

# Innovations

Autor(en): **[s.n.]**

Objektyp: **Article**

Zeitschrift: **The Swiss observer : the journal of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK**

Band (Jahr): - **(1970)**

Heft 1605

PDF erstellt am: **13.09.2024**

Persistenter Link: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-691702>

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# INNOVATIONS

(by courtesy of OSEC)

## Birth of the first hygrometer watch in Switzerland

At the last International Inventors Exhibition in Brussels, a silver-gilt medal was awarded to a Granges industrialist (Canton of Solothurn) for having created a hygrometer watch which is bound to meet with public favour. This gadget-watch is provided with a ring set on the case and indicating the changes of the weather. Reacting to the humidity of the air, the material that covers the case turns blue when the weather is going to become dry and fine, and pink to indicate rain. Thus the wide range of special watches launched by the Swiss watchmaking industry during the last few years has been enriched with yet another speciality.

## A new medicine to combat Parkinson's disease

A big Swiss pharmaceutical firm has announced the discovery of a new medicine against Parkinson's disease, which so far nothing has been able to combat. This medicine, based on a substance (L-Dopa) discovered by a Swiss research worker in 1913, has been tried out clinically in various European countries and is now to be launched on the world market under the name of Lodoropa. One hundred million francs (US \$23.25 million) has been invested in the construction of a new production plant in Switzerland and the United States, which although very strict in this respect, has already authorised its sale. This medicine which is unfortunately unable to cure this terrible disease but diminishes its effects and combats it effectively, will have to be used very carefully and by well informed specialists only. For this purpose, a big congress will shortly be organised in Switzerland to which specialists from all over the world will be invited.

## The first mobile reading stand

An electric mobile reading stand, aimed at simplifying the work of typists as well as the reading of wiring diagrams in the electronics industry, etc., has been designed by a Lausanne inventor. This new appliance of simple design avoids the drawbacks of existing reading stands (manipulation, size, etc.). This small desk consists of a support for the document to be read and a sliding ruler graduated according to the spacing of a typewriter. It has a motor for operating the sliding ruler, controlled by a device placed separate from the document support. It is very light, fits easily into a briefcase and can be assembled like Meccano. Thanks to its document support, provided with a large number of holes, it is easily fixed without hooks to a wall, a telex machine for the transmission of texts or a machine for the automatic reading of book-keeping documents.

## Swiss novelty: a musical blackboard

Who has not envied keen musicians who are able to read a musical score with as much ease and enjoyment as a detective novel? For the rest of us, the staves and notes are merely a mass of hopelessly unintelligible signs. Thanks to the musical blackboard presented by a Swiss firm at a number of trade fairs, including Didacta at Basle and Inter Navex in London, everyone will now be able to convert written musical notes into sound. An electronic device consisting of 80 transistors and 40 diodes is built into this board making it possible to hear, by simply pressing with a rod, the notes marked by the teacher or pupil in chalk on the blackboard. This instrument offers new scope for the audio-visual teaching of music: it increases students' interest in music lessons, and develops their power of memory and creativeness. Designed mainly for secondary school education, it can also render invaluable service in training adults, especially choirs.

## A new time check: an inexpensive warning system

The C.90 Time Switch, put out by a Swiss firm, is an electrochemical cell with control electrodes, capable of switching off a comparatively high current after a pre-set time. The C.90 acts as a switch opening after a period of time from 100 to 5,000 hours. There are two circuits: a low impedance (utilisation) circuit, in which the current is switched off by the dissolution of the anode and a high impedance (timing) circuit which regulates the speed of electrolysis. A simple modification of the timing circuit by the addition of a resistance makes it possible to set the required interval of time. The intrinsic precision of the C.90 is  $\pm 5\%$ . It is therefore a tiny meter (diam. 9 mm., length 18 mm.) indispensable for any preventive maintenance or servicing: emptying and overhauls, supervision of long-term processes, replacement of parts, length of life of tubes and circuits, etc. The extremely low price of the C.90 Time Switch justifies its use in all fields.

## Extending pruning shears 5-SM

The extending pruning shears 5-SM we wrote about a few months ago have met with great success abroad. After winning awards at the Brussels and New York Inventors' Salons, these shears formed the subject of a report by the Federal Agricultural Research Station in Lausanne. This specialised organisation mentions the advantages offered by this instrument for pruning fruit trees; advantageously replacing the "chanille" type tree-pruner used for high branches, it avoids unnecessary movements and increases cutting power. An invaluable tool for professional arboriculturists, it can also render useful service to amateur fruit-growers.

## Tchoukbal, a new sport of Swiss invention

The International Physical Training Federation in Lisbon has just awarded the Geneva doctor Hermann Brandt the Thulin prize for inventing the game of "tchoukball". The inventor of this new sport has devoted the whole of his professional career to the association of medicine and sport. The founder of the first medical sports service in Switzerland, he is at the same time the author of many books that are now standard works in the field of sports medicine throughout the world. "Tchoukball", which is like handball and the Basque game of "pe-lote", requires a frame fitted with springs with which the players hit a ball to and fro to each other. This game, which anyone can play, has the advantage of making all the muscles of the body work and provides a complete psychophysical training (resistance, wind, skill, tactics, etc.). How soon shall we be seeing the first world "tchoukball" championships?

## AN "ALPINARIUM" FOR PIZ LAGALB BERNINA

About 165 feet to the southeast of the upper station of the aerial cableway from Curtinatsch to Lagalb the Alpinarium Piz Lagalb Bernina was inaugurated. It took about one year to complete it at an altitude of more than 9,500 feet at a cost of nearly half a million Swiss francs. The alpinarium's purpose is, among other things, to add another attraction to the impressive panorama of Lagalb. Thus more people would use the aerial cableway even at times other than the main skiing season. So far this transportation company has had very good winter seasons but the summer results have been rather poor and thus often have offset the winter profits. As we have learned from Prof. Heini Hediger, the director of Zurich's Zoo, there was another reason for the construction of this new type of animal reserve. During the current Nature Protection Year and beyond it the public's attention should be drawn to alpine animals threatened with extinction and it is well known that successful protection of nature and animals must be based on actual knowledge of nature and animals. Dr. Hediger, the originator of Europe's highest nature reserve, sees as the alpinarium's main task to enable people to get closer and more familiar with animals. Later on the alpinarium at Lagalb may become an interesting observatory as for instance the marmots will be shown not only during their short period of summer activity but with special equipment one will be able to observe them during their long hibernation. These observations may prove to be of special importance as recently there has been a great deal of behaviour research done with respect to the attitudes of animals while asleep, especially since artificial refrigeration of man has gained a great deal of

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theoretical and practical importance. The Alpinarium Lagalb serves another purpose, too, as Prof. Hediger informed us. Many tourists who visit our mountains and national parks would like to take pictures of typical representatives of our alpine fauna and are disappointed if they do not meet them at the roadside as one encounters elephants, rhinos, lions and antelopes in African national parks. These friends of nature may now have their wish for in the alpinarium they will be able to photograph typical alpine animals to their heart's content at close range and in their natural habitat just slightly altered. The alpinarium is open during the same hours as the aerial cableway is in service. Admission is free.

(SNT0)

## SWISSAIR NEWS

### Air Taxi Services for Swissair Passengers

Swissair passengers departing from or arriving at U.K. airports can now make use of connecting flights by chartered aircraft under an agreement between the airline and the U.K. Air Taxi Operators Association.

Bookings for the air taxi service can be made through Swissair offices or travel agents at the same time as those for the scheduled flights. Such bookings can be accepted by any member of the Association or delegated from one member to another; since the Association has 11 members throughout the U.K., the chances of a charter aircraft being available when required, particularly at short notice, are proportionately improved and the booking procedure is simplified.

### New Hotel opens in Zurich

The Hotel Atlantis, Zurich, the first of the three major Zurich hotels in which Swissair has a share and a management interest through PROHOTEL AG, a joint hotel management company, is opening on November 6.

It is located in a large park a short distance from the town centre and has 400 beds in 235 rooms, including 60 studio singles, all with bathroom, balcony, colour television, radio and telephone. There are also some luxury penthouse suites.

General amenities include an elegant grill room and a rustic style restaurant, indoor swimming pool, sauna gymnasium, ladies' and men's hairdressers, various shops, a Swissair information and reservations desk and Avis car hire service.

A convention room is available with a complete range of audio-visual equipment and simultaneous translation facilities. The hotel will be linked with Zurich Airport by a direct Swissair coach service. Prices range from Sfr. 40 for single rooms and from Sfr. 58 for double rooms, including service.

Reservations can be made through all Swissair offices.

# ACME-GOTH, A HUNDRED YEARS OF FORWARDING

The name of ACME is well known to readers of the Swiss Observer as this important forwarding firm counts among our welcome advertisers. Thirty years ago, our paper was already reserving space for "ACME-GOTH SERVICES". But the former British firm of ACME has been completely taken over by GOTH & Co. AG of Basle in 1966 and now forms part of a powerful transport and forwarding organisation with worldwide connections. GOTH & Co. is 100 years old this year.

In 1869, Julius Peter Goth and Ferdinand Niebergall, managers of the transport company of Gaudet Frères, purchased the firm from its former owners and set up the new firm of Niebergall & Goth, initially incorporated in Antwerp, and a few months later in Basle.

The Franco-Prussian war of 1870 didn't prevent the firm from starting off well and carrying out intensive business with British and American ports through its Antwerp branch. GOTH & Co. became the representatives of the American Red Star Line. The Basle branch prospered too and thrived on the exports of St. Gall embroideries to the U.S.A. It figured among the first 55 subscribers to the Basle telephone exchange in 1881.

The firm was taken over by the Goth family in 1910. Julius Peter Goth, the co-founder, handed over the responsibility of the firm and its destiny to his two sons, Ferdinand and Julius August Goth shortly before his death at the age of 70. Julius August took charge of the management of the Antwerp branch and his brother Ferdinand ran the business in Switzerland.

The First World War hit the firm badly. Part of its business was diverted from Antwerp to Bordeaux, but the Antwerp offices had to close down and the most important documents and ledgers had to be copied and sent to Switzerland and safety.

After four years of standstill, the firm gradually re-established its connections and the threads of its business. The war had been the beginning of a new era and the profound changes which it had brought about were particularly marked in the field of communications. Shipbuilding improved, railways extended their networks and road transports developed. GOTH & Co. knew how to make the best of these changes and expanded. New branches were opened in the main cities of Switzerland. Bonded warehouses were erected or enlarged in its Basle and Antwerp centres and GOTH became engaged in the transportation of motor vehicles.

On May 8th, 1939, the firm was converted into a limited company with a capital of 750,000 francs divided into 750 nominal shares of 1,000 francs each. Four months later the war broke out and the border was closed again. Part of the staff was mobilised and much of the business came to a stop. The watch trade continued to prosper however and this warranted the opening of a branch in La Chaux-de-Fonds. Another branch was opened at Chiasso during the war and ran very well. Trade filtered through Antwerp with difficulty and part of the overseas business had to be diverted via Lisbon.

But the company emerged practically intact from six years of war and was ready to start on a new lap of expansion. Julius Goth had died in 1941 and his brother Ferdinand, who was to die twenty years later, stepped back in favour of the third Goth generation. A grandson of the founder, Peter Goth, was appointed Vice-Chairman of the Board of Directors at the 1955 general meeting.

The GOTH concern has now become a five-pronged enterprise with a dense network of connections and affiliated companies on every continent. GOTH has eight branches in Switzerland and subsidiaries in Belgium, America and Great Britain. The latter is of course ACME. It has offices and facilities in the City, in the London docks, at London Airport, at Harwich and at Manchester. Present members of the Board are Mr. Peter Goth (Chairman), Mr. P. B. Haberstick (Life Director), Mr. G. H. Lyons and Mr. F. Augstburger.

GOTH's colourful centenary brochure gives a varied account of what forwarding actually involves. The nature of the work of a company like

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