

Recent deaths in Switzerland

Autor(en): **A.T.S.**

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RECENT DEATHS IN SWITZERLAND

It is a well-known fact that with the advent of spring the number of deaths increases. We have recently received so many announcements of well-known Swiss personalities passing away that it is quite impossible to mention them all. Amongst the number of diplomatic personalities Minister Karl Stucki should be mentioned. He died at the age of 74, having served in the Swiss Foreign Office since 1919. Monsieur Franco Brenni, until a few months ago Ambassador in Portugal, died suddenly whilst travelling through Zurich, at the age of 65.

National Councillor Pierino Tatti (70), Municipal President of Bellinzona, died early in April. National Councillor Emile Giroud collapsed during a meeting at Moutier, aged 67. The former Federal Judge Henri Thélin died in Lausanne at the age of 96. Dr. Hans Markwalder, Town Clerk of Berne from 1916 to 1950 and Honorary Citizen of Berne, died at 81.

Of scholars and teachers Professor Paul-Louis Mercanton, one of the pioneers in wireless telephony, died at the age of 87. Other eminent scientists on the death roll are Prof. Emile Guyenot, expert on genetics, the radiologist Dr. Raymond Sarasin, and Edouard Bélin, the discoverer of belinography (transmission of photographs by wireless).

Coincidence would have it that the death was reported almost simultaneously of Monsignore Willi, Domprobst of Choire (78), Rabbi Samuel Brom (73) of Lucerne, and the Archimandrite Valiadis (81), head of the Greek Orthodox Church in Switzerland.

The world of art lost a gifted sculptress and painter, Maria Perlasca-Caccia (73), and the sculptor Mario Bernsaconi from Lugano. The actor Alois Rainer died at 78 in Lugano, and the famous conductor, Jeruchim Mersson, at the Jewish old age home at Lengnau, also aged 78. The internationally famous conductor, Ferenc Friscay, died in Basle at the end of February. He was not yet 49 and though not a Swiss citizen he had been living at Ermatingen for about ten years.

Corps Commander Colonel Jules Borel died unexpectedly in Neuchâtel at the age of 79. Business circles lost Jacob Hecht, founder and chairman of the Neptun Transport and Shipping Company in Basle, one of the pioneers in the international navigation of the Rhine.

The oldest inhabitant of Bienne, Mrs. Rosina Mischler Fivian, died in her hundredth year. Other centenarians were Mrs. E. Wild-Ruchat (Prilly) and Mr. Emmanuel Ferron (Court, J.B.). Four men aged 101 died, Henri Montandon at La Brevine, Johann Traber, the oldest inhabitant of Basle, Jules Grobéty of Vallorbe and Jakob Weber-Kuenzli of Murgenthal (Aargau). Mrs. Johanna Annasohn-Rothenfelder was 104 when she died on 12th March at Uttwil near Romanshorn.

With Ingenieur Urs Feer the Swiss abroad have lost a great friend. He was one of the architects of the Solidarity Fund of the Swiss Abroad, himself an "Auslandschweizer" for many years.

Finally, two unusual personalities died. One was Giacomo Gaffuri, who died at St. Moritz at the age of 97. He was helping in erecting the first ice- and curling-rinks, also the bobsleigh run and the famous Cresta run. For 82 years he had been employed and was still looking after the golf courses last summer. The other was "Vater Janzi", the last postillion of the Jaun Pass. He passed away at 81 at Boltigen (Simmental).

[A.T.S.]

THE SWISS EFFORTS TOWARDS INDUSTRIAL ATOMIC POWER

The Lucens Experimental Power Station

As the Federal Council had insisted upon having to deal with only one body responsible for the appropriate investment of the funds made ready for the building of an experimental Swiss atomic power station, an agreement was concluded in July 1961 between Thermatom Ltd., Suisatom AG. and Energie Nucléaire S.A., which agreement led to the creation of a Société nationale pour l'encouragement de la technique atomique industrielle. This company then formed an executive group to implement the plans for an experimental nuclear power station at Lucens.

The agreement, by putting an end to the dispersal of effort and the rivalries previously existing, showed the common will of industrial and economic Switzerland to repair the country's backwardness in the utilization of atomic energy. The atomic power station at Lucens is a happy compromise between the projects prepared by Energie Nucléaire S.A. and Thermatom Ltd. The type of heavy water moderated reactor chosen by Thermatom Ltd. (the more advanced type of the two) is to be installed where the preliminary work is most advanced, that is in the Lucens cave recommended by Energie Nucléaire S.A.

The total cost of the experimental atomic power station at Lucens is estimated at 70 million Swiss francs, half of which sum is to be put up by the Confederation.

The plant is so conceived that no accident can possibly result in a dangerous escape of fission products, and the security provisions are extremely severe.

The whole installation will be a hundred yards inside a hill and covered by some sixty yards of native rock. Construction began this year and will last for about three years in all. The first tests are therefore expected to take place in 1965. The Lucens station will have a power of 30,000 thermal kilowatt-hours, giving a net electric power of 6,000 to 7,000 kilowatt-hours. The experience gained by its construction and operation will be extremely valuable to Swiss industry and to the Swiss economy in general, for it will run from the actual building of the reactor to the supply of electric power of nuclear origin.

Future Prospects of the Swiss Atomic Industry

True, the realization of the Lucens project is a great step forward in the utilization of Swiss talent in the atomic field. It is, however, still a long way to a full-scale atomic power station supplying current at economical rates and in commercial quantities. For this, a yet bigger effort will have to be made by industry and by the authorities. And they will have to make this effort if Switzerland is to be able to meet competition at the international level.

Compared with other countries, the expenditure of the Swiss Confederation on atomic energy is still quite a modest one. All the same, great progress has been made in Switzerland over the last few years, and particularly in 1961, in the spheres of research into, technical development of and legislation on atomic energy.

Swiss industry has, moreover, proved that it can meet international competition at the atomic level, for important orders for the partial equipment of various atomic power stations have been secured. Furthermore, by joining the big international organizations devoted to atomic research and by the signing of bilateral agreements, Switzerland is taking her part in world efforts towards the atomic age.