

News at Random

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NEWS AT RANDOM

Tourists to Switzerland may have been disappointed by the lack of snow over the New Year Holidays, but when at last heavy snow did fall a few weeks ago it caused great chaos. Zurich, that great Limmatt city which has a road network of 700 kms. — representing roughly the distance from Rome to Zurich — had to engage supplementary workmen to clear the streets of snow. The operation is estimated to have cost 340,000 francs.

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Health authorities in several Swiss cantons dropped plans for scheduled polio immunisation campaigns in order to eliminate the threat of an even more immediate evil — smallpox. Schaffhausen sounded the alarm when it reported the first case of smallpox in forty years. A 26-year-old German journalist, Karl-Heinz Wimmers, just returned from Dusseldorf, came down with the illness. Medical detectives quickly traced Mr. Wimmer's car route from Germany, his travelling companions and others with whom he had been in contact.

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Former Federal Councillor Philippe Etter, who has been elected four times President of the Confederation, has just celebrated his 70th birthday in Kirchenfeld (Berne).

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Customs duty on petrol sold in Switzerland has been raised five centimes per litre. But it is not expected that motorists will have to pay more until the present petrol supply is exhausted. This is the Federal Government's answer to the problem of raising funds to build a national network of autoroutes. At present, approximately 55 per cent of the price of a litre of petrol is the result of taxes. Sixty per cent of the customs duty now goes to the construction of new roads. The Swiss Treasury has agreed on spending 400 million francs on the autobahn network. They estimate that the new tax will totally compensate for the cost of construction of the network.

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A watch factory which will provide employment for some three hundred men and women has just been built for a well-known firm near Montreux — a district hitherto noted for tourism rather than industry.

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Vaud State Councillor Arthur Maret, Socialist, has informed the committee of the Socialist Party that he will not seek re-election for the new term beginning at the end of March.

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An alleged escape ring bringing Germans out of East Berlin by using falsified Swiss passports has been uncovered, according to a report issued by the East German Police. One Swiss student and two West Berliners have

been arrested by the Communist authorities. Andreas Stalder, 28, a Swiss student in West Berlin, was sentenced to two years and nine months in prison after he was arrested while trying to smuggle an East German girl across the frontier with a Swiss passport that had been tampered with.

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The last tramway car, under garlands of flowers, has just made its round of honour through the city of Lucerne before being sent to the junk-yard. There will be no more rail traffic in the streets of the city. All public transportation will be by bus or trolleybus.

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Four skiers were swept to their deaths by an avalanche over the Lang glacier on the Valais side of the Bernese Alps. Two men buried by the same avalanche spent a bitter night in the open, 8,450 feet up, before bringing the news of the death of the four men to Blatten, an Alpine village in the Loetschen Valley.

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Old archives discovered in Sempach have revealed that Walter Ulbricht, Communist leader of East Germany, worked there as a carpenter in the year 1910.

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A Swiss insurance company has taken the initiative in helping to counter the rising number of traffic accidents in Switzerland. On the assumption that a safety-conscious youth will assist in preventing accidents, the Vaudoise Vie, of Lausanne, has announced a safety contest for children. The competition, open to children born between 1945 and 1954, will end on 31st January. The prizes include 250 bicycles and 50 ballpoint pens.

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At the end of last October there were 180,901 TV sets in Switzerland. This number is regularly increasing, particularly around Zurich, Basle, Lausanne, Saint-Gallen and Geneva.

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Michel Marmot, the Swiss yachtsman thought to have been lost attempting a trip to Polynesia, arrived safely at the Galapagos Islands, 400 miles west of the South American mainland. Marmot left the port of Callao, Peru, over six weeks ago without the permission of the port authorities. When there was no news of him, an air and sea search was begun.

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Construction on the Zurich Airport Hotel is soon to start at Glattbrugg, about half-way between the city limit and Zurich Intercontinental Airport. It will feature some 50 guest rooms and suites, all with private bath. The top floor will consist of de luxe apartments with private roof-gardens.

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In Schwyz, the tramways are to be replaced by buses. The change-over will be spread over the next two years.

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Switzerland's gold medal winner at the last Winter Olympics at Squaw Valley, Roger Staub, is turning professional and will enter ski races in the United States and Canada this winter.

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A great social event took place on 20th January in Lausanne — the marriage of Simeon of Saxe-Cobourg, King of Bulgaria, and Miss Margarita Gomez Acebo y Cejuela, daughter of a Madrid businessman. The reception was held at the Town Hall.

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Bobsleighting champion Max Angst of Zurich was banned from competition for life by the Swiss Bobsleigh Federation, and his colleague Hans Zoller of Basle was suspended for three years. Both men have been the captains of the Swiss I and Swiss II bobsleighting teams for years. The Bobsleigh Federation accused the pair of unsportsmanlike conduct at the 1961 world championships in Lake Placid, New York, and during other seasons.

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Yugoslavia has named a woman, Miss Danica Cabiljo, as her consul-general in Geneva.

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Speaking in Basle, Mr. R. A. Langford, Zurich correspondent of the London "Times", said that the content of the Swiss Press was above criticism. But, he added, many Swiss newspapers had an old-fashioned outlook.

(Most of the above items were received from the A.T.S. News Service.)

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LETTER FROM ST. MORITZ

When the short, magnificent Engadine summer has flown like a dream, when the lively bustle of the season has given way to a deep peace, there is a kind of ache in one's heart. Autumn, with its wonderful, bright days and its ardent magnificence, sweetens the parting from summer and makes the bridge across to the winter pleasant. As the days become shorter and shorter, the feeling of yearning for winter, the real, solid winter suddenly asserts itself.

The summer was indeed splendid, and we enjoyed it; we tasted of its beauty to the full. But the winter follows on. Nowadays we can roam at ease in the snowy mountains, go on ski tours up hill and down dale.

Admittedly, winter does not provide the glory of colour that summer does; the green meadows are covered with snow, the gay flowers have died, the blue Engadine lakes are bound by ice and snow. But Master Winter has other merits, instead. Summer is usually an unsettled companion, at one moment in a radiant frame of mind, the next moment dull and unfriendly. Indeed, the dull, unfriendly condition can often last for weeks on end, and seems at times indomitable! Winter, though, is different. Winter has a more uniform steady character. He resembles a mature, calm and noble being within whom passion and desire, experience and hope, have settled down to a quiet, crystal-clear serenity of the soul. For weeks at a time one beautiful day follows another, uninterruptedly, each more splendid, more brilliant than the preceding one. The wind, which in summer has to provide the necessary breeze, is dormant in winter, so that the air is quite calm. Not that storms are completely unheard of! From time to time a snow-storm blows up and whistles and howls its way through the streets and villages. But they do not last long — and the sun shines forth again, brightly, from a cloudless blue sky.

There is no haste or hurry about the winter, when all is peaceful, settled and comfortable. It is so pleasant for visitors who come to the Engadine to find that life in general is more peaceful, because one is not bound by the motor car craze; when paying a visit, taking afternoon tea, or going to a dance, one walks. The evenings are longer, and one has time to spare — at last a human being, and not a slave to one's profession, business or motor car!

Because of all these merits and pleasant characteristics, we Engadiners love the winter much more than the townsfolk do. It brings something gay and cosy to our valley.

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