

From cipolin to modern marble

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ASSOCIATION OF SWISS ENGINEERING CONSULTANTS

Recently, Swiss firms of engineering consultants founded a professional association, known as "USSI — Association of Swiss Consulting Engineering Firms". The tasks of the new group include the maintenance of the highest level of technical and moral quality of the services offered by its members, as well as the defence of members' interests with the Government, and Swiss professional and economic organizations; the co-ordination of campaigns among professionals and the public; safeguarding the general interests of the profession and the common interests of its members. USSI groups independent Swiss associations of engineering consultants, capable of handling, without external assistance, the risks and responsibilities involved in projects to be executed abroad. Membership in this association is not open to groups of firms of engineering consultants with certain members already belonging to USSI, or to associations of engineering consultants which, owing to their connections with a contractor or a supplier, do not offer sufficient guarantees of objectivity and independence, or again to offices associated with a public corporation, a state department or any other public or semi-public concern. The offices of USSI are situated in Geneva for the moment.

[O.S.E.C.]

FROM CIPOLIN TO MODERN MARBLE

It is not generally known that there is a cipolin quarry in the Rhône Valley in the Canton of the Valais at an altitude of over 3,000 feet; cipolin or antique marble is the stone that enhanced the beauty of so many palaces of Imperial Rome and whose traditional quarries in Greece are no longer worked. About a century ago, the famous French architect Garnier, who was building the Paris Opera House, wanted to use cipolin marble to give special magnificence to his building. But he could not find any in the quarries of antiquity, which had all been abandoned. After having seen some samples of marble from Saillon in the Valais in Switzerland, he immediately decided to order the required quantities. Later, the quarry at Saillon also supplied marble for Fourvière basilica in Lyons, St. François-Xavier church in Paris, the Trocadero, which no longer exists, and many other striking buildings. From the same quarry come two monolithic columns 16 ft. high and 2 ft. in diameter with a yellowish white ground, richly veined in violet and dark grey, used to decorate a Grenoble hotel, as well as the marble used in the time of Emperor William II for restoring Aix-la-Chapelle Cathedral, and marble used in Oxford University, the British Museum and a great many other important buildings. Today, the quarrying of marble in blocks is no longer practicable owing to difficulty of access. But this noble stone is still extracted in smaller pieces, conveyed by aerial cableway to the factory where it is broken up and converted into small cubes for the manufacture of mosaics, or into grains of different diameters and powder for the manufacture of artificial stones and even artificial marble, reproducing all the veins of the natural product.

[O.S.E.C.]

"DRIVING FORCE"

Sulzer's part in British Railways Film

The film "Driving Force" is on current release in all Odeon Cinemas. It shows the achievement of British Railways in their extensive introduction of modern motive power. In particular, replacement of older steam locomotives by a modern diesel fleet has enabled great improvements and economy in train operation to be realised. Part of the film is devoted to the manufacture of Sulzer engines and highlights many of the production processes involved.

Sulzer have made a major contribution in supplying engines for more than half of British Railways main line diesel fleet over 1,000 h.p. The total of nearly 1,400 power units include over 700 of 2,500/2,750 h.p.

The experience with such a great number of diesel engines in service on British Railways put Sulzer in a strong position in the export field. The 1,400 h.p. engine in particular, which was developed from the 600 engines supplied to British Railways, is giving excellent economic service in Australia, Nigeria and Malawi.

While LDA28 engines have been selling in large numbers over the recent years Sulzer have not neglected the future needs of locomotive operators. The new Sulzer range of LVA24 engines can provide power up to 4,000 h.p. This represents an increase of nearly 30% in output above that of earlier engines of similar size and weight.

MECHANISATION OF THE RAILWAY TICKET ISSUE SYSTEM

In connection with a far reaching mechanisation of the ticket issue system, the Swiss Federal Railways have installed a number of coin-operated ticket-machines in different railway stations throughout the country. Some 230 railway stations are scheduled to be equipped with these new machines. Some are already in operation, for example, in the main station of Basle or at several railway stations on the Lake of Zurich. Plans are made to set up coin-operated ticket-machines in all remote-controlled stations, in all the main stations and in stations where the ticket-counters are closed after hours.

The ticket-machines, which were developed by the SODECO Company of Geneva, are based on an electric control system with changeable relay connections. The ticket-machines have forty printing plates, containing up to three different tickets. The ticket reserves include single, return and special half-fair tickets. A detailed operating instruction in English, French, German and Italian makes child's play of selecting the right button to push. The money required to purchase a ticket can be put into the machine in all Swiss silver and nickel coins except the 5-centime piece. Every time a coin drops an indicator shows the remainder. Only when the necessary amount has been reached does the machine start printing the ticket. Up to that moment any order can be cancelled and the money returned. The ticket-machines are equipped with one of the newest coin-checkers and a complicated alarm and control system. In addition to the ticket-machines, special money-changers have been installed, which accept 2-franc and 5-franc coins. A special machine for changing bank notes is scheduled for the near future.

[S.N.T.O.]