

News from Switzerland

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SWISS MACHINERY FOR INDIA

In countries where under-nourishment holds sway it is not enough to bring in ships loaded with wheat or other cereals—it is also essential to unload them as quickly as possible so as to dispatch their cargoes without delay to the districts where the famine is most acute. As India lacks the installations and equipment it needs in this field, the first five machines for unloading cereals presented by Switzerland recently arrived at the Indian port of Bombay. Fifteen further machines will soon follow this first consignment. Half the machines are to be installed at Bombay and the remainder at Calcutta, and thanks to them the unloading capacity of these two great Indian ports will be brought up to 40 tons per hour. (OSEC)

A "LOVERS' EXPRESS" IN EASTERN SWITZERLAND

The Bodensee-Toggenburg Railway Company has thought up an original idea for this summer season. It has had its last steam locomotive renovated and will put it into service to draw special wedding party trains. The guests will be comfortably installed in a coach transformed into a hotel lounge, furnished with easy chairs and sofas and provided with a boudoir. A buffet service will look after the hunger and thirst of the travellers. The "Lovers' Express" will generally run over the Romanshorn-St-Gall-Nesslau section. On request, the special bridal coach can be coupled to normal service trains. Young married couples will thus be able to enter wedded life under full steam. (OSEC)

SWITZERLAND'S OCEAN-GOING MERCHANT FLEET

At the end of last year, the Swiss merchant fleet numbered 31 ships, with a total displacement of 267,297 tons and a total crew of 763 of whom 600 were Swiss citizens.

Created during the last war in order to keep the country supplied with essential commodities, the Swiss fleet ranks only fortieth in the world but is very modern. It includes two tankers for transporting wine and two deep-freeze ships. The main goods carried are coal, iron, chemical fertilizers, wood and rice.

SWITZERLAND'S LARGEST TOWN IS AN AGRICULTURAL COMMUNE

Some extremely serious statistics prove that Zurich, the largest town in Switzerland, is also one of the largest agricultural communes in the country, judged from the number of haystacks it contains. In fact, the fire prevention officials of this town each year inspect some 300 haystacks on urban territory with a view to the prevention of fires that might break out through the fermentation of the hay. (OSEC)

AN INGENIOUS DEVICE FOR COPYING ADDRESSES ON A SMALL SCALE

While big organizations and offices can choose from a large range of appliances for simplifying office work, the same is not true of private individuals and small firms which are compelled to perform by hand certain tiresome jobs like the copying of addresses and other details. It was in order to fill this need that a Swiss manufacturer designed the "Praktikus" addressing set for the rapid and neat copying of addresses, signatures, labels and other short entries on notepaper, invoices, envelopes, etc. This device uses the well-known system according to which addresses typed or written by hand, using a special carbon, can be copied a great number of times merely by applying on to a surface moistened with alcohol. The interesting point about the "Praktikus" system is that all the instruments are combined in one so that it is possible to operate the appliance with one hand. The block marked with the text to be copied is inserted against a strip of foam rubber permitting pressure, fixed along a plastic reservoir, containing the cartridge filled with alcohol and bearing a strip of felt at one end; this felt automatically sucks up alcohol and makes it possible to moisten the paper on which the text is to be copied. All parts of the appliance, together with the ingenious accessories which considerably simplify its use, are housed in a handy attractive case, making "Praktikus" a clean, efficient and very inexpensive office aid. (OSEC)

THE CONSUMPTION OF MEAT IN SWITZERLAND

In 1965, the average per capita consumption of meat in Switzerland amounted to 27.447 kg. (1 kg. equals 2.2 lb.) of pork, 17.445 kg. of beef, 5.849 kg. of veal, 920 gr. of imported meat preparations, 754 gr. of horsemeat, 619 gr. of mutton and 116 gr. of goat meat. This represents a total of 53.180 kg. of meat as opposed to 54.195 kg. in 1964.

In addition, last year every Swiss consumed on an average 5.550 kg. of poultry, 2.065 kg. of fresh fish and 2.108 kg. of tinned fish, 815 gr. of game and rabbit. For this category of meat, the average consumption therefore amounted to 10.538 kg. per inhabitant as compared with 10.407 in 1964. (OSEC)

GENEVA INDUSTRY AND TIDAL POWER

The idea of harnessing the energy developed by the powerful tides of the Bay of Mont-Saint-Michel (France) goes back quite a long way in time. The Ateliers des Charmilles of Geneva (Switzerland) played a large part in the preliminary studies of the various projects considered. They even suggested an original method by which the power station would use multipliers to boost the generators to very high speeds. These proposals were not followed up, being regarded at the time as too bold, and the Rance designers decided to build bulb groups in which the turbine propellers are

coupled directly to the generators. The Geneva industrial concern not only contributed to the designing of this tidal power station but is also participating in the manufacture of its machinery—in collaboration with the Alstom company it is making 3 of the 24 turbines to be installed. (OSEC)

THE MANUFACTURE OF BISCUITS AND CANDY IN SWITZERLAND

In 1965, Switzerland manufactured 27,000 tons of biscuits, rusks and other similar articles as well as 14,000 tons of candy, totalling a value of S.Fr. 190 million (\$44.1 million) at the factory. The increase in output, higher for biscuits than for candy, is 6 per cent over the figure for the previous year. These figures refer to a hundred or so firms, employing 3500 people, 35 per cent of whom are of foreign origin. In this branch, production has doubled between 1950 and 1965, while the number of workers has increased by only 5 per cent owing to measures of rationalization and specialization. (OSEC)

VITALITY IN SWISS DOCUMENTARY FILM MAKING

Swiss film production, it is well known, is on a relatively modest scale compared with that of other European countries. But there is one special field in which Swiss cinematography had had a number of outstanding success—that of scientific films. At the 2nd International Festival of Scientific Films at Sao Paulo, three Swiss entries received awards. The first prize at the Festival was awarded a group of three films presented by Wild Heerbrugg SA dealing with the construction, functioning and application of microscopes. In addition, a film from Messrs Sandoz AG, made in France, received second prize. Finally, honourable mention was awarded to two films presented by Messrs Geigy AG. (OSEC)

AN "ANTI-POISON CENTRE" IN ZURICH

Modern man frequently comes in contact with various poisons (contained in medicines, cleaning products, insecticides, etc.) capable of causing mild or serious poisoning, which it is impossible to counteract properly without accurate information. Consequently the Society of Swiss Pharmacists recently organized in Zurich (Switzerland) a toxicological enquiry centre open 24 hours out of 24, which doctors, pharmaceutical chemists and private individuals have merely to telephone in order to obtain all the information required to diagnose and combat cases of poisoning. This centre's documentation is stored in a card-index system, which is continually kept up to date and already possesses 15,000 cards. It should be added that a Swiss chemical and pharmaceutical products' firm in Zofingen has supplied all pharmaceutical chemists' shops with a complete set of antidotes free of charge. The anti-poison centre in Zurich is therefore an invaluable addition to Switzerland's health facilities. (OSEC)

A NEW SYSTEM FOR REMOTE CONTROLLED READING OF ELECTRICITY METERS

In the recently inaugurated premises of the Electro-technical Institute of the Lausanne Polytechnic, a department of Lausanne University, representatives of Messrs Landis and Gyr AG, Zug, recently demonstrated a new system for reading electricity meters by remote control. Based on their centralized telecommand system—known all over the world—the company has designed an apparatus for fitting to electricity meters which uses the electricity distribution network as the channel for transmitting information put out by the individual meters installed with users. The remote meter readings are routed to a processing centre where they are recorded on perforated tapes carrying all the information required for invoicing. This system undoubtedly provides important advantages over present procedure under which an employee must carry out reading on the premises, and will in particular permit companies to keep precise and chronological records of the consumption of every subscriber and thus to take the measures necessary to reduce peaks of consumption and improve the economic running of the network. (OSEC)

AN OFFICIAL PROPERTY FOR SWISS YOUTH

Morgarten, scene of one of the first successful freedom battles fought by the Old Swiss Confederacy against the Hapsburg horsemen in 1315, has become the official property of the youth of Switzerland. At a recent ceremony, the schoolchildren of the village of Kappel (Canton Schwyz) took symbolic possession of the historic field as representatives of all Swiss youth. The decision to make this gesture was taken at an open meeting of Swiss youth on October 21st 1965 in order to preserve the historic ground along the road between Sattel and Aegeri from encroaching construction and to make of it the site of a memorial and a hostel for Swiss youngsters. A collection among the schoolchildren of all cantons netted a total of 214,110 francs for the purpose.

AN INTERESTING EXPERIMENT IN ANIMAL PSYCHOLOGY AT BASLE (SWITZERLAND)

The head of the famous Basle zoo recently carried out an interesting experiment in animal psychology in this establishment. He brought together two African elephants, a mother and child, and two Indian elephants, also a mother and child, from the Knie circus which was visiting Basle. The introductions, which started rather inauspiciously with a show of suspicion on the part of the elephants, ended in the most perfect accord. This interesting experiment, the first of the kind in a field in which we still possess very little experience, was carried out in the presence of a certain number of experts, and was naturally photographed and filmed in great detail. (OSEC)