

# Switzerland emerges as drug 'paradise'

by Christian Huth

Switzerland is on the way to becoming the drug El Dorado. Amid protests, so-called scientific studies of the free government distribution of heroin and cocaine are now under way. In July, the Swiss Federal Ministry for Health approved an experiment that is now being conducted with 700 pauperized drug addicts. In securing approval for this experiment, reference was made to a legislative initiative of the German Bundesrat (upper house of Parliament), which aims at government distribution of heroin. Astonishingly, this drug experiment was not criticized in many media because of its cynical character, but rather because the other approximately 30,000 drug addicts will not have the doubtful pleasure of government stuff.

The subjects of the experiment, who are divided into 14 different groups of 50 addicts each, are to receive shots of heroin, morphine, or methadone under medical control. Evaluation of the four-year experiment is to show whether the addicts distance themselves from the drug scene and become less criminal than their fellow sufferers who must continue to finance their addiction with prostitution, theft, robbery, or dealing.

Protest against this reckless policy has primarily been expressed by the initiators of the "Youth without Drugs" referendum, which is also supported by the Union for the Promotion of Knowledge of Human Psychological Nature (VPM). This initiative intends to push through a consistent application of relevant laws as well as a rational therapy program. The VPM explains the dangers of such drug experiments, since more drugs are made available through the distribution of heroin and methadone.

## A political 'hot potato'

What is particularly nasty is that irresponsible politicians, on the pretext that we must wait for the scientific evaluation of these experiments, want to postpone the vote on the initiative in the Bundesrat until 1997. Simultaneously, the supporters of the Drug Legalization Work Group, in which leftists, greenies, and liberals are all found, is preparing an initiative "for a rational drug policy"—to the delight of the drug mafia. These advocates of free distribution put forward, of all things, the right of personal responsibility and self-determination in justification for their drug plans.

How bad this *laissez-faire* policy is can be seen today in Zurich. Under the Lettensteg Bridge, a crowd of seedy peo-

ple can be seen, dealers using shopping carts as sales stalls between figures of misery, made wretched by drugs and AIDS. Vending machines are set up, from which addicts can get a packet with needle, gauze swab, and condom along with an information sheet for 2.5 francs.

## A first-hand account

Annbrit Gruenewald, director of the Oesteraker National Prison near Stockholm, Sweden and an expert on drugs, in July gave an account of the drug scene in Zurich: "First, the area was completely covered with the plastic covers of thousands of needles that were distributed free of charge to the addicts. In Zurich, a city of 350,000 inhabitants, 11,000 needles are given out per day. Even methadone is distributed more or less without controls, as I was able to find out on a visit to a distribution place."

In fact, even heroin is now to be given out without prescription. The addicts will receive a pass that allows them to purchase drugs. Gruenewald reports: "In the vicinity of the municipal bathhouse, there are thousands . . . of drug addicts. Wherever we looked, there were people sitting and injecting themselves in their arms or legs or wherever they could find a vein. At the same time, a few male nurses went around and breathed life back into people who had taken an overdose. . . ."

"I have worked for almost 25 years with drug addicts. But I have never in my life seen such misery as in Zurich. A study trip is recommended to all advocates of legalization. What is happening here is genocide. . . . Miserable figures in the thousands with open wounds!"

A former addict who spoke with addicts in Zurich, stated at a VPM meeting that many want to be "clean," but social workers do not want them to get rid of the addiction. Why? A brochure from the Swiss office specializing in alcohol abuse in Lausanne reads: "Every human being must find out for himself which drugs are a means of pleasure for him and which not. If we speak of drugs in this brochure, we mean tobacco, inhalants, hashish, marijuana, heroin, morphine, cocaine, crack, LSD, different medicines, alcohol, and synthetic drugs."

Gruenewald countered: "Science and confirming data show that use as well as misuse increases with easy availability of drugs. In my eyes, it would be insane to consciously increase drug use, which would occur through legalization. In Zurich, treatment institutions are empty, not from lack of addicts, but from lack of motivation of the addicts. No addict stops taking drugs because of a drug's positive effects. An addict stops because of the negative effects. If all the negative effects are removed . . . then obviously no addict will stop. Thus, a humane drug policy must make it as difficult and as troublesome as possible to take drugs. Then the motivation is created and the treatment institutions will fill up. We must work against drug misuse with a continuing, strict control policy. We really need the resources of our society for other things."