

News from Switzerland

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This picnic, we hope, will become an annual event and our heartfelt thanks go to each and everyone who helped to make it a success.

D. PEYER,
Auckland Swiss Social Club. Hon. Secretary,

Picnics held by the Swiss in Wellington

This time the Weather God was very much on the side of the about 70 Swiss people who assembled in brilliant sunshine at the Cenotaph to go for their picnic, a few miles inland from Paekakariki, to which they had looked forward for so long. The place, chosen with great care, was simply ideal for the purpose. The 20 cars could easily be parked and there was still plenty of room left for games, etc.; even a little swimming pool was in the close neighbourhood.

Unfortunately, the Consul-General, Mr. P-H. Aubaret, being abroad, could not attend the party, but Madame Aubaret, with her two sons, and the Vice-Consul, Mr. W. Sollberger, and Mrs. Sollberger were present.

On the picnic ground little groups formed themselves and everybody was chattering happily away, glad to do it for once in their mother tongue. A few ball games were organised and later in the afternoon Mr. Bischof played his accordion and some talented voices sang and yodelled.

The picnic was a real success, due mainly to the splendid organisation of Mr. K. Bischof, whom we should like to thank very much indeed. L.H.

Seeing that our first attempt to bring the Swiss of Wellington together was such a success, another picnic was held on March 10th. The 40 people who met at Maoribank, Upper Hutt, were very much surprised to see so many faces turning up. Everybody was convinced of being the only one to come, because the weather was very poor. It rained and the clouded sky did not bear any promise to clear up. However, by the time we reached our destination, a lovely spot in the Akatarawa Valley, the weather was improving. A cup of coffee offered by Mrs. Sollberger was most enthusiastically welcomed. Mr. Bischof, thinking of everything, brought a big canvas which he fastened on four trees to afford protection against the rain. Although a nice and gloriously cool-looking river hugged our meadow, nobody was bold enough to risk a swim. Boys, big and small, tried to hit a piece of paper with a stone on the opposite bank of the river, but with next to no success. In dry moments, Mr. Bischof played his accordion and then everybody settled down for lunch. By one o'clock the sky was practically blue and we played several games of "Volkerball" and then football solidly for three hours. Short showers in between sunshine were quite well received; they freshened up the hot and tired players.

Unfortunately, the day ended not as happily as it began for Mr. Sollberger; playing football, he fell and broke his ankle.

When at 5.30 p.m. the last party left the field, rain was settling in again. Satisfied with our day's work, we drove back to Wellington.

This season coming to an end soon, there will be no more picnics until next summer, but we plan to have a Social Evening now and then during winter-time. L.H.

Thanks to the initiative and co-operative spirit of a few local Swiss an effort has been made after a period of about eight years to re-establish a Swiss Social Club in Auckland.

So far we have had three successful socials, these being held the first Tuesday of each month at the Church Hall of the Epiphany, Newton. Entertainment has consisted of jazz, films and Swiss dance music, and we welcome all compatriots from other centres when in Auckland to come and join us on these social evenings.

Our aim for the future is to eventually establish our own Swiss Club House in Auckland.

D.P.

Notices

Our Secretary, Mr. Ernest Gilgen, is leaving at the end of March to take up a position in the South Island, and has therefore resigned. Pending new arrangements to be made at the next General Meeting all correspondence should be addressed to our treasurer, Miss Doris Peyer, 48 Moa Road, Pt. Chevalier, Auckland, who will in the meantime also act as Secretary. Letters concerning general policy of the Society should be addressed to the President, Dr. L. Bossard, 24 Edmund Street, St. Heliers, Auckland.

Appeal by the President

In my last Annual Report I urged all members to help to make the Swiss Society a truly representative one. I therefore invited all members to enrol as many new members as possible. I believe that in this respect very much can be done still. I would like to remind those members whose subscriptions are still outstanding to send same to our treasurer, Miss Doris Peyer, 48 Moa Road, Pt. Chevalier, Auckland, as the financial year has ended on the 31st of March, 1957.

NEWS FROM SWITZERLAND

The Swiss Labour Market

As is nearly always the case, at this time of the year, the evolution of the Labour Market has been marked by a recrudescence of winter unemployment. The cold and the snow have caused a partial stoppage of work in the building trade. At the end of January there were some 9,000 unemployed, in the whole of Switzerland, whilst the number of jobs offered amounted to nearly 6,000.

U.N.O. Borrows Money from Switzerland

Wishing to favour the plan for the modernisation of the European Office of the United Nations, in Geneva, the Swiss Government has decided to grant a loan of four million Swiss francs to this Organisation. This loan will be granted without any interest, with the reservation that it must first be approved by Parliament. The Canton of Geneva, which will be the first to benefit from the carrying out of this work, has decided to participate in this loan to the amount of 50 per cent.

New Swiss-American Agreement

A Swiss Delegation has just signed, in Washington, an additional Protocol to the Agreement on Air Navigation Lines, concluded between Switzerland and the United States in 1945. This new agreement will make it possible for Switzerland to make use of some supplementary stopping-places in her air traffic with North America, namely in Portugal and in Germany, the necessary agreements having already been concluded with these two countries.

An Outstanding Swiss Realisation

A big factory in the watchmaking industry, namely the firm of Ebauches S.A., at Neuchatel, has just produced a quartz standard generator. This high precision apparatus has been created in Switzerland with the collaboration of the Federal Polytechnical School and can be used equally well as a standard of frequency or as a chronometer. Its guaranteed precision is of one milli-second per day. However, the official results registered by the Neuchatel Observatory show that the average precision is of one ten thousandth of a second per day. Standards of this kind have already been ordered by several observatories in Switzerland and abroad.

The 75th Anniversary of the St. Gotthard Railway

Lucerne, Switzerland: An ultra-modern 15-unit Swiss Federal Railways train is to leave Lucerne in the early morning of June 18 and whisk 600 guests of honour to Switzerland's sunshine balcony, the Ticino Canton, where the official festivities of the 75th anniversary of the St. Gotthard Railway are to be held at the capital city of Bellinzona. Among the South-bound travellers will be 240 to 250 members of the two houses of Switzerland's federal Parliament. Other invited dignitaries include representatives of the cantonal governments as well as cities and towns in the vicinity of this important trans-Alpine trunk line, the Swiss and foreign press, public and private transport companies, chambers of commerce and several European railway companies. The St. Gotthard cantons are preparing

special welcome celebrations for the occasion. Uri, for instance, is to greet the guests of honour at its lakeport town of Fluelen on the southern end of Lake Lucerne and will give them a chance to marvel at the authentic "puffing bill" train creeping out of the almost 10 miles long St. Gotthard tunnel at Goeschenen, its northern gate, as it did on June 1st, 1882. It was on that day that the St. Gotthard route was opened as one of Europe's outstanding North-South rail links. At Airolo, at the southern entrance to the tunnel, a salute to the 117 victims of the St. Gotthard tunnel project will take place in front of the memorial which was erected for them there. The piercing of the tunnel was achieved on February 29th, 1880, after 2726 days of hard work inside the mountain.

Swiss Hotel Rates Remain Low

St. Moritz, Switzerland.—Despite increased prices of such vital commodities as fuel oil, coal, sugar, rice, etc., caused by the Suez crisis, the Swiss hotels are to stick to their 1955 rates to the effect that Switzerland, in this coming spring and summer season, will again prove one of Europe's most inexpensive holiday lands. This was part of one of the most important resolutions passed at a recent extraordinary assembly of delegates of the Swiss Hotel Keepers' Association in St. Moritz. Press comments published under such headlines as "The Good Example" hailed the decision as "a vote of confidence for Switzerland's economy," which is expected to continue to follow its traditional anti-inflation line.

Switzerland's Costs of Living Show Smallest Increase in Europe

Geneva, Switzerland.—Switzerland ranks 14th in a diagram visualizing the increase of costs of living and food since 1950 in fourteen European countries, with Belgium and West Germany claiming the next higher positions. This means that life in Switzerland is only slightly more expensive than it was six years ago, whereas living costs have jumped up considerably in Greece, Austria, Norway, Great Britain and Sweden, which are featured in the five upper ranks of the graph. This is the result of a joint analysis by the Economic Commission for Europe (E.C.E.) and the Food and Agriculture Organisation (F.A.O.) of the United Nations. Europe's smallest increase of general costs of living is less than 10 per cent. (Switzerland), while it reaches upwards of 62 per cent. in Greece. Economic experts express the opinion that Switzerland's liberal import policy is to a large extent responsible for this development. The Swiss, it is pointed out, believe in maintaining a sound balance

between demand and supply and have never allowed bureaucratic protectionism to interfere with natural market requirements.

A Swiss Hollywood to be Founded near Lugano

Lugano, Switzerland.—The well-known film producer, Filippo Del Giudice, whose productions include "Hamlet" and "Henry IV," both starring Sir Laurence Olivier, is reported to have picked Lugano as the site of his future permanent studios. It is added that he has been negotiating with the local authorities in view of making the Trevano estate, a former residence of German-Russian nobility, his new "Cinecitta." The Castello di Trevano surrounded by spacious gardens of almost semi-tropical luxuriance, stands in one of the sunniest spots of Central Europe and may well match Southern California as to climatic advantages for outdoor filming. Del Giudice's first Swiss production is said to be a Biblical theme based on a script by Bruce Marshall.

Tracing Walter Mittelholzer's Flight to South Africa

Zurich, Switzerland.—Twenty-five years ago the Swiss crack pilot, Walter Mittelholzer, embarked on a trail-blazing flight to South Africa in a tiny "Dornier-Merkur" aircraft. It took him 77 days to reach Cape Town from Zurich by way of Naples, Athens, Cairo, Khartoum and the East African lakes. Members of the "Efficiency Club," an association of Swiss business men, have recently left Zurich to trace Mittelholzer's memorable flight all the way down to the Cape and to commemorate his pioneering exploits in the promotion of civil aviation as an instrument of world peace and world trade. Although the party is to follow the exact itinerary of Mittelholzer and stop over at all important points, they will travel much faster and with all modern conveniences. Using a Swissair DC6B long-range passenger plane they will stay away less than a fortnight instead of eleven full weeks.

Switzerland's Petrol Situation as Normal as Ever

Berne, Switzerland.—Following the Suez crisis which resulted in a stagnation of fuel and petrol supplies, a temporary ban on Sunday driving had to be enforced in Switzerland. As early as December 10th, 1956, however, the ban was lifted and Sunday motorists again crowded the highways. It has now been officially announced that the "voluntary restrictions" imposed on motor-vehicle holders are no longer necessary, due to sufficient petrol imports and storage supplies. Thanks to this satisfactory situation, petrol can again be exported in liberal quantities by foreign motorists. The retail price of petrol in Switzerland is expected to drop another 3 centimes per litre in the near future.

Switzerland's Foreign Trade in 1956

During the last month of 1956, Swiss foreign trade was marked by an intense activity. The figures for the whole of last year are now known, and show that Swiss foreign trade has attained a fresh record figure. Imports surpassed seven thousand and a half million francs in value, and were considerably higher than those in 1955. Exports also show an advance, although not to the same degree, so that the unfavourable trade balance has almost doubled and amounts to about one thousand four hundred million francs. The striking increase in the value of imports is partly explained by the fact that the average price for foreign goods has gone up, whereas that for Swiss products shows a contrary tendency. The deficit in the Swiss trade balance will, of course, have a big influence on her balance of payments, but, nevertheless, it is not thought that Switzerland's economic situation will be unduly affected.

Switzerland's Cinematographic Industry

The production of the Swiss cinematographic industry is better known abroad as a result of its quality, rather than from the number of films put on to the market. Some twenty firms, in all, are engaged in the production, above all, of short-length films. On an average, Switzerland only produces one big, full-length film per year. If, at first glance, this small production may astonish the foreign observer, the fact should be recalled that very particular conditions prevail on the Swiss market, the division of which into the three national languages does not facilitate the distribution of films on a large scale. Moreover, no material aid is furnished, for the present, by the State, so that the small producers' work consists in the execution of orders, only, and is devoted mainly to the production of publicity and documentary films for tourist propaganda, etc.

Famous Guests at Klosters

Klosters (Switzerland).—Klosters, the trim mountain village in the Grisons, the Canton of 150 valleys, has lost none of its lure for screen celebrities and international society. This famous winter sports resort nestling at the foot of the Parsenn and Silvretta, names that are a byword amongst skiers and mountaineers, is expecting among its guests the American film stars Rita Hayworth, Jennifer Jones and Gene Kelly as well as Madame Onassis, the wife of the multi-millionaire.

Queen Juliana—No. V.I.P. Arrangements

Arosa (Switzerland).—Together with a party of ten, Queen Juliana of the Netherlands has been spending two weeks at Arosa, the paradise of sun and snow. The Queen insisted that she

should be "treated just like any other guest." It is understood that when the hotel rooms were booked for the Royal party, no indication was given that the reservations were for a monarch and members of her court. The Hotel Bellevue, where the Queen was staying, is no luxury hotel, but a first-class establishment popular with families. Every day the Queen could be seen with her ski instructor, Flury Zogg (brother of the world champion David Zogg), standing with lesser mortals in the ski-lift queue, and in the afternoon enjoying a cup of tea with complete informality in one of the tearooms or shopping in the village street for the little gifts she likes to take back with her after a holiday in Switzerland. She was struck not only by the scenic glories of Arosa but also by the kindness of the inhabitants and visitors who took her into their democratic midst without any of the awed deference that might have marred the holiday atmosphere.

Basle Flour Soup in Togas

Basle (Switzerland).—When on 11th March Basle's famous "Fasnacht" or Shrovetide Carnival opens with the traditional "Morgestraich" at 4 a.m. the whole town will be up betimes to chuckle at the giant lanterns with their coloured cartoons and lampoons which poke fun at world events and faults and foibles nearer home. On the conclusion of the lantern parade, the crowds gravitate to the restaurants for a nourishing flour soup, a time-honoured carnival breakfast no true son of Basle would miss. The centuries-old "Cliques" or drumming clubs, formed by citizens of a humorous turn and with a supreme devotion to Carnival, are responsible for its organisation, and this year they have made the official Carnival Badge, soon to be sported in the lapel of every Balois, reflect the great event of the year, the 2000th birthday of the town of Basle. Since a history professor has publicly aired his view that the 2000th anniversary celebrations lack a sound historical foundation, the "Cliques" are rebutting this allegation with evidence in the form of metal badges showing how the Romans celebrated "Fasnacht" 2000 years ago. A marked Roman can be seen drinking his flour soup with a spoon, while under the tavern table stands a Basle drum of the kind beaten with such verve at the "Morgestraich."

A Gem Amongst Swiss Towns

Stein am Rhein (Switzerland).—On 22nd January, 1457, the little town of Stein am Rhein purchased its imperial freedom from its erstwhile lieges, the Knights of Klingenberg, for 24,500 guilders, an enormous sum in those days. At the same time it acquired the Castle of Hohenklingen and the debts with which it was en-

cumbered. Owing to the prodigality of the previous lords of the castle, these were very considerable. Five centuries later this bold venture on the part of the citizens once again brings into prominence the picturesque little town on the banks of the Rhine near Lake Constance and its population of little more than 2500. Medieval streets and squares and brightly painted gabled houses have made Stein am Rhein one of the most charming towns in Switzerland, into a favourite goal for excursions and foreign tourists. The facade paintings on the venerable "Zum schwarzen Adler" house, which have been renovated by the Swiss artist Alois Carigiet, amply repay a visit.

By Flying Boat to the Riviera of Lake Geneva

A new air link between Britain and Switzerland will be inaugurated soon for use in connection with inclusive tours to resorts on Lake Geneva, according to the London Travel Trade Gazette. It will be operated by Aquila Airways, using 58-seat Solent flying-boats, between Southampton and Montreux, where the aircraft will land on Lake Geneva.

The Sphinx in the Realm of Stars

Jungfrauoch (Switzerland).—Since last summer extension work has been in progress at the meteorological and astronomical observatory perched at a height of 11,723ft. on the Sphinx, which towers above Jungfrauoch. A new storey is to house additional laboratories of the High Alpine Research Station for the intensive research to be undertaken as part of the geophysical year 1957-58, more particularly observation of cosmic rays and sun spots. The building work and installations, costing some 150,000 Swiss francs, should be completed in the course of the spring.

The "Big Ten" of the Swiss Summer Tourist Trade

Zurich (Switzerland).—Placed in order according to the number of hotel beds available and the overnight stays registered during the main summer season of 1956, the ten favourite resorts for foreign visitors in Switzerland are: Zurich, Lugano, Geneva, Lucerne, Montreux, Interlaken, Lausanne, Locarno, Basle and Berne. The number of hotel beds available in Zurich is about 7200. The figure for Lugano is already in excess of 7000, and, with the opening of more modern hotels imminent, it will soon be near 7500. Geneva has 5100 beds, 200 fewer than Lucerne, but, thanks to a record occupation rate of 96 per cent., a higher number of overnight stays than Lucerne, which is particularly popular with

Americans. Second place was taken by the hotels of Basle, which, with 2100 beds available, had 91 per cent. of them occupied on an average during the months from June to September.

Swiss Imports of Motor Vehicles

If the Suez crisis has not impeded, to any considerable extent Swiss imports of liquid fuel—which, as a matter of fact, show a considerable increase in comparison with the figures for 1955—it would appear, on the other hand, to have caused a slight decline in imports of motor vehicles, as a whole. It is only in respect of motor-cars that there was a slight increase, their number having exceeded 63,000 cars, of a total value of nearly 370,000,000 francs, so that the 1956 figure for this category of vehicles constitutes a new annual record. Compared with 1955, the advance achieved amounts to approximately 10 per cent. It may be noted that the tendency has changed towards the purchase of more highly-powered cars, to the detriment of the small car.

Swiss Cheese Abroad

According to a recent report of the Swiss Cheese Union, Switzerland exported more than 1600 wagons, of ten tons each, of cheese during the business year of 1955-56. This is the highest figure attained since the pre-war period. This favourable result is all the more remarkable as considerable progress has been achieved abroad in the domain of high-quality cheeses, and, moreover, the export prices for Swiss round (hard) cheese are still higher by from 25 to 80 per cent. than those of the competitive products. Thus, facts prove that the renown of Swiss cheese has not been usurped, as it continues to find numerous connoisseurs throughout the world who are eager to purchase it, in spite of its high price.

Swiss Factory to be Built in South America

The Swiss firms of Sandoz, Geigy and Ciba are going to establish jointly a big factory for chemical products, in Brazil, in the region of Resende. This plant will be the most important of its kind in South America. Building will be started in 1957, and production will begin in 1959. It is anticipated that the initial annual output will amount to 300 tons of aniline and to 150 tons of chemical products for the pharmaceutical industries and for tanneries.

A Swiss Firm Produces an Interesting New Device

The progress realised, during the last few years, in regard to radio-telephony, has made it possible for the Swiss firm of Messrs. Hasler

Ltd., of Berne, to launch a new system by means of which persons employed in big plants, administrations, hospitals, etc., can be easily found, wherever they may be. Thus, persons who are often obliged to be absent from the office or place where they usually work, will carry a small receiving set, no larger than a cigarette case, somewhere on their person; when needed, a transmitter, with a low frequency current, operated by the telephone girl at the central board, will produce a signal in the form of a whistle emitted by the receiving set of the person who is being sought for, who will then immediately know that he is required. This electro-technical novelty will be exhibited and demonstrated together with a great many others at the forthcoming Swiss Industries Fair.

New Ultrasonic Machine

A Swiss firm, in Lausanne, has just put on the market a new ultrasonic machine for cleaning small mechanical detached parts, which require a great cleanness of surface. This apparatus, which is bound to be of the greatest utility to manufacturers of instruments of precision and to watchmakers, can be adapted for a number of uses. In addition to the generator of sound waves, itself, it is possible to incorporate into this machine various devices for preliminary washing, for rinsing, etc., in order to form a complete cleaning unit. The mechanical parts that have to be cleaned are placed, in bulk, at one end of the machine and come out of the other end, washed and dried.

CORRESPONDENCE: Please address to the
Acting Secretary,

Miss D. Peyer,

48 Moa Road, Pt. Chevalier, Auckland.

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