

Innovations in Switching on the National Railways (SBB)

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Another important event took place in November when the Palais de l'Athénée celebrated its centenary. It is there that the Committee of the International Red Cross was founded in 1863.

The international music competition took place in September, followed by the congress of the International Federation of Young Lawyers. Another conference was that of the organisation for a world parliament, and Federal Councillor Bonvin delivered an address during the "Quinzaine à l'Université de Genève". Finally, the Council of CERN met in Geneva in December.

Other news from Geneva is about considerable damage in the Cathedral of St. Peter where a main burst during the cold weather and of an armed robbery on the branch office of the Union Bank of Switzerland. On New Year's Eve a bad fire broke out in a mansion on the Route de Malagnou, and a few days later damage of some ten million francs was caused by the worst fire for twelve years when the "Bon Génie" Stores near the Place du Molard was gutted. Two hundred firemen and thirty policemen took part in the fire-fighting.

The Geneva Authors' Prize was awarded to Nicolas Bouvier for his travel book "L'Usage du Monde". The widow of Prof. Charles Bally has bequeathed her mansion at Chêne-Bougeries to the Geneva Academic Society. The house has been a centre of linguistic research for thirty years. A Charles Bally Fund for the promotion of linguistic studies and classical philology has also been created. An anonymous woman sold her Renoir picture in New York and donated part of the proceeds, Fr.125,000.—, to the Geneva Holiday Camps.

The report of the "Grand Théâtre" foundation created a stir. A considerable deficit was made in a short time and the Trust complained about the bad state of the theatre when it was opened in December 1962. "The Times" described it as "Comedy of Errors at Theatre — 'Hasty Opening' brings headaches".

Finally, three items of news concerning lake and river. The wreckage of a transport ship was accidentally discovered at a depth of two hundred metres when a group of divers made experiments with an underwater television camera. Two months later a taxi chauffeur successfully landed a pike 1.18 metres long and weighing 12.6 kilos. And a little while ago the Geneva club for underwater sport discovered a lake-dwelling, one of the most important finds in the Lake of Geneva so far. The village is some four thousand years old and extends for roughly sixty thousand square metres near Versoix.

(Based on news received by courtesy of the Agence Télégraphique Suisse.)

MACHINE TOOL PRODUCTION IN GENEVA

In Geneva the five firms specialising in the field of machine tools each year produce over seven hundred machines of different types, over 80% of which are exported to European and overseas markets. The value exported amounts to approximately seventy million Swiss francs a year. The fine achievement of these factories is all the more striking when it is considered that they are up against very keen foreign competition.

[O.S.E.C.]

SWITZERLAND ON THE MAP

When the Genevese Henry Dufour, the later general of the Swiss army, issued the first sheets of his topographical map of Switzerland in 1809, the outstanding job accomplished by him and his assistants was highly controversial. On the one hand, it found fullest recognition and praise while, on the other, sharp criticism was voiced because of "the slanted light and the system applied to mark altitudes". That was long ago. The Topographical Survey of Switzerland, which has its offices near Berne, is celebrating its 125th anniversary and may be rightly proud of the excellent reputation which Swiss cartography enjoys in the world today. While in 1838 General Dufour was able to sell but three hundred copies of the first four sheets of his map, sales of maps in 1963 totalled 1.1 million copies.

[S.N.T.O.]

INNOVATIONS IN SWITCHING ON THE NATIONAL RAILWAYS (SBB)

The Electrotechnical Research Department of the Swiss National Railways (SBB) has just developed a system which will increase the traffic in the humping operation in switching yards while resulting in savings in personnel and money. Conclusive trials at the switching station at Basel-Muttenz have been made where the new device has been used on forty-one tracks.

The principle of the installation rests on two elements recently developed: a braking device for the rail and an electrodynamic accelerator. The first element is placed at the beginning of each one of the tracks of the control group and it automatically gives a constant speed to the cars. The second element stretches over about half of the aforementioned tracks and its control gadget, activated by a linear motor, releases itself as soon as the car stops or when its speed exceeds 1m./sec. The new installation doubles, or indeed triples, the capacity of switching operations. It will make obsolete present braking systems and dispense with the necessity of brake shoe installations. Thanks to it, there will be no more accidents nor damages in the course of switching.

[O.S.E.C.]

DINING CAR ANCESTRY

The first dining car to be introduced by the Swiss Railways was the 1888 model which operated between Basle and Milan. This innovation which added considerably to travel comfort found such favourable echo with the public that the "Compagnie Internationale des Wagons-Lits" established in Brussels (Belgium) extended the service. Since 1903, the "Swiss Dining Car Company" (SSG) takes care of restaurant service for the inland traffic while CIWL cars are hitched to some international trains. Today, the Swiss Federal Railways have forty-five dining and snack cars of most modern construction. One of the old models, built 1914 in Smichov near Prague, may be visited at the Swiss Traffic Museum in Lucerne where it still serves its purpose although it is now stationed and far less rickety than formerly en route.

[S.N.T.O.]