

Free bicycles

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

Objektyp: **Article**

Zeitschrift: **Helvetia : magazine of the Swiss Society of New Zealand**

Band (Jahr): **58 (1992)**

Heft [10]

PDF erstellt am: **22.07.2024**

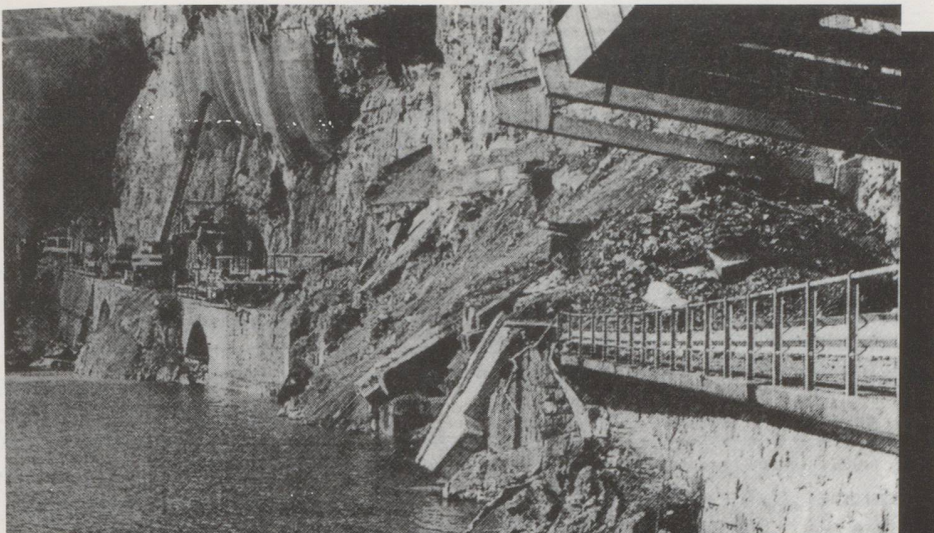
Persistenter Link: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-945214>

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AXENSTRASSE DESTROYED

The picture shows the destroyed Axenstrasse along the "Urnersee" after an overhanging rockface had been blown up by dynamite. The overhanging rock had cracked and started to shift and the authorities' major worry was that by falling into the lake, the whole rockface would have produced a huge, devastating tidalwave. By blowing up the rock beforehand, this disaster was averted, although the road could not be saved. The plans are now to build a road tunnel to by-pass this dangerous spot.

FREE BICYCLES



Against the presentation of a personal identity card, anyone can now borrow a bicycle in Zurich. These free bikes are available at both the Bellevue and Paradeplatz from 8.30 am onwards and must be returned at the latest by 9.30 pm.

This service had already been tried out in other Swiss cities with very poor results: the bikes were either stolen, vandalised or simply left anywhere in the city instead of being brought back to the depot.

However, the Zurich City Council hopes that by providing a top class bicy-

cle, people will take more care of them. Each bike costs around 1.200.- SFR, it has 21 gears and a basket to carry goods. The borrower is instructed on how to operate the bike and on how to adjust the saddle. The frames, rear wheels and baskets carry advertising slogans which cost the advertisers some 4350.- SFR per bike. So in fact the whole operation has cost the clever Zurich City Council absolutely nothing.

AUSTRALIAN JOKE

Here is a joke that is going around amongst the English speaking elite in Switzerland. A competition was being held in Australia whereby competitors were required to ad lib a poem which had to end with the word TIMBUKTU. Two competitors, a priest and a sheep shearer were the two finalists. The priest opened up the final round with: "I was a priest for all my life, I had no children and no wife, I read the bible through and through, all my way to Timbuktu". Big applause. But it was the sheep shearer who won the competition with his own contribution: "Tim and I to Melbourne went, there were three women in a tent, they were three and we were two, I booked one and Tim booked two".

THRIFTY SWISS ARMY

Last year the Swiss Army used up "only" 25.685.000 litres of fuel (petrol and diesel) or just on 1% less than in 1990. The Military Department indicated that this result was 13% below the expected consumption and was achieved through careful planning and cutting out of many empty trips.

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RICH VERSUS POOR

As a result of the recession and increased costs of living, the trench between the rich and the poor is getting wider in Switzerland too. More and more people find it impossible to save money for their retirement. The hardest hit are the already retired people and, despite the fact that the Swiss superannuation scheme is far better than the New Zealand one, a survey showed that one in every seven Swiss superannuitants requires additional financial assistance from the government.