

# The rise of the Nestle empire

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## Fresh success in the United States for Brown, Boveri

The biggest private electricity company in the United States, the American Electrical Power Service Corporation (AEP) has just placed an order with Brown, Boveri Co. Ltd. at Baden (canton Aargau) for three additional groups of steam turbines with a unit power of 1,300 megawatts for its thermal coal-fed power stations. At the same time it reserved an option for the purchase of a similar complementary unit. Bearing in mind that, in 1967, the AEP ordered a 1,300 mw group and another of 1,100 mw for a nuclear power station, Brown, Boveri now holds orders for seven units of this category, for the United States. The overall power developed by these machines corresponds to that of all electrical power stations installed in Switzerland.

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# THE RISE OF THE NESTLE EMPIRE

Switzerland's largest company, Nestlé, was founded by two men, Henry Nestlé, operating at Vevey, and Charles A. Page, an American, who opened the world's first condensed milk factory at Cham, near Zug.

Charles A. Page was the United States' Consul in Zurich. Realising that Switzerland's plethoric milk production could be profitably used elsewhere, he had the brilliant idea of setting up a condensed milk factory whose production would be directed towards the most important market of the day, Great Britain. He asked his brother, George Page, an official at the Defence Ministry in Washington, to come to Switzerland with the necessary machinery. It was thus that he started a factory bearing the name of "Anglo-Swiss Condensed Milk Co." in 1866 at Cham, which, with Vevey, can be considered as the birthplace of Nestlé.

At the same time, Henry Nestlé was opening a small factory devoted to the preparation of floured milk, a health food for children discovered and developed by himself. Henry Nestlé, who kept a store for soap, seeds and petrol lamps in Vevey, was passionately interested in chemistry and its practical applications. Also, children in his days were still dying of undernourishment and this prompted him to look for a simple and essential food. After many years of experimentation in his backshop, he found a way of making a concentrated milk by compressing it with an air pump at low temperature and

devised a means of amalgamating the milk in this new form with flour to produce a highly nourishing paste. The success of this new product was immediate and seven years after his invention, Nestlé was running a sizeable factory with 30 workers producing 2,000 boxes of floured milk a day.

The factory in Cham also began producing floured milk and Nestlé retaliated by going into condensed milk. The two companies decided to end their competition and merged in 1905. They became known as the "Nestlé and Anglo-Swiss Condensed Milk Co"

Chocolate became a predominant Swiss industry during the 19th century. It began with F. L. Cailer, who founded a small factory and chocolate shop in Vevey in 1819. He had observed the way Italian chocolate makers were grinding the cocoa by hand and subsequently invented the first mechanical way of preparing chocolate powder, thereby producing a far cheaper chocolate.

His son-in-law, Daniel Peter, settled in Vevey next to the Nestlé factory, and had the idea of applying Nestlé's process to cocoa and milk. After many years of trials, he managed to bind milk with cocoa powder and discovered *milk chocolate*.

Gottlieb Kohler, who moved from Lausanne to Biel to start a business in colonial wares in 1793, founded a small chocolate factory in 1818 with his sons. The firm acquired a flour mill called "Bramafam" in Lausanne and, later, a

sawing-mill above the city which it converted into a modern chocolate factory.

At the same time, Suchard, Tobler, Klaus, Lindt and others were opening their chocolate factories across the country. Competition was beginning to make itself felt and Kohler, Cailler and Peter decided to unite. Shortly after, Nestlé announced its intention of going into the production of chocolate and an agreement was passed with the newly created partnership whereby Nestlé, already a financially strong company, was to exchange capital for their support of the Nestlé chocolate brand. The four companies were completely merged in 1929.

Soon, chocolate, condensed and floured milk factories began to spring up in other parts of the world. National competition, increased import duties and the world crisis made Nestlé's expansion difficult. It was necessary for the company to get a foothold in each new market by creating local factories and distribution centres. In this way, the group has come to own 200 factories all over the world, 60 of which lie in developing countries. This world-wide expansion was governed from the central headquarters in Vevey (Vevey took precedence over Cham in 1924) and the company would have been nowhere as large as it is today had the management only thought of day-to-day contingencies.

The company decided to expand its production programme. After adding sweetened condensed milk to its production of floured milk, it began

marketing unsweetened condensed milk in 1900. In 1921, Nestlé marketed, for the first time, a powdered milk which could re-give real milk under mixture with water. In the course of time the company produced malted milk, powdered butter-milk (for children with digestive troubles), malted health beverages and "Nestogen", a fatless but protein-rich milk. In 1936, Nestlé produced in conjunction with the pharmaceutical firm of Hoffman-La Roche, a well-known vitamin preparation called "Nestrovit". In 1937, it introduced an epoch-making product, "Nescafé". The development on this product began in 1930 when the director of the Brazilian Coffee Institute went to see the president of Nestlé and suggested that his firm should look for a concentrated extract of coffee, to appear in the form of cubes immediately soluble in water for instant consumption. The world price of coffee was so low at that time that the Brazilians were firing their steam engines with coffee. They were hoping that such a revolutionary product would boost world consumption of coffee. Nestlé also had a lot to win over this and set off in search of the clue. The main difficulties to be overcome were to preserve the aroma of coffee. After seven years of efforts, Nestlé marketed a soluble coffee-powder (which had the advantage over cubes of being served in quantities suited to personal taste) under the name of "Nescafé". The advantage of this product from the marketing point of view was the ease with which it could be altered to taste so as

to be adapted to local markets.

In 1947, Nestlé acquired control over Maggi-Produkten, a company that had been founded by Julius Maggi, a miller and son of an Italian immigrant. He realised that industry was separating housewives from their homes and their families. Recognising the nutritive value of dried vegetables, he developed the first packet-soups, which contained pea and bean soups. He also pioneered in the production of broth and bouillon cubes. By taking over Maggi, Nestlé made a breakaway from foodstuffs exclusively based on flour, milk and chocolate, and became known as "Nestlé Alimentana S.A."

In 1962 the company made another step towards horizontal concentration by acquiring "Findus International", a Swedish frozen-food company that has been making remarkable progress in recent years and whose products can be seen in the refrigerators of every shop.

Today the company has a staff of 80,000 and counts among the most important firms of the world. In addition to products we have mentioned, it prepares various kinds of sterilised and creamless milk, cream, ice-creams, dietetical specialities, baby foods, instant tea and instant chocolate, soups, bouillons, sauces, sausages and ready-packed meals. The company is not only important from the economic point of view. It will have a vital role to play in a world where two children out of three are inadequately fed.

(PMB)

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## THE FOOD OF THE FUTURE

While we are still warm on the subject of food industry, we ought to mention some of the fascinating disclosures at the international conference on synthetic and substitute food recently held at Rüschtikon.

According to an American professor, the day when we will be buying synthetic chicken is not so far off. The future appears far brighter than is popularly imagined. We shall not just be told to swallow tasteless pills containing the ingredients of a fillet steak, but shall actually be enjoying faithful, although artificial, replicas of the softest and juiciest steaks—the kind that we now have to pay 18s. a pound. It's quite simple: scientists have been able to produce artificial proteins for some time, they now have to learn how to spin them into yarns and pack them into slabs of meat economically. It is quite within the foreseeable possibilities of technology to reproduce the exact texture of animal meat. Man-made meat would be produced in attractive colours, it would be free of nerves and fat, it would be preservable for years without the use of a fridge. For the benefit of those intent on eating a piece of meat

that looks as natural as possible, it would be conceivable to include (at an extra cost) artificial nerves and fat and shape the manufactured pieces into chops and slices. Artificial ham has already been produced in America.

The onset of artificial food will have far-reaching consequences. Man will be able to do away with agriculture altogether. The developed country of tomorrow won't have any more farms and tilled fields but automated food factories and zoos with the last remaining cows. Primary material for food will be found in coal, oil, algae and (why not?) in the sand of the sea. The trouble is, and this was pointed out by M.I.T. Professor N. S. Scrimshaw, one of the lecturers at the conference, that an interruption in production, either through a strike or by a war, would have heavy and well-imaginable consequences. The "farmerless" society will just have to adapt itself to this new reality. One of the advantages of artificial food will reside in its unlimited variety. We shall certainly be a long way ahead of the cyclamate drinks of intermission-time.

*(information taken from the Basler Nachrichten)*

# MORE SAFETY FOR CHAMPIONS

The death of the French ski-champion Michel Bozon, who crashed against a post at the edge of the run during a competition, gave rise to an interesting feature on the dangers of ski-ing competitions in the "Weltwoche".

In the course of the years, ski-ing has become the most dangerous sport next to motor-racing. Descents have become steeper and longer, ski-ing equipment has improved tremendously and the level of competition has increased in such a way that all serious competition-skiers have to be semi-professionals. A fall in a giant slalom race is worse than a fall in a slalom competition, but falling during a descent almost invariably means a lasting injury. Light falls with trivial injuries are quite rare at speeds of 120-140 km/h. Invariably, the luckless racer will suffer from sprained muscles, fissured bones and contusions. In the worse cases, laid up with a fractured pelvis, a champion may have to keep out of a ski-run for the rest of the season.

This means that champions, however fit, however trained and however well insured, always start a descent race with fear. Jos Minsch, the Swiss champion, who has suffered from every kind of fracture in the course of his career, has now decided to retire. At 28, he was getting to be a doyen of the slopes but not over his career yet. The in-

creased danger of the sport and the worsening conditions of racing had been his reasons for abandoning international competition before his term.

Jos Minsch believes that some of the regulations of the International Ski Federation should be applied more stringently. These regulations forbid a champion to derive material benefits from his sport: a provision which is obviously non practicable and not held. Ski-ing has necessarily become professionalised and better with the result that competitions are speedier and more dangerous. Jos Minsch is not against the ski payoffs—the regulation on this question must now be altered—he is against the lax preparation of ski-runs for important competitions. This preparation is the responsibility of the managers of the race. The International Ski Federation, however, stipulates that three experienced competition-skiers should take part in the laying-down of the track because they alone have the experience to judge which bumps are dangerous and are to be avoided. They are in a better position to place the slalom gates in such a way that the racers do not incur unnecessary risks. Jos Minsch maintains that this job is presently being done by 60-year-old ski-supporters who, in many cases, have not got a sufficient concern for the safety of the competitors.

A second regulation of the Ski

Federation is that high speeds which could lead to dangerous and harmful falls must be prevented by speed-reducing bends and obstacles.

Descent runs have so far been designed to make the competitors whizz down as fast as possible. Small bumps are levelled down so that skiers can go at 80 m.p.h. Although the smoothness of the run may lessen the chances of a fall, it permits speeds of 80 m.p.h. and over which are risky in any circumstances. The competitors must take risks: they cannot decide to brake when they feel unsafe unless they're not interested in winning the race. They are bound by the very nature of competition, the organisation of ski-racing and the shape of the tracks to take risks.

A third regulation provided by the I.S.F. is that runs should not have hard-edged bumps making skiers dangerously lose contact with the ground. This refers again to the preparation and testing of runs by experienced skiers.

Another important regulation is to border the sides of bends and stretches where a racer might be carried away with a soft barrier of straw or snow. This appears particularly important after the death of Bozon, who crashed to his death on a railing-post. When a competitor falls at 80 m.p.h., he usually somersaults for a good 50 yards and protective barriers should therefore be spaced well away from the descent.

To get these vital measures carried through, Jos Minsch thinks that competition skiers should league together (as they do in motor-racing) and impose their conditions collectively. A lone skier can do nothing against the will of the management of a race and the hierarchy of sports. If all the skiers partaking in a competition agreed that the safety of a run was insufficient, then they ought to refuse to compete. They have recently done this at the Kandahar Race. Fog had settled on the track, visibility was reduced to 20 yards and competitors (who had the death of Michel Bozon vividly in their minds) refused to take the risks presented by such conditions.

There have been five deaths in professional ski-ing since 1945. The first two were in 1959, the third was in 1964 (on the Olympic run at Innsbruck), the last two, the deaths of the Swiss champion Silvia Sutter and of Michel Bozon, happened within the past year. The figure may not appear large and is still smaller than the toll of motor-racing, but it is quite large enough for those who are directly involved.

Ski champions might not like danger for its own sake, but this doesn't appear to be the case of Sylvain Saudan, a ski instructor and guide from Martigny who has skied down the south-west face of the Eiger, a snow-wall 1,000 metres high and slanting at 50 degrees. One slip meant a kamikaze's death, one rough jerk with the skis meant an avalanche. This kind of sport however will never become an Olympic event. (PMB)