

News from Switzerland

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NEWS FROM SWITZERLAND ★ ★ ★

Zurich and all Switzerland mourn over the death of cabaret star and humorist Rudolf Bernhard, who was a native of Basel. Until shortly before his death on October 21st, he directed his own boulevard theatre in Zurich of which he was the leading man. It was in the Rudolf Bernhard Theatre that the Swiss actress and film star Maria Schell began her fabulous career with the title role of "Scampolo" in 1933-34.

Waiting before closed railway-crossings is soon to be a thing of the past in Switzerland, for the Swiss Federal Railways have already been able to abolish 60 crossings this year and just as many are to be pulled down in 1963. The track-level crossings will be replaced by underpasses or bridges, and at places several former crossings are to be joined together. Level crossings have already been eliminated completely on some trunk railway lines, such as between Bellinzona and Chiasso.

The Crossbow—Switzerland's Trademark

During one week in the year Swiss housewives exclusively buy domestic products and for seven days the country is self-supporting. The "Swiss Week" has become something of a national custom and the same country that otherwise welcomes foreign products and ideas with undisguised enthusiasm, willingly accepts all that is "made in Switzerland." During the "Swiss Week" the Swiss flag and the trademark of Swiss products, the crossbow, shine out from the window-displays who mirror the Swiss way of life. The buyer of Swiss-made products pays tribute to Swiss precision work without which a land, poor in raw materials like Switzerland, could not put much on the market. Yet precision work alone is not all that is required to sell a turbine or a watch. In addition, punctually kept terms of delivery and personalized service in the shops have become features foreign business partners and customers take for granted in Switzerland. During the "Swiss Week" every employee in a shop, at the post-office, in trains and hotels remembers once more that foreign guests expect service from him equalling Swiss precision work. This year the "Swiss Week" took place from October 13 to 27. In a moment when Switzerland's adherence to the Organisation of the European Common Market is being considered, a review of the country's economic possibilities at home seems to be justified, for, despite being open to the world, Switzerland wants to remain true to itself.

Big Industrial Concentration in Switzerland

Two big Swiss fine engineering firms, Paillard Ltd., manufacturers of Hermes typewriters and Bolex cine-cameras, and Thorens Ltd., makers of record players, musical boxes and cigarette lighters, have just signed an agreement to co-operate. Although continuing their own independent existence, the two factories will co-operate more and more closely regarding the unification and rationalisation of their activities, in particular with respect to research, production and administration. This co-operation is intended to strengthen the position of the two firms on the Swiss and international markets. (OSEC).

Growth of TV in Switzerland

At the end of August, 1962, there were over a quarter of a million television license holders in Switzerland, 250,129 to be precise. On the same date the total number of licences issued for radio sets amounted to 1,523,354. (OSEC).

A Swiss Barometer-Watch

The "Bivouac" watch created by a Geneva (Switzerland) watch manufacturer will render invaluable service to mountaineers, hikers, flyers and explorers of all kinds as well as a great many others. In addition to its watch movement indicating the time, the new "Bivouac" watch contains a barometer and an altimeter with a red pointer moving round a scale on the dial marked in millibars, as well as a graduated revolving rim indicating the height above sea-level. One has only to set the pointer to the correct height at the start in order to read off the subsequent altitudes on the scale on the revolving rim. By setting this rim to the 760 millibar mark, it is also possible to read the average barometric pressure corresponding to any altitude. Naturally it is also possible to see from the movement of the red pointer whether the pressure is stable or whether it is going up or down, thus making the "Bivouac" watch a small portable barometer. It is interesting to note that after having been thoroughly experimented with and tested in the laboratory, the "Bivouac" watch was recently given a severe practical try-out at the International Parachute Jumping Meeting at Colombier (Switzerland) and that all members of the Swiss national team taking part in the Sixth World Parachute Jumping Championships, 1962, at Orange (Mass.), U.S.A., have been equipped with these watches. (OSEC.)

Thriving Colony

In a large number of countries in the New World, Swiss emigrants founded colonies which have generally turned into prosperous cities. This is the case in particular of the town of Nueva Helvecia (New Helvetia) in Uruguay. In order to commemorate the centenary of the foundation of this town, the General Management of the Uruguayan General Post Office—on August 1st of this year, the Swiss National Day in fact—issued a set of 4 postage stamps with the values 10, 20, 90 and 140 centavos; the two lower values show a spade attractively beribboned in the Swiss colours, with an ear of corn sprouting alongside, while the higher values, also decorated in the Swiss colours, portray a plough crowned with a sheaf of corn. This friendly gesture towards Switzerland on the part of the General Management of the Uruguay Post Office is especially gratifying at a time when the international situation is still tense in many parts of the world, showing as it does that the presence of Swiss citizens in Uruguay is appreciated. (OSEC.)

All matters regarding the Swiss Society . . . to—

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The "Expo" is in the News

Excavations made on the site of the 1964 Swiss National Exhibition, called "Expo" for short by the French-speaking Swiss—revealed that even the Romans were smitten by the charms of this beach in Lausanne with its panoramic view reaching from the Dents du Midi to the Rochers de Naye and settled down to an easy-going life on the banks of Lake Geneva. So that no valuable fragments are dumped away by bulldozers, a young woman archaeologist supervises the building work for the exhibition. Even now, eighteen months before the "Expo" opens its doors on April 30th (closing day: October 25th, 1964) people keep talking about it. As a highlight it is to feature a noiseless one-track railway, which will trundle merry crowds all over the entire area of the exhibition and even through the halls. The city of Lausanne is preparing accommodation in all price-ranges and expects to play host to 4 million visitors from abroad and 12 millions from Switzerland, as each Swiss will take several trips to the "Expo." Near the city's main station, the Swiss Federal Railways have built a special terminus capable of handling 15,000 arrivals and departures per hour. 25,000 private cars and buses will be able to catch their breath in parking lots. Beautiful Lake Lemman vies with the efforts of the hospitable city to make guests feel at home; from specially constructed piers small speedboats will whisk them over the glittering surface of the lake to the "Expo" which will make Switzerland known abroad and inspire creative minds at home.

Tourists in the Lotschental?

Before the remote Lotschental in the Valais was linked to the world by the Simplon-Lötschberg railway, it was one of Switzerland's most secluded alpine valleys. Its inhabitants are of Celtic origin like those of Ireland, and in this solitary part thrives a fairy world of gnomes, giants and ghosts or erring souls. The French writer Guy de Maupassant conjured up this eerie loneliness in his short stories from the Lotschental. At Carnival time the unreal comes into life in the Lotschental, and the inhabitants scare away winter from behind weird masks which seem to originate from the South Seas. They express their deep religious belief in a custom as moving as it is picturesque; in past centuries young men from the Lotschental stood on guard in Rome, Versailles, Madrid and Naples as mercenaries; and so the "Grenadiers of the Lord" still wear their colourful uniforms on the day of the mightiest of all Kings. So as to offer the population of the Lotschental an adequate living, the development of tourism has been considered, for which the scenic beauty of the place offers unlimited possibilities. Some of Switzerland's mightiest peaks are just within reach, like the Aletschhorn, the Breithorn, the Jungfrau, and the Bietschhorn (12,970 ft) right next door is praised for its magnificent view by experienced mountain-climbers. Sir Leslie Stephens, the literary philosopher and father of the essayist Virginia Woolf, was the first to climb the Bietschhorn in 1859. Not only can holiday-makers ski right into summer in the Lotschental, but sun-drenched mountain paths and shady woods offer inexhaustible hiking possibilities. In order to open the valley to tourism, an aerial cableway is to link it with the Bernese Oberland; a motor-car road already leads to the Rhone Valley and another is planned to the Fäfleralp right at the far end of the valley. According to press reports a new tourist centre is to be built in the vicinity of the villages of Kippel and Wiler.

Success of Swiss Engineering in South Africa

Within the framework of their electrification programme, the South African Railways ordered 10 and 12 rectifying stations, in 1956 and 1958 respectively, from the Oerlikon Engineering Works in Zurich (Switzerland) for supplying their network with 3,000 volt continuous current. The expansion of the electrification scheme necessitated a further order for 11 rectifying stations, each with a capacity of 4,500 kw.; they will supply current for a line 160 miles long, thus completing the electrification of the Johannesburg-Durban railway. This order, to the value of several million Swiss francs, will be carried out in close co-operation with South African industry; it was awarded to the Swiss engineering firm in the face of very keen international competition. (OSEC.)

Collaboration Between Capital and Labour in Switzerland

Fifty years ago, the Swiss industrialist and scientist Albert Wander decided to establish a closer association between capital and labour in his Berne firm and, acting as a pioneer in this respect, introduced not only a private health insurance scheme for his workers but also a share in the firm's profits for the whole of the factory staff. (OSEC.)

An International Award for a Swiss Pilot

The IAF (International Aeronautical Federation) in Athens, recently awarded its highest distinction, the Lilienthal medal, to a Swiss lawyer, Mr Adolf Gehrig, for his great contribution towards the development of international gliding. This medal is awarded only to active pilots who have distinguished themselves by outstanding performances in the field of gliding. The Swiss glider pilot Gehrig, who is the holder of several national gliding records, was one of the founders of the IAF Gliding Commission, of which he has been president since 1949 and which today includes among its members pilots from 48 countries. He also took part in the drafting of the new gliding regulations and the organisation of the first World Gliding Championships at Sameden in 1948. Finally, let us add that in his business capacity glider pilot Gehrig is second in command to the Executive Manager of the Swiss airline company Swissair. (OSEC.)

Laugh a little . . .

Kennet Der dae? Ein Berner hatte in Zuerich zu tun und sucht nun auf dem Hauptbahnhof den Zug fuer die Heimreise. Auf Geleise 2 steht einer. Er geht ihm entlang, bis er an einem der Wagen eine Tafel findet, und liest: 'Zug.' "Das gsehn daenk selber!" brummt er, "die Schtuermihueng wuerde gschyder druf schrybe, wo er hifahrt!"

* * *

FATHER AND SON

"Look son it hurts me myself when I have to punish you. Son: "But not on the same place."

Father: "Listen boy, that's a terrible word you've been using. If you don't say it any more I shall give you sixpence." Son: "Dad, I know another one which is worth one shilling."

—Nebelspalter