

Earthquake damage in Switzerland

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

Objektyp: **Article**

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

Band (Jahr): - **(1946)**

Heft 1045

PDF erstellt am: **22.07.2024**

Persistenter Link: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-686993>

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EARTHQUAKE DAMAGE IN SWITZERLAND.

As reported in the English Press a violent earthquake was felt over almost the whole of Switzerland on Friday, January 26th, at 6.32 p.m.

It was the most severe earthquake Switzerland has experienced since 1855 and 1911.

The seismograph of the Zurich Meteorological Institute registered the first exceptionally violent shock at a distance of 100 miles in the region of the canton of Valais. The shocks were of such heavy nature that the seismographs of the Basle and Neuchâtel meteorological stations actually collapsed.

The first news which came through over the wire were alarming, but we are glad to state, that it has since turned out, that, with the exception of two, no lives were lost, and that the damage, although heavy, is less than what was feared in the first instance. A rough estimate so far as to the damage caused mentions the sum of approximately 15 million francs.

The canton of Valais was the centre of the disturbance, and was consequently hit worst. The town of Sitten suffered heavily, many of the buildings, amongst them the Post Office, the cantonal government buildings, and the Banks suffered extensive damage. For some time the power station failed, and the population was plunged into darkness, the telephone service was severed, and for a considerable period the town was cut off from the outside world, owing to the dislocation of traffic.

At Siders a barn collapsed, and a number of shops had to be evacuated. The local inn was so badly damaged, that it had to be closed to the public. Several of the houses in Chippis had to be evacuated. An elderly woman at Mollins died of shock. Damage was also caused at Ried, Montana and Leuk.

Several churches suffered in various degrees; the church steeples of Chalais and Marais collapsed.

From other parts of Switzerland damage is reported. At Villeneuve the lake promenade partly collapsed. The church and many buildings at Aigle cracked, and shop windows were broken. The town of Fribourg also registered damage to dwelling houses, and in some of the buildings the lifts were put out of order. At Château d'Oex a number of pictures shown at an exhibition fell from the walls. The town of Berne received a shaking accompanied by rumbling noises. The big candleabres at the Town Hall, where a meeting of the Grand Council was in progress, began to swing in an alarming manner.

In Zurich and in many parts of Eastern Switzerland the shocks were noticed and furniture and pictures were dislocated. In the Diableret region the earthquake loosened numerous heavy avalanches, and for some considerable time the Simplon line was blocked through avalanches which were set in motion.

Further tremors occurred on Saturday, January 27th, without, however, causing much damage.

Our readers will be, no doubt, interested to hear that Pastor C. Th. Hahn, formerly in charge of the "Schweizerkirche" in London, was obliged to vacate the vicarage in Sierre, owing to heavy damage caused to the building. We are, however, glad to report that both Pastor and Mrs. Hahn did not suffer any injuries.

R.A.F. EXHIBITION IN SWITZERLAND.

On Tuesday, February 12th, a Royal Air Force Exhibition was opened by Air Marshal Sir Arthur Cunningham, at Zurich, on the premises of "Jelmoli," in the presence of Dr. Kobelt, President of the Swiss Confederation, Sir C. Norton, British Minister in Berne, General Guisan, accompanied by a number of high staff officers, Dr. Streuli, head of the cantonal government, and Dr. Lüchinger, Mayor of the town of Zurich.

Thus the inhabitants of Zurich were given an opportunity of seeing some of the machines which, on several occasions during the war, they had "heard overhead."

This exhibition has been arranged by the British Air Ministry, under the direction of Mr. E. Spencer Alberry, who is well-known in Switzerland; its aim is to let the Swiss people have a chance of seeing something of the work of the Royal Air Force in many parts of the world.

Around the walls are hundreds of photographs covering all phases of R.A.F. activity since the beginning of the last war. A special section entitled "Highlights to Victory" shows stage by stage the high-lights of the air war from the first German raid on Britain, to the latest Bomber Command attacks on enemy territory.

The Spitfire machine on display has done a great deal of operational flying against the Germans and has a good score to its credit. Visitors were given an opportunity to climb into the machine and look inside the cockpit to see for themselves the controls of the famous type of aircraft.

Another great attraction proved to be the Link Trainer which reproduces many of the sensations actually experienced when flying.

Other exhibits are the sectioned working of the famous Merlin aero-engine and the briefing model as used in connection with the landings in Normandy.

Model aircraft of many types are displayed. A range of Royal Air Force bombs can be seen, including the rocket used by Typhoons and other aircraft in low-level attacks on troops, trains and ships.

An outstanding feature of the exhibition is the large selection of photographs of bomb damage inflicted by the R.A.F. on a large number of German cities. Many of such pictures can be viewed in three dimensions through illuminated stereoscopes similar to those actually used by the Royal Air Force to assess bomb damage.

There is also a special section devoted to the work of the Women's Auxiliary Air Force who serve in about sixty different trades. The women of Zurich are particularly interested in the manner in which the women of Britain and the British Empire have served beside the men of the Royal Air Force and have themselves been an indispensable part of the Service.

There is also a cinema attached to the exhibition in which special films of the Royal Air Force are shown at regular intervals.

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