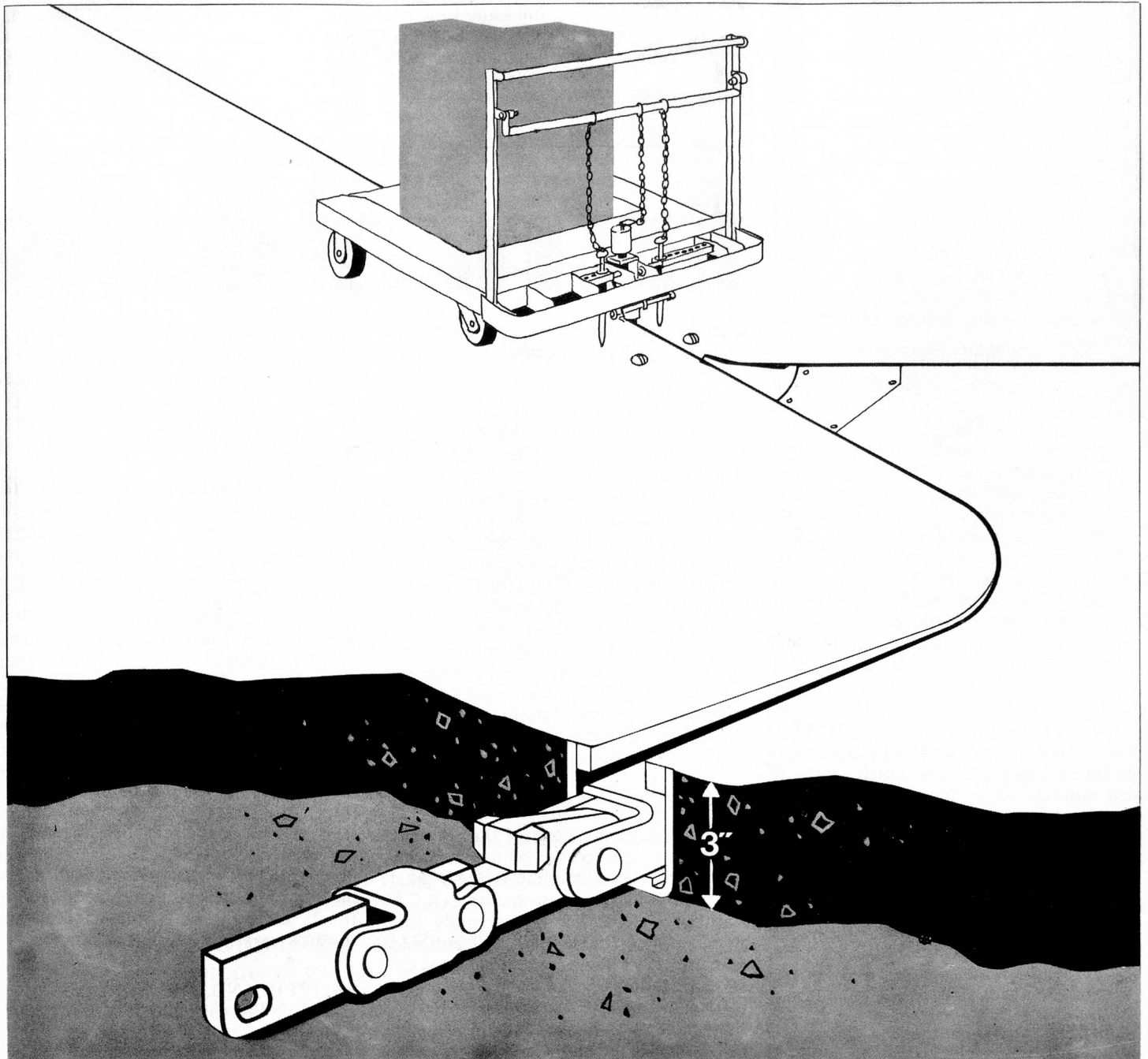
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sudden American invasion on the Scandinavian buyers' market, unexpected long rainfalls in the Canadian forests which made timber-cutting unattractive, Italian unwillingness to pay fantastic prices for the Scandinavian raw material, delays in delivery, increased costs of production due to higher costs of power (oil and electricity) and several more. It has, incidentally, been calculated that the average Swiss uses 156 kilos of paper per head per annum, but the average American gets through 280 kilos. Of course, much could be done in Switzerland to economise: so much paper is being wasted in shops where products which are already wrapped get wrapped again before being handed over to the customer.

One well-known Swiss book publisher — Scherz — is planning to bring out 100,000 copies of Solzhenitsyn's best-seller *Archipelago Gulag*. In order to do this it has, according to a published report, been necessary to borrow paper from other publishers. At the same time it has become unavoidable to review the arranged book publication programme for the autumn and to cancel or postpone publication of several books, some of which had not only been accepted but even commissioned by the publishers.

After the oil crisis the world is thus now confronted with a paper and newsprint crisis. And as a regular contributor to the *Swiss Observer* in London I cannot help wondering whether the Colony's organ has also been affected in this respect and how much longer it can continue as at present before being forced to increase the subscription once again. In the past when subscription had to be raised, I have usually been asked to explain this necessity to the readers. Next time such an increase would be self-explanatory to the readers of this "Letter from Switzerland".

Gottfried Keller

PUBLISHERS NOTE:

Referring to the final paragraph of the above "Letter from Switzerland", kindly contributed by Mr. Gottfried Keller, the Publishers are very grateful to Mr. Keller for having mentioned the points he has made. We endorse entirely the problems, which are very real and in fact are even more intense than those written of, in that not only is there a chronic paper crisis but as in common with every other industry labour costs have risen sharply since the present subscription rates were put into effect. However, it is the Publisher's wish that the rates should not be increased, unless for economic reasons it becomes a real necessity. We have to try to cover increases in costs by additional advertising and increased distribution. Perhaps some of our readers could help us in this field by introducing new subscribers, or interesting some concerns in advertising. The Publishers would assure readers that it is the intention to preserve the *Swiss Observer* as a medium

for the dissemination of articles and items of interest to the Swiss Colony in the U.K., and not to become purely a vehicle for advertising, but at the same time one has to face up to economic facts. We operate on a very tight margin and every endeavour is made to keep overheads down to the very minimum, the profit

motive is not a prime consideration in this concern, what is foremost is the service we can offer to the Swiss Colony. We are extremely grateful to those of our readers who have found it convenient to make donations to the cost of running the paper, without these life would be very difficult.

technical items

SWISS CONSUMER EXPENDITURE IN 1973

According to the official estimates available, consumer expenditure in Switzerland totalled 89.7 billion francs in 1973, of which 74.26 billion was accounted for by the private consumption of goods and services and 15.01 billion francs by the consumption of the public authorities. With regard to real private consumption, the rate of growth fell from 5.7% in 1972 to 4.5% last year; services however were less affected by this falling off than consumer goods. The real rate of growth of public consumption, on the other hand, has remained practically unchanged (4.5 and 4.4% respectively). Nearly half of the figure for public consumption is accounted for by wages and salaries.

INCOME TAX IN SWITZERLAND

Switzerland is one of the countries in which the part played by income tax in the overall fiscal revenue is the biggest. According to the most recent O.E.C.D. statistics, 41.0% of Switzerland's total fiscal revenue (including social insurance taxes) in 1971 came from income tax and tax on profits. Of all European countries belonging to O.E.C.D., the proportion of these taxes was higher only in Denmark (48.2%), Sweden (46.8%), Finland (43.0%) and Luxemburg (41.9%). Great Britain was on a par with Switzerland. On the other hand, the proportion of income tax and tax on profits in the total fiscal revenue was much lower in all European countries: Netherlands (34.2%), Belgium (32.8%), West Germany (31.3%), Norway (29.4%), Eire (29.1%), Austria (26.0%), Portugal (24.3%), Spain (20.8%), Italy (18.6%), France (15.9%) and Greece (14.1%).

Preference for the big cities and higher-class hotels

Japanese tourists choose to spend the night mostly in hotels close to airports. Two-thirds of the overnight stops made by Japanese visitors in 1972 were spent in the big cities (more than half in Geneva and Zurich), one-sixth near the lakes and only a tenth actually in the mountains.

The average length of time Japanese visitors spent in Switzerland in 1972 was

nearly two nights per arrival, which is extremely short. This is because the Japanese generally visit Switzerland while touring Europe. Vacations in the mountain resorts, which would last a longer time, are still quite a rare occurrence.

There are no figures available for how much Switzerland earns from visits by Japanese tourists. From surveys by the US Department of Commerce into the amount spent by Americans in Switzerland and taking into account the proportion of bookings in hotels of the various price ranges, it would appear that in 1970 Japanese visitors spent between Sw.fr.40 and 50 million in Switzerland.

Japanese visitors clearly prefer the high-class hotels. In 1972, for instance, the hotels in the highest price bracket recorded about 53% of the night stops made by Japanese tourists and 22% of the total figure for foreign guests in general. It is evident, however, that in terms of the total number of foreign visitors, the proportion of Japanese staying in the higher-class hotels is on a slow downward trend; there is an increased tendency towards lower-priced accommodation.

SWITZERLAND, THE WORLD'S BIGGEST PRODUCER OF WATCHES

In 1973, world proportion of watches and movements amounted to 215.6 million items, i.e. 10% more than the previous year (195.6 million items). The European watch industry alone — Switzerland, West Germany, France, Great Britain and Italy — manufactured 117.7 million watches and movements, which represents nearly 55% of the total world production. West Germany recorded the largest growth (+11.6%), followed by France (+9.9%), Great Britain (+8.4%) and Switzerland (+7.8%). In actual figures however it is Switzerland that had by far the largest growth (over 6 million watches and movements more than in 1972). The remaining Big Three of watchmaking — Japan, USSR and the United States — also increased their production of watches and movements, but to a lesser extent. Together they manufactured 77.4 million items, a figure corresponding to roughly 36% of world production. With a volume of 84.3 million watches and movements, nearly 40% of the world