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Conservationists on the rampage

Switzerland's conservationists are continuing their campaign to prevent new nuclear power stations from being built. Their campaign seems likely to delay Switzerland's plans to find alternative energy requirements to petrol and hydroelectricity by several years.

The latest move came from the "Committee of action against nuclear power stations in North-Western Switzerland" (NWA) and the "Non Violent Action against the Kaiseraugst Power Station" (GAGAK), who have just brought two successive actions to the courts against plans to build a nuclear power station at Leibstadt, in Canton Aargau.

The two organisations had already halted work at Kaiseraugst following a mass sit-in of the site last year. The two bodies have now appealed to the Federal Court in Lausanne and to the Federal Department of Transport and Telecommunications.

GAGAK has also published a violent protest against plans to create a waste depot for radio-active material in the Airolo area. It claimed that this went against the wishes of local residents. It is likely that the organisation will start legal proceedings against these plans as well.

Fifty-five Basle doctors joined in the controversy and said that the Kaiseraugst power station would be dangerous. In a letter to Parliamentarians in Berne, they said that one could not foretell the effect the two huge cooling towers might have on the weather in the area. They said that the nuclear site would only be 800 metres away from the nearest houses.

This, they added, made the situation considerably more dangerous than in America, where nuclear power stations were in remote areas. Recalling the controversy on nuclear power stations in

the U.S., they said that no amount of devices to filter radio-active effluents from such installations could avoid the risk of long-term radiation becoming a threat to the neighbouring population.

Minute quantities of radioactive substances found their way in water and in the atmosphere. They had a cumulative effect which would inevitably create a cancer risk. Referring to a recent accident in a West-German power station, they said that there was no guarantee against human errors leading to serious accidents.

GOOD RESULTS FOR OERLIKON- BUEHRLE

Oerlikon-Buehrle, one of Switzerland's leading machine tool and arms manufacturers, have reported a 25 per cent increase in sales in 1975. Their turnover now reaches about two billion francs (nearly £400 million). This holding company, which up to two years ago, was the largest private business in the country, has also registered good business in its textiles and electronics divisions. The only department where sales are slackening is at the Balzers precision scales factory. Shareholders are to get a 12 per cent dividend (30 francs per bearer share and 12 francs for registered shares).

The Swiss public has shown a great interest for Oerlikon-Buehrle stock. Nearly 400,000 shares have been issued. Bearer shares have a par value of 250 francs and registered shares were issued at 100 francs.

SWISS EVENTS

New status for refugees

The Federal Council has decided to "clean up" Switzerland's complex legislation on refugees and has submitted the outline of a new bill to Cantons and interested organisations for their advice.

Switzerland has pursued a fairly liberal policy in this respect since the War. Thousands of Hungarians were given asylum in 1956. Subsequently, Switzerland offered asylum to refugees from Czechoslovakia, Chile and Uganda. The law under which the Confederation is allowed to welcome expatriates was passed in March 1931 and has since received a number of amendments – in 1948, 1949, 1951 and 1955. But the law is apparently incomplete in its definition of a refugee and the regulations governing asylum need tidying up. The Constitution says nothing about refugees but Article 69-4 is considered as offering the basis for legislation on asylum.

The Government's proposals do not present anything particularly new. Their purpose is to supply a proper legal framework. Refugee status would be granted to individuals who can satisfy the authorities that they would have been exposed to real physical dangers and psychological pressures in their country of origin. Refugees would also be given greater legal means of defending themselves against expulsion orders and could appeal to the Federal Court.



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CINEMA: AN INSIPID FESTIVAL

The eleventh Swiss Film Festival took place for two days at Solothurn during the first weekend of February. As usual, it raised the interest of amateurs from all parts of the country who crammed inside two projection halls for two days. But the local population took little part in festivities which for many appeared to be as remote from the local scene as a pop festival.

The fact is that, despite all the controversy on the matter, there is no Swiss film industry to speak of. Swiss films are all highly individual works produced on a shoe-string budget. The scant federal funds available for this *cinéma d'auteur* go to a very small number of directors who have proved themselves, such as Tanner, whose *Retour d'Afrique* was shown towards the end of last year in London. These directors hardly ever get their films on general release.

In the main, they can be seen at festivals and at a few cinemas specialising in the kind of films they produce. In London, for example, a Swiss film might be screened once in a year at the Academy or the Classic. The National Film Theatre gave a festival of Swiss films under the patronage of Pro Helvetia in 1973.

It was, therefore, unavoidable that most of the films shown at Solothurn were the works of eager amateurs not unlike the American underground cinema. The few works that mattered came from well-known directors. The films which caught the attention of critics were: *L'exécution du traître Ernest S.* by Richard Dindo, *Der Gehuelfe* by Thomas Koerfer and *Schatten der Engel* directed by Daniel Schmid and written by the West-German Werner Fassbinder.

The first of these three works probes into the life of the first man to be executed as a traitor in Switzerland during World War II (in the event, 17 traitors were brought before a firing squad). The work purports to show that the execution of a completely unknown reject of society was decided above all to

serve as an example and underscore Switzerland's determination to survive. Much of the film takes the form of a documentary, with old newsreels, interviews of the victim's brothers and of the historian E. Bonjour.

The *Gehuelft* is the adaptation of the novel of the same title by Robert Walser which Kafka is said to have admired greatly. It is the story of a

West-German inventor of the beginning of the century who hires an unemployed worker to help him commercialise his ideas.

Its aim is to illustrate the total absence of relationship between the various protagonists who are trapped in a stifling society. Finally, *Schatten der Engel* is a Brechtian and rather off-putting effort at portraying the life of a pimp and a prostitute.

Apart from these films and one or two others, the welter of cheaply made short films that were shown conveyed an impression of insignificance with a general tendency to be too documentary, pompous and close to television.

SWISS LICENCE FOR JAPAN

Georg Fischer Co. Ltd. (Schaffhausen) has granted a big licence to a Japanese manufacturer of utility vehicles. The contract concerns Trilix wheels developed by the Swiss firm; for many years now, these wheels have been made in Italy, West Germany and Spain as well as, more recently, in Turkey, Australia, Hungary, Venezuela and Peru. The Trilix wheels made by Georg Fischer will now also be mounted on Japanese utility vehicles, which are to be sold in large numbers to the Middle East, Africa and South America.

BROWN BOVERI CO-OPERATED WITH HUNGARY

A skeleton agreement covering scientific, technical, industrial and economic co-operation between BBC Brown, Boveri & Company Ltd. (Baden) and the Hungarian Government Office for Technical Development (OFMB), was recently signed in Budapest. Co-operation in the fields of the generation, distribution and utilization of electricity will extend to the full range of BBC products, the agreement mainly covering mutual exchange of licences and knowhow, collaboration in certain fields of research and in the joint delivery of equipment to other countries. Thus the long-standing relations that the Brown Boveri group has maintained with its Hungarian partners and which it has

systematically expanded during recent years, have been further consolidated.

SWISS TECHNOLOGY FOR PAKISTAN

An agreement was recently signed between the Pakistan firm National Fibres Ltd., of Karachi, and two European companies — Lurgi Mineralöltechnik GmbH of Frankfurt (West Germany) and Inventa A.G. of Zürich. The German firm will supply the engineering work for the new polyester production plant which is to be set up in Pakistan; it will also deliver the equipment and supervise its installation. The Swiss firm Inventa, a member of the Ems Works Group, will be supplying the manufacturing process and technology, as well as supervising the starting up of the plant. The annual capacity of output of this new polyester production plant will be 12,000 tons of cut fibres and 3,000 tons of continuous pre-drawn yarns. This plant, which is being built in the neighbourhood of Karachi, is scheduled to start production by the middle of 1978.

SWITZERLAND'S PRESENCE ON THE HIGH SEAS

From statistics published by the Institute of Maritime Economy in Bremen, it appears that Switzerland's ocean-going fleet is at present the largest of the sea-going fleets of six countries

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with no direct access to the sea. Apart from Switzerland, these countries are Czechoslovakia, Austria, Hungary, Paraguay and Uganda. The 28 vessels sailing under the Swiss flag, representing a total displacement of 232,391 tons, account for half the total tonnage of the six countries in question. It is interesting to note that Switzerland's presence on the high seas is even more impressive when one considers the number of ships fitted with Swiss diesel marine engines. Thus seven engines, with a total capacity of 110,000 HP, are at present in the process of construction in the Sulzer Bros' works in Winterthur. Once completed, these engines will be mounted in vessels under construction in the shipyards of Germany, Canada, Greece, Denmark and Norway.

PROLONGED DROP IN THE PRODUCTION OF CEMENT IN SWITZERLAND

The volume of deliveries of cement in Switzerland amounted to no more than 5 million tons in 1974, i.e. 15 per cent less than in 1972-73. In 1975, the figure dropped still further, since it has been estimated at 28 per cent. Total deliveries amounted to only 3.6 million tons, which is equivalent to the level for 1961. Between 1960 and 1972, sales of cement had practically doubled, rising from 2 to 5.9 million tons. As a result of the severe recession that started in 1974, on an average only 50 per cent of the output capacity of Swiss cement works is now used, which considerably raises the unit cost of production.

EVOLUTION OF THE SWISS GROSS NATIONAL PRODUCT

Switzerland's real gross national product, which takes the evolution of prices into consideration, has trebled since 1949. Until the seventies, with the exception of the years 1949 and 1958, it regularly recorded a real growth. According to estimates of the "Work Group for Economic Prospects", for the first time since the Second World War the Swiss gross national product showed a falling off during two consecutive years, amounting to 0.9 per cent in 1974 and 4 per cent in 1975.

INITIATIVE ON PARTICIPATION

The electorate will be called on 21st March to vote on the important issue of worker participation in industrial management (see Gottfried Keller's Letter from Switzerland). The Initiative launched by the Trade Union movement several years ago is now to be put to the electorate, who will also have before them the Government's far milder counter proposals. It is likely that with nearly 30,000 registered unemployed and a fair amount of union opposition to enforced lay-offs, the issue will produce renewed interest.

The promoters of the Initiative want workers and employees to participate at all levels of the decision-making process of both private industry and public services such as federal administration and the railways. The Initiative blurs all operative distinctions between management and labour. In a recent statement backing it, the Swiss Labour Party (Communist) said: "The recent spate of factory closures and redundancies show to what extent it is necessary to curb the absolute power of management and to enable workers and their unions to control the organisations for which they work".

The Vorort, or the Swiss equivalent of the CBI, has rejected the proposals right from the start. It repeated its stand forcefully at the end of its last assembly held in Zürich at the beginning of February: "The Initiative aims to introduce, in the Federal Constitution, provisions that would give workers and employees unlimited rights in respect of co-management of both private and public enterprises... This politically motivated concept would in fact prejudice fundamental principles and institutions which have proved themselves in our country and which have produced economic and social benefits while at the same time enabling everyone to develop his personality to a large extent".

The Vorort adds that the Initiative would gravely affect decision procedures and prevent companies from "taking

decisions with the required speed and flexibility in response to market situations and thus seriously impair the efficient running of companies".

The Vorort supports the Federal counter-project which guarantees management the right to manage but enhances the scope for participation of employees. Workers in any one firm, that is, people directly concerned with the welfare of their company and not their union, would be given considerably more

information, they would be consulted and be given the opportunity to take decisions in common with management in certain areas of direct concern to them. The plan would in fact give constitutional support to practices common to a great many liberal and progressive companies in Switzerland.

The left-wing proposals are more than likely to be rejected. But the degree of support they get will be a good indication of the mood of the country.



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