

# Accidents

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as a result of advancing medical techniques and specialized nursing practices; and finally, though it may sound a paradox, the steadily increasing loss of nursing personnel as a result of marriage, despite the otherwise encouraging increase in the number of candidates for nursing diplomas.

At the same time, the demands made upon nurses are increasing constantly, and the Swiss nursing schools, like the one in Zurich, are becoming ever more selective, as their standards of professional training rise.

What was accomplished 64 years ago by Dr. Anna Heer and her colleagues — the founding of a good training institution to help alleviate the shortage of nurses — thus emerges as a stroke of vital work for today and for the future as well. The Swiss Nursing School in Zurich is fulfilling an important function, by operating a well-equipped, scientifically advanced hospital run by experienced women doctors; and by offering theoretical and practical training for student nurses.

*E.F.-S.*

*(By courtesy "Swissair Gazette".)*

## ACCIDENTS

Lack of space has prevented us from reporting accidents so far. Every week our news sheets from Switzerland include more or less serious accidents which have occurred. The most numerous are on the roads, and these, as well as fire and mountaineering mishaps, will be referred to in a later issue.

Accidents happen everywhere; to begin with in the home, where carelessness often has far-reaching consequences. A housewife in Bellinzona died through scalding herself with boiling water. An old woman at Arbon was found dead in her flat after a fortnight. In Bienne, a fifteen-year-old girl fell from the 14th floor of a skyscraper and was killed instantaneously. At Frauenfeld a child of eight fell from the fourth floor while sleepwalking and by a miracle escaped any major injury. A small child in the Canton of Aargau died after a screw had got stuck in his throat.

Poisoning from "mushrooms" has been reported several times, so have accidents on the land, either because horses have run wild or a tractor or other piece of machinery was wrongly used. A mountain farmer at Meiringen was killed when he was out searching for a lost goat.

Death and injuries have been caused on several occasions to men coming into contact accidentally with high tension transmission lines, and recently in a large business house in Zurich, a workman was killed by a lift which was being repaired.

Reports of workmen falling to death from scaffoldings on building sites or from roofs are received every now and then. From an interesting

### ACCIDENT CHART

for 1962 in the Brown Boveri Bulletin we learn that in their works injuries to hands and fingers increased last year and represented 42% of all bodily harm done, feet and toes 18% and the rest of the body from between 7.9% (torso) to 1.2% (thigh). 21% of all accidents were caused by falling from steps or slipping, 20% by tools or sharp objects and 15% by mishaps while busy on machinery. In 13% of all accidents at Brown Boveri's, falling articles were blamed, in 6% carrying goods by hand, and in 4% chemicals or burning. The rest were caused by mechanical load transport and electric current.

### ACCIDENTS IN SPORT

happen frequently in every field. The Swiss Society for the Prevention of Accidents launched a special appeal early in the year for safe ski-ing. Over 100,000 copies of a booklet of instruction were distributed in a first attempt.

Talking of accidents in the snow — the brakes of a snow plough on the line Altstaetten (St. Gall) — Gais (Appenzell) suddenly failed and the plough shot downhill.

The operator could jump clear, but when the heavy machine finally got derailed it plunged into a group of children, of whom several were injured.

Now during the summer many swimming accidents have been reported. A rather high proportion of the victims are foreign workers. The Swiss News Agency (Agence Télégraphique Suisse) published a special appeal in Italian by the Swiss Advice Bureau for the Prevention of Accidents, warning against swimming after a meal, diving in unknown waters, and bathing in unsafe places like fast rivers or near steep lake shores.

Amongst accidents during military service a recent tragic occurrence has been related when two officer cadets ("Aspiranten") lost their lives on a swimming test in full kit.

Accounts of boating accidents, too, were sent in June. A folding canoe capsized on the Lake of Constance, causing the death of one of the four occupants. Two motor-boats on the Lake of Zug collided, resulting in the loss of one life. A few weeks previously a freight vessel on the Lake of Geneva sank to a depth of 200 metres; four men drowned. Earlier this month a motor-boat carrying a party of 170 passengers collided with the quayside at Stein-am-Rhein. Miraculously there were only minor injuries and negligible damage to clothes and equipment. Incidentally, the Town Hall at Stein-am-Rhein had suffered serious harm last year when a 23-metre-long motor-crane smashed against the building. Serious

### RAILWAY ACCIDENTS

fortunately are rare in Switzerland, but a deplorable number of accidents occur at level crossings. The Swiss Federal Railways published a report from which we glean that in 1962 there were 110 accidents at the 3,845 level crossings, causing injuries to 61 people, of whom 38 died.

Since the only major train collision last summer, at Schoenenwerd, which resulted in the death of two men, there has been only one bigger accident, at Sihlbrugg in July this year — a collision which caused injuries to 19 passengers and the conductor of a fast train.

### EXPLOSIONS

have been reported from various places in Switzerland during recent months. After the mysterious explosions in several parts of Lucerne last summer, the explosions in Zug, and a week later at a petrol station at Cham (Zug), a serious explosion occurred at the Geigy works at Schweizerhalle (Basle) last autumn, when three men were injured and a fourth was found dead the next day inside the exploded container, a huge screw having pierced his heart. Three explosions have been reported from Geneva in the course of the year. The worst occurred in May on

a building site, causing extensive destruction but fortunately no serious injuries.

In the construction of the National Highway, a conveyor belt is used (one kilometre long) to transport gravel from Langnau am Albis to Thalwil. A few weeks ago this belt snapped, and the whole load, the belt with the scoops and the supports were pushed into a huge pile. The damage including that to motors amounted to nearly one million francs.

A tragic accident occurred at the district hospital of Lachen (Schwyz) when, through a series of unfortunate circumstances, carbon-dioxide instead of oxygen was put into an anaesthetization apparatus, causing the death of a patient.

Finally, two unusual accidents: one due to a burst water main, when 1,500 young chickens drowned at a poultry farm at Obergurzel (Berne); the other on the road from Colombier to Boudry (Neuchâtel) when a lorry got caught in the tramline and overturned, and 3,500 wine bottles on the lorry and 2,000 on the trailer fell on to the road, half of them getting smashed.

#### AIR CRASHES

The report for 1962 of the Federal Department of Communications showed that 35 investigations into air accidents on Swiss territory had to be started during the year. Three were connected with regular air services (no loss of life) and four with commercial charter services (including a German taxi plane which crashed in the region of the Oberalpstock (Grisons) with the loss of six passengers). Twenty accidents happened to sports and private planes, five to gliders, two to balloons and one concerned parachute jumping. A total of 14 people lost their lives and 20 were seriously injured.

This report does not include any military mishap like the loss of the three fighter planes a year ago crashing near the Furkapass when three pilots were killed.

#### THE SWISSAIR DISASTER

In June we received a report of an unusual exercise held at the village of Embrach near the Swiss airport at Kloten. It was assumed that an aircraft had crashed and the local and cantonal police (3 officers, 48 men and 10 dogs), the airport fire brigade, local first aid detachment, as well as a helicopter of the Swiss Emergency Airguard (Rettungsflugwacht) took part in dealing with the catastrophe.

Now, 2½ months later, the whole of Switzerland has been stunned by Swissair's worst disaster in which conditions arose infinitely worse than those presumed at Embrach.

On Wednesday, 4th September, a Caravelle aircraft of Swissair bound for Geneva and Rome left Kloten airport at 7.12 a.m. Five minutes later it lost radio contact and disappeared from the radar screen. Nine minutes after take-off the airliner crashed at the village of Duerrenesch in the Canton of Aargau (where the Home of the Swiss abroad is). "The Times" reported that "according to some of the villagers the Caravelle was already on fire when it plummeted out of the thick morning mist". The aircraft made a crater several metres deep "when it struck the ground and exploded less than 50 yards from two farmhouses. Bits of the aircraft — mostly mere fragments of twisted metal — were strewn through orchards, woods and fields for more than half a mile. Parts of the exploding aircraft damaged both houses, setting alight a barn adjacent to one of them. The occupants were uninjured."

Seventy-four passengers and a crew of six lost their lives. Among the victims were the experienced pilot, Eugen Bohli, his co-pilot, a steward and three hostesses. Eight Swissair employees, one with his wife, were killed, heads of departments and instructors. The other passengers included one Englishman, five other foreigners and sixteen Swiss citizens, one of them the Federal Council's delegate to the UNO conference on tourism in Rome, Prof. Dr. K. Krapf.

Over half the victims of the disaster were the 43 inhabitants of the small hamlet of Humlikon near Andelfingen in the Canton of Zurich. They were members of the local farmers' co-operative society and their wives who were on a visit to an experimental fruit farm near Geneva.

The village of Humlikon had counted 217 inhabitants — 174 are left. As the "Basler Nachrichten" put it, "the village has lost a generation". Nineteen couples were killed and 48 children are orphaned. 24 families have been bereaved. The majority of the farms have lost their masters. The whole Commune Council, the School President, the innkeeper, the postmaster, and the chief of the fire brigade have all been killed, and, according to the Constitution, the affairs of the Commune have now to be dealt with by the District Council of Andelfingen, whilst a former teacher of Humlikon directs the most urgent business on the spot. Welfare workers and executives from neighbouring villages have come to help.

Salvage work was extremely difficult. The wreckage was thrown over a large area and consisted of thousands of small bits and pieces. The bodies of the 80 passengers were terribly mutilated and amounted to mere human fragments which were collected in nine coffins. The salvage was carried out by 80 people working day and night, amongst them scientists and soldiers. As the crater had to be searched to a depth of eight metres, a bulldozer and crane were put into action.

Motorised troops and cavalry had to assist the police in roping off the site of the disaster. Many reporters, most of them apparently from abroad, have been behaving badly and the village had to be cleared. Crowds arrived by the thousand.

On 9th September Swissair issued a statement that the provisional investigation was now concluded and it could be stated that in all probability the undercarriage had been damaged on take-off, which caused fire in the hydraulic system. All the vital parts of the airliner have been found: scientific and technical evidence has yet to be examined before a final report can be compiled. This will take several months.

Swissair has had a fleet of eight powerful and reliable Caravelles so far. The lost HB/ICV machine "Schaffhausen" has flown 2,082 hours and both pilots were experienced and capable operators. The Duerrenesch disaster is the gravest accident which has happened to Swissair since its foundation in 1931. Contrary to most other international airlines, only two relatively bad accidents had hitherto happened to the company: in 1954 a Convair plane had to come down in the Channel and four people lost their lives, and nine people were killed when a training aircraft crashed into the Lake of Constance in 1957.

The insurance of passengers is covered by international agreement. Based on the Warsaw Convention the sum of £3,000 per passenger who lost his life through an accident was raised to £6,000. Swissair put the higher rate into operation in August, earlier than obliged. "The Times" City Editor reported on 5th September that the hull of the

Caravelle was insured for about £1m. through the Swiss Aviation Pool, but about half of this was reinsured in the London market.

A tremendous wave of grief and sympathy has spread all over Switzerland and messages of condolence have arrived from abroad. Many festivities were cancelled, notably the concerts by British bands scheduled in Zurich during the British Fair and Fortnight, and the big "Volksfest" in connection with the jubilee celebrations in the Canton of Appenzell.

There was a Memorial Service at the Fraumünster Church in Zurich on Saturday, 7th September. The Federal Council was represented by the President of the Confederation, Federal Councillor Spuehler, and Federal Councillor Chaudet. The crowds were so vast that the service had to be relayed to the Grossmünster, to St. Peter's and the Wasserkerche, as well as the Münsterhof. All the Zurich churches rang ten minutes before the start in memory of the dead. At the Service the Cantonal and municipal governments and the organisation of Swissair were represented in large numbers. The music and the addresses were transmitted by the Swiss broadcasting system, and a service was held at the same time at the Jewish Synagogue in Zurich.

Two days later the funeral took place at Humlikon/Andelfingen when the remains of the inhabitants who had lost their lives so tragically were carried through the stricken village in a long procession. Federal Councillor Wahlen and members of various cantonal governments and the Swissair Company followed the mourners. From all parts of the country people had come to pay a last tribute.

Help has been flooding the little village. Organisations of every description and individuals have donated money, and gifts in cash and kind have been pouring in. Offers to provide homes for the orphans have come. A course of young officer cadets have committed themselves to pay for the upbringing and training of one of the orphans. The numbers who have come forward to help with the harvest and the potato harvest later on surpass the requirements. Cowmen and cooks, farmhands and agricultural students have been sent to the village and the deprived farms and bereft children are being looked after in a spirit of admirable solidarity.

The village wants to keep the children together, and to try and keep the farms going for them. The Swiss Farmers' Union has decided to assist in this. A Zurich industrialist has offered, together with other well-to-do circles, to employ farming couples to take charge of the farms until the children are old enough to take over.

Much has been done to alleviate suffering and all the offers of help that have come spontaneously from all over the country have shown that charity and sympathy exist under the cloak of hard materialism. Nor must one forget that day in, day out, good deeds are done on the quiet, sometimes real sacrifices, which never reach the light of publicity.

At the funeral Federal Councillor Wahlen called the disaster a national trial, which should shake the Swiss people to self-examination. He appealed to the whole country not to fail in the coming weeks, months and years: "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ". Does this only apply to the Duerrenaesch disaster?

(Based mainly on news received by courtesy of the Agence Télégraphique Suisse, and the "Basler Nachrichten".)

## LA DEFENSE NATIONALE MILITAIRE

Exposé présenté par le Colonel cdt. de corps R. Frick,  
Chef de l'instruction de l'armée

Journées des Suisses de l'étranger, St. Moritz, 16.-18.8.1963

Peut-être avez-vous suivi, mes chers compatriotes, de vos résidences lointaines, les efforts déployés par le Gouvernement et les chefs militaires de notre pays en vue d'adapter sa défense militaire aux exigences probables d'une guerre future. Il y a cinq ans, lors de vos assises de Zurich, Monsieur le Conseiller fédéral Chaudet, Chef du Département Militaire Fédéral, vous avait exposé les raisons pour lesquelles nous nous trouvions contraints de procéder à une réorganisation de l'armée. Il précisait alors que cela prendrait beaucoup de temps.

En fait, les choses ont été menées de telle façon qu'en 1961 toutes décisions étaient prises et que le 1er janvier 1962 la nouvelle organisation entraînait en vigueur.

Peut-être vous êtes-vous intéressés aux différentes étapes de cette nouvelle refonte de l'organisation de notre armée destinée à lui permettre de remplir sa mission traditionnelle compte tenu des nouvelles formes de combat qui pourraient lui être imposées. Nous ne pouvons guère nous représenter jusqu'à quel point les modifications intervenues vous sont connues. Au risque de vous ennuyer avec des explications parfaitement superflues je vais me permettre de rappeler ici les caractéristiques de cette réorganisation.

Il convient de souligner tout d'abord le fait que l'organisation de 1951, résultant des renseignements recueillis au cours du conflit de 1939 à 1945, représentait elle déjà un progrès sérieux dans l'efficacité de notre instrument de défense militaire. Notons encore que les études et travaux avaient été entrepris dès 1945 déjà et que leur aboutissement en 1951 avait donc exigé un délai de réalisation de six ans.

Au rythme effréné du développement de la science et de la technique, une évolution précipitée jusqu'à en être révolutionnaire, a bouleversé les conceptions guerrières, cela à un point tel, qu'en 1955 déjà, la Commission de défense nationale et l'Etat-major général se sont trouvés dans l'obligation de reconsidérer tout le problème de notre défense nationale militaire. Cela s'imposait pour les raisons principales suivantes:

- le développement de la science nucléaire permettait désormais la fabrication de projectiles atomiques de modèles de plus en plus réduits ce qui eut pour conséquence la création d'une artillerie atomique attribuée aux grandes unités de bataille de type dit conventionnel.

Une telle artillerie est capable, avec un seul obus, d'ouvrir une brèche de 1 à 2 km de diamètre, dans n'importe quel dispositif défensif.

- dans toutes les armées étrangères le nombre des grandes unités aéroportées ne cessait d'augmenter, ce qui prouve de façon incontestable que l'enveloppement par la verticale jouera dans un conflit futur un rôle stratégique de première importance.

- les moyens blindés, techniquement perfectionnés et mieux armés, prenaient une place de plus en plus grande dans l'organisation des armées étrangères.

Les conséquences de l'emploi combiné de l'artillerie atomique, des grandes unités aéroportées et de la puissance des blindés devaient amener les chefs militaires à se pencher à nouveau sur la doctrine d'engagement de notre armée.