

Swiss news

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satisfies entirely its specifications. This has nothing to do with Swiss perfectionism. All planes must be modified in one way or another, in order to satisfy the particular conditions in which they will operate. Our airfields, for instance, are all very short and hemmed in deep valleys. This calls for steep descents and this means sturdy undercarriages and powerful brakes. Caverns have been hewn out of the Alps to protect the airforce's fleet from any surprise attacks. This means that the planes need the dimensions and the "peripherals" allowing them to be maintained in these caverns. In all cases, elements must be changed on a model. These modifications lead to others which not only can lead to considerable costs but actually change the flying characteristics of an aircraft. If strengthening the undercarriage of a particular version calls for an enlarged wheel-housing which cannot be achieved without displacing the petrol tank, which in turn involves a change of the shape of the wing or the weight distribution with corresponding changes in flying behaviour, then our experts might want to examine another aircraft.

Similar problems led to drastic and unexpected increases in the cost of the Swiss-built "Mirages". 828 million francs were initially voted for the construction under licence of a 100 of these planes, now 1,200 million are to be spent for only 57.

The Swiss government has been very careful in preventing a similar occurrence with the new projected planes. A motion by National Councillor Fulgrer had initially been adopted. It separated the process of "acquisition" of an aircraft (or its licence) from its evaluation, modification and development. In order to be absolutely sure of the costs involved in the necessary modifications performed on an acquired version, M. Fulgrer suggested that two units of each of the two selected versions be bought, modified in Swiss workshops, evaluated and be definitely bought in quantity only at this stage.

The trouble with this course, which now has been abandoned, was that it took rather too long. An estimated three years would have been needed to adapt the individual planes to Swiss requirements. Then only could a series have been launched and the airforce would have been only supplied with its new plane in the early '80s.

The need is for a new aircraft by 1974-75; this precludes home-developments such as those undertaken on the "Mirage 111 S". Although no firm decision has yet been made as to whether the "Corsairs" or "Fiats" are going to be bought ready-made or built under license, the most probable course is going to be, in view of the airforce's hurry to be re-equipped, to submit the modifications to the constructors. Both "Corsairs" and "Fiats" are now going to be intensively

tested, the changes rigorously evaluated, so that the Federal Council will be voting the 1,300 million francs set aside for new aircraft equipment between 1970 and 1974 with a stronger assurance that money is not going to be wasted through unforeseen expenses or technical incompetence as could have been possible in 1961, when the "Mirages" came into the scene.

The Federal Council started by being almost neurotically careful at not repeating the "Mirage-Affair" in adopting the proposals of the Fulgrer report. Now, hard-pressed by time it is prepared to take the risk of a paper evaluation. A diminutive risk in any case.

SWISS NEWS

(Unless otherwise stated, all the following news items have been received by courtesy of the Agence Télégraphique Suisse.)

JACQUES PICCARD'S SUBMARINE GLIDE

Jacques Piccard, the Swiss submarine expert after having drifted in a mesoscaph of his design along the Gulf Stream for a month, made the following report to the "Agence Télégraphique Suisse".

"The Grumman-Piccard expedition has come to an end at the expected time. The mesoscaph submerged south of Florida and reappeared on the surface off the coast of Nova Scotia, some 2,700 kilometres to the North and thirty days later. Average speed was 2 knots and peak speed was 4 knots. The craft cruised at a mean depth of 250 metres, making five trial dives of 570 metres and reaching the sea-bed five times. It was pushed out of the Gulf Stream by currents on only one occasion.

Over five million measurements have been performed. These included recordings of the temperature of the Gulf Stream, the salinity of its waters, their depth and the generation of submarine noises. Over a million explosions were detonated by the accompanying ship on the surface and their shock waves recorded on tape. The gravitational pull of the earth was measured continuously over 100 kilometres and the intensity of submarine light traced for 500 kilometres. Water was sampled several times a day for its chlorophyll and mineral content.

Hundred of hours were spent by the crew in observing what was happening outside. The crew discovered numerous kinds of unknown planktons. It took thousands of stereoscopic and normal snapshots which will be analysed in the oceanographical laboratories of the Grumman Corporation and the U.S. Navy during the next months.

A number of "deep scattering layers" were directly observed. The fauna was not as rich as expected,

although a number of large sharks were seen, as well as numerous banks of tunas and planktons. The craft glided in ideal conditions close above the sea-bed and the crew could observe its usual indwellers, sea-urchins, anemones, shrimps, crabs (some of them of impressive size) rays and many kinds of fish.

The crew of six consisted of one NASA engineer, one U.S. Navy, one Royal Navy and one Grumman Corp. oceanographer, Jacques Piccard from Lausanne and Erwin Aebersold from Geneva. It lived through those thirty days in complete harmony and isolation from the outside world, their only link with it being half-hourly routine messages with the accompanying ship above".

THE APRICOTS OF VALAIS

Valais' overabundant apricot production is one of Switzerland's ever-recurring problems. This year's pick was plethoric: total production amounted to ten thousand tons of apricots! Three thousand tons had to be picked in a single week, because a sudden heat-wave had precipitated the fruits' ripening. However fond of these golden fruits the Swiss might be, they could not absorb them in such quantities in good time. Fifteen hundred tons had therefore to be stored in refrigerated installations. The villagers of Valais set up stalls on the Canton's main roads to sell apricots to motorists. Their price was 10 centimes a kilogram cheaper than what the shops had to offer, first picks costing 1 franc 85 a kilogram and apricots for making jam, 1 franc a kilogram.

The apricot producers decided to storm the country's number 1 market, Zurich. A hundred pretty girls dressed in lively costumes arrived in Zurich, toting a huge red arrow decorated with apricots, and were warmly greeted by brass bands, representatives of consumer organisations and the Mayor, Dr. S. Widmer. The colourful heralds of Valais' golden fruits dispersed along the Bahnhofstrasse and, dipping in their bounteous baskets, distributed 3 tons of apricots to the glutinous crowd. This generosity was accompanied by the flourishes of the brass bands. When the operation was over, Bahnhofstrasse was covered by a thick layer of apricot stones. A banquet was offered to the apricot delegation. The president of the Great Council was among the official guests, so were the president of the Fruit Union of Valais and the director of propaganda for Valais' agricultural products.

RING OUT WILD BELLS — LATER

Church bells in Zurich may not be rung before seven o'clock in the morning, under an amendment made by the city council to its noise regulations.

The change is the result of numerous complaints from the public, that their morning sleep was being disturbed by bells being rung at six o'clock.

The police department consulted the Protestant, Roman Catholic and Old Catholic authorities about the problem, and all agreed that the morning ringing of the church bells should be postponed for an hour.

The regulation comes into effect on September 1.

AFTER THE LAKE GENEVA DISASTER

A spokesman of the "Compagnie de Navigation sur le Lac Léman", the company which operates the paddle-steamers of Lake Geneva, made a statement explaining why the "General Guisan" passed near the site of the shipwreck off Thonon, which had cost the lives of 19 French children, without changing course.

He said that the captain, the pilot and a mechanic were in the wheel cabin as the ship was nearing the site of the disaster keeping at a distance of 300 m. from the shore because of the *bise*. The three men noticed a half-submerged boat surrounded by a fleet of small pleasure craft. The pilot took a look through his binoculars but could see nobody in the water and no beckoning signs towards his ship. Not being aware of the importance of the disaster that had just occurred, the three men continued their course, believing that there was a sufficient number of rescuers surrounding the wreck.

The spokesman added that the ships of the "Compagnie" went out of their way many times a year to rescue people shipwrecked on the lake. In the circumstances, he doubted whether the presence of a big ship, rolling in the waves lifted by the *bise*, would not have rendered the rescue operations any easier.

WHERE LIFE-SAVING PAYS-OFF

Early last month an eleven-year-old boy drowned in the swimming pool of Allenmoos, in Zurich. A few minutes after his disappearance, the supervisor in attendance lifted him up from a depth of 3 m. 20 and immediately gave him the kiss of life. As soon as the ambulance was on the spot, the child was connected to an artificial breathing apparatus. Within twenty minutes of the first alarm calls to the Cantonal Hospital, he was in its new ultra-modern emergency ward. His clinically dead heart was electrically excited and injected with high-powered medicine. Within fifteen minutes it slowly responded to the treatment. It was only the next morning that the child regained consciousness, after having been helped to stay alive by oxygen and drugs in great doses.

The health inspector of Zurich,

Mr. Walter Hess, drew the lesson from the chain of events that had saved the life of the child. He said they proved once again the necessity of having well-trained supervisors present in every swimming-pool. They should be dressed in a distinctive manner, so that they could be found immediately should an emergency arise.

Professor Georg Hössli, who treated the drowned child in hospital, appealed to schools on the radio the next day. He said that what the life-saver had done, every schoolboy ought to be able to do and expressed the belief that the time had now come where the knowledge of life-saving techniques and first-aid measures should compulsorily be taught in the higher forms of every school.

SWISS POPULATION AT THE BEGINNING OF 1969

The latest estimates of the Federal Statistical Office indicate that the total population of Switzerland (foreigners included) was 6.115 million at the beginning of the year. This means an increase of 79,000 inhabitants between the beginning of 1968 and the beginning of 1969, a smaller figure than that for the corresponding period a year before, which was 83,000. There is a distinct slowdown in the rate of population growth. Had it followed the rate found in 1963 and 1964, then today's population would have been 6.85 million.

Since 1964, Zurich has lost 7,600 inhabitants, Geneva 5,200 and Bern 600. Basle has gained 1,700 inhabitants and Lausanne 2,500. The present populations of these cities are respectively 432.2, 169.5, 166.8, 213.2, and 138.3 thousand inhabitants.

Compared with the 1964 situation, the population of every canton except Appenzell has increased. The smallest increases (considerably below 5%) are found in Uri, Schwyz, Obwalden, Nidwalden, Glarus, Basel-Town, Schaffhausen, the two Appenzells, the Grisons and Valais. In absolute figures, the population of the Canton of Bern has seen the greatest growth, with a 71,000 population increase, then comes Zurich with 63,900, Ticino with 37,000, Aargau with 33,000 and Geneva with 32,900 new inhabitants.

A SCARE IN OBERHASLI

The management of the power-station "Oberhasli AG" received a letter from Namur, in Belgium, signed by a member of the so-called "Jura Liberation Movement Abroad", warning that the power-station would be blown up some time after the 13th of September. Taking no chances, the management reported the inauspicious message to the local police, who increased their supervision of the premises. The staff was asked to apply rigorously security measures concerning the maintenance of the dam and

the water conduits. The management said there was nothing else that could be done. There was fortunately no reason to be seriously apprehensive of any real sabotage. The Bernese daily "Der Bund" reported that the handwriting of the letter received by "Oberhasli AG" was the same as that received earlier by other villages. It can only be the work of an eccentric, living abroad and acting alone, who apparently derives great enjoyment from trying to scare entire villages.

PLASTICS AND ART

A Bernese sculptor has just completed a gigantic plastic fresco, the largest in Switzerland. It is 8 m. long and 3.2 m. wide and decorates the school of Buempliz (Be). There had been a competition opened ten years ago for such a fresco but it had yielded no results. The sculptor, Walter Voegeli, had undertaken his work after having made a detailed model of the fresco and submitted it to the "Arts Council" of the Canton of Bern. It had taken him two years to achieve and, in his own words, the "Arts Council" had shown a distinct "greatness" in accepting a work of such magnitude.

Another plastic fresco, entitled "Janus" (the legendary king who, being of such wisdom, was always depicted with one face looking backward towards the past, and another looking forward towards the future—both of which he knew) has been causing some upheaval in Basle. It is a gift by the firm Sandoz to the city in celebration of its 50th anniversary. Sandoz had opened a competition for such a work. It happened that the six-men jury, (three from the town and three from the firm) chose this particular fresco, which had not been entered in the competition. It portrayed an old man on one side and a youth on the other. The jury thought that this symbolised appropriately the past and future of Basle, its history and its modern industrial surge. No site had been foreseen for the fresco, so the jury decided it could be conveniently placed in Totenplatz. As it happened, the plastic work of art produced vehement complaints from local residents and the numerous visitors to the hospital near-by, whose feelings were hurt by the cantankerous look of the past face of Janus. The City Council has decided to fix the fresco in a wooden frame and see whether local residents and other Basle citizens still find that it spoils the harmony of Totenplatz. Sandoz is anxious to avoid any strife in the town over its controversial gift and has made known to the City Council that it was not intent on keeping it in Totenplatz. One outraged member of the Great Council, Dr. Marie-Agnes Massini, has promised to raise the matter in the next session of the Cantonal Parliament.