

Letter from Switzerland

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LETTER FROM SWITZERLAND

October 1969

Dear Readers,

While you in New Zealand look forward to the warm, beautiful summer, we here steer towards dreaded winter-time with all its cold and wetness. Autumn has come and just about gone, the weather is still fine, and the older people cannot remember a more beautiful summer and autumn like the present one, and I have been very lucky in that respect so far. Even on my trip to Denmark, Norway and Sweden, the weather was always in my favour, in spite of it being very late in the season. When you travel a lot, believe me — that bit of sunshine makes all the difference! — be it at a visit to the nice clean farms in Jutland, climbing the big Holmenkollen skijump in Oslo, visiting the Millsgarden in Stockholm with all the famous sculptures, or just strolling through Tivoli, Copenhagen's world-known entertaining centre.

Mind you, it has its disadvantages too; it is getting very dry here in Switzerland. The farmers are very worried about getting their fields ready for the winter seed before snow comes. In some districts they are very short of water and if we don't get substantial rain very soon it will be disastrous for the electricity in winter-time. On some rivers the navigation is paralysed because of the water shortage.

Harvest time is soon over here. The potatoes gave good yields, apples are in very big supply and only the best fruits are accepted for consumption.

At the present time the vintage is in full swing. Some districts had the misfortune of hail, but otherwise the 1969 wine should turn out a very good drop. In close connection with the vintage are the wine festivals — Winzerfests — and these are very popular. The S.B.B. organises many "Fahrt Ins Blaue" to those events. In the wine districts big processions are organised with beautiful floats and lovely girls. If you speak about "Winzerfest" you think of "Sausen" — young wine in fermentation stage, and very much appreciated by young and old. Here comes the business sense of the Swiss to the surface. Instead of using Swiss wine for Sausen they use cheap Tirolese wine. When I asked a wine-dealer about it, he told me that they get a lot more for the Swiss wine in fermented state than for "Sausen", and that is the way to make money. The wine industry is one of the most profitable agricultural lines at the present time in Switzerland.

October is the month where the annual traditional Olma is being held. It is foremost an agricultural show. This year they had a beautiful arrangement of fruits and vegetables. Another

impressive sight was the big hall with a display of all types of farm machines.

A few weeks before the opening of the Olma, a piece of the N.I. from Wangi to St. Gallen was completed and it was a great help in dealing with the large volume of traffic to the show. It was possible to drive from Schaffhausen to the show in less than one hour, a journey which usually takes about 2 hours.

A feature on the Olma this year was the finish of the first Swiss Jass competition; 30,000 Swiss, including ladies, competed for the many prizes, with the big prize being a car valued at 19,000 Swiss francs. 80 Competitors "Jasst" for the first prize in the last round at the Olma. The winner was Willi Bühlmann Ebikon, with 2427 points. In a T.V. interview he said that he plays cards only very occasionally. The organisers are so pleased with the results that they want to make it an annual event.

Well attended always are the "Metzgete", held from the end of October onwards. It is just about a must for every Swiss to attend one or more of these social events, so there is no trouble of getting rid of money here!

Fog is a big problem at this time of the year. When we have a foggy day accidents increase considerably. One day 30 cars were involved in an accident on the N.I. Lenzburg—Bern. The accident rate is very high in Switzerland and more than 1400 people get killed on Swiss roads every year, which is reflected in insurance premiums, they are very high here.

The other day I read in a Swiss newspaper about the landing of 3 flying saucers in a field in New Zealand. That was naturally big news for me here in Switzerland.

With regards,
E.S.

Swiss Population at the Beginning of 1969

The latest estimates of the Federal Statistical Office indicate that the total population of Switzerland (foreigners included) was 6.115 million at the beginning of the year. This means an increase of 79,000 inhabitants between the beginning of 1968 and the beginning of 1969, a smaller figure than that for the corresponding period a year before, which was 83,000. There is a distinct slow-down in the rate of population growth. Had it followed the rate found in 1963 and 1964, then today's population would have been 6.85 million.

Since 1964, Zurich has lost 7,000 inhabitants, Geneva 5,200, and Bern 600. Basle has gained 1,700 inhabitants and Lausanne 2,500. The present populations of these cities are respectively 432.2, 169.2, 169.5, 166.8, 213.2, and 128.3 thousand inhabitants.

Compared with the 1964 situation, the population of every canton except Appenzell has increased. The smallest increases