

Swiss events

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SWISS EVENTS

SWITZERLAND AND ABROAD

A somewhat gloomy view of Switzerland

Reviewing the coverage devoted to Switzerland in this country throughout the year 1971, the London correspondent of the Swiss Telegraphic Agency noted that, in the main, the volume of comments on Switzerland appearing in the British news media has increased appreciably, but at the same time become less complimentary. "More often than not, he notes, Switzerland is reviewed critically, rightly or wrongly, and the tone used becomes occasionally frankly hostile".

Among published reflections on Switzerland, the Correspondent of the ATS recalled an article printed in the "Financial Times", which was critical of the difficulties encountered by foreigners wishing to reside permanently in Switzerland.

The introduction of voting rights for women and the importance of Switzerland in the monetary field, particularly with the revaluation of its currency, have brought Switzerland considerable publicity in the British Press. These events, notes the ATS Correspondent, have been "competently and objectively" commented. The cultural department of the Embassy are also credited with intensifying Switzerland's artistic and musical presence in the U.K.

The "Harrier" still a candidate

A Hawker Siddeley vertical take-off "Harrier" jet crashed during a demonstration at the RAF German base of Wildenrath. Many Swiss newsmen had been invited for the occasion. The "Harrier" is the latest machine to be included among the Air Force's list of possible replacements for obsolete "Venoms" and "Hunters". Although it

is not planned to test it with the same thoroughness as the "Corsair" and the Dassault "Milan", the two favourites, a growing number of specialists believe that this type of aircraft, requiring no runway, could be an ideal formula in terms of Swiss requirements.

The crash at Wildenrath does not seem to have reduced Swiss interest in the machine, whose operational qualities have already been well proved. There was speculation that the Federal Council would write off the "Harrier", and treat it in rather the same way as the ill-fated "P-16", a jet of Swiss design which was scrapped after two successive crashes in the Lake of Constance. When the emotions roused by these disasters had cooled down, there were many qualified persons who regretted the decision, in view of the advanced characteristics of the aircraft.

Switzerland and the United Nations

The Federal Council has published a second memorandum on the question of Switzerland's full membership to the United Nations. The memorandum notes that Switzerland is already highly involved in those spheres of activity where the international organisation has been the most useful, namely, subsidiary agencies such as the World Health Organisation, the Food and Agricultural Organisation, Unesco, etc.

It does not yet have a seat, however, at the "World's Forum": the UN General Assembly. The Federal Council, now edging slowly towards full membership, is determined not to hasten the decision and says: "The Swiss people will have to prepare themselves in the not-too-distant future to voice their opinion on this crucial matter. However, a number of points will first have to be cleared up, in particular our relationship to the European Community".

Swiss public opinion will thus be given a warming-up period and a special commission, representing all political tendencies, will be set up to investigate the political and legal implications of full membership to the United Nations. As this is a constitutional issue, it will be for the people to give the go ahead. At present, it seems the majority of opinion is not inclined to press Switzerland's participation to an international caucus more reputed for its inefficient verbalism than its effectiveness. But the current of opinion in favour of a less traditional attitude to foreign policy is gathering momentum, particularly among the young, and the question may be put to the people in a national referendum earlier than the Federal Council expects.

In the Swiss Press

The "Tages Anzeiger" published in December a portrait of our compatriot in Belfast, Professor Heinrich Wagner, Dean of the Department of Celtic Languages at Queens University in Belfast. Professor Heinrich Wagner, 48, left Zurich for Northern Ireland 13 years ago (see also the S.O. of 8th January, 1971) and must almost certainly rank as the first authority on Gaelic from continental Europe.

Balmoral Avenue, the street where his institute is located, had been spared of bomb outrages, with the exception of a small explosion in June until four neighbouring houses belonging to Unionist officials were badly damaged on 14th December.

Although some students feel strongly about Civil Rights and others openly support the IRA, the University in Northern Ireland has been remarkably calm in the present crisis. According to Professor Wagner, this is because the University, with its liberal tradition, remains one of the few places where it is still possible for Ulster's warring tendencies to establish a dialogue. Professor Wagner adds that since the beginning of Internment, it has been impossible for the academic establishment not to be involved in

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the crisis. He is moreover highly pessimistic about the chances that the British Army will be able to keep things under control.

From Zurich, regular listeners of the Swiss Short Wave Service could hear Mr. Walter Gunthard, former N.Z.Z. Economic Correspondent in London, make a round-up of the world economic situation in a broadcast in German on the morning of January 3rd.

The Swiss School in Genoa

The December issue of "Echo" had an interesting article on the Swiss School in Genoa, one of the leading Swiss educational establishments abroad (there are 19 of them). The school was founded in 1852 for the children of the predominantly French-speaking merchants and importers of the Ligurian capital. There were initially 12 pupils. The present building, raising its austere 19th century architecture on the Via Peschiera, caters for 286 schoolchildren, 37 of whom are Swiss, 228 Italian and 21 of other nationalities (mainly children of consular personnel). Owing to the difficulties of recruiting Swiss teachers, many of the teaching staff are Italian. The school's syllabus stresses the importance of the three national languages and children are taught French and German at the late primary level. Attempts to prepare students for the Swiss "Matura" were frustrated by the non-recognition of this certificate by Italian Universities. The education offered by the Swiss School of Genoa therefore goes no further than mid-secondary level, which gives pupils the opportunity to branch either into Italian or Swiss higher-secondary education. The certificate delivered by the school is recognised by the Italian Government.

The Swiss School of Genoa has traditionally given children basically lay education (with Protestant religion classes included in the syllabus) and kept them in touch with the democratic and civic spirit of their mother-

land. It is part financed by the Confederation and by the Swiss community in Genoa. It still stands as a valuable symbol of Swiss presence in industrial Northern Italy.

International Conferences

The devaluation of the dollar had immediate consequences on the demands of petrol exporting countries and the fixing of new airline tariffs on international routes.

The Organisation of Petrol Exporting Countries (OPEC) and the representatives of the world's major petroleum companies met during a week of almost secret talks in Geneva at the beginning of January, to thrash out new petrol prices as a result of the realignment of international parities. Due to the devaluation of the dollar, petrol exporting countries were claiming substantial losses in revenue (usually calculated in dollars) and began by claiming a 12 per cent increase in royalties.

This the companies, which had already conceded a 2.5 per cent "inflation" increase at Teheran, were not prepared to accept. They improved their offer from 3.3 per cent to 4 per cent. The exporting countries scaled down their demands to 8.57 per cent. Negotiations were broken up on 14th January with no immediate prospect of the gap being bridged.

Arab countries, especially militant Iraq and Libya, were deliberating renewed tactics. The immediate consequences of the growing tension between petrol companies and OPEC countries seemed to be an increased reliance on North Sea energy sources, and to a lesser extent, on Persian Gulf petrol. A second round of talks began in Geneva on January 20th.

The International Air Transport Association (IATA) also met at Geneva for a ten-day conference to establish a new tariff system for the various IATA world regions. Sixty-five companies agreed, with the exception of "Air Canada" to increase trans-Atlantic tariffs by 7 per cent from 1st April to compensate for the 8.87 per cent devaluation of the dollar. This

will in fact lead to a slight reduction in the price of trans-Atlantic tickets. "Air Canada" will have up to 25th January to fall in line with the other IATA companies, barring which another price-fixing conference will have to be convened. Prices on European and Asian routes, calculated in sterling, remain unchanged. They will be increased respectively by 5 and 6 per cent on American and South Atlantic routes.

DEATH OF ALFRED GEHRI

A former best-selling writer

Alfred Gehri, one of the most prolific and successful authors of his generation, died in Morges, his native town, at the age of 77. Born in 1895, Alfred Gehri began his career in journalism and edited the "Revue Suisse du Cinema" and contributed to many European publications before settling down in Paris in the 1930's and working as Stage Director at the Albert 1st Theatre, later collaborating with the Pitoeff Theatrical Company. Alfred Gehri created his most successful play, "Sixth Storey", in Lausanne in 1937. It was translated into 25 languages and performed 20,000 times in 40 countries. He wrote another forty plays, most of which were highly successful and worked for many years for French-speaking Swiss Radio. Among his many literary awards, he won the literary prize of Paris in 1935 and the Schiller Foundation Prize in 1939.

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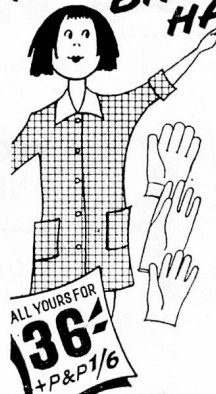
Next year, the Pro Juventute Foundation will celebrate its 60th Anniversary. With headquarters in Zurich, this national institution with a household name, has collected 84m. francs throughout its long years of existence with the help of schoolchildren, who at every coming winter

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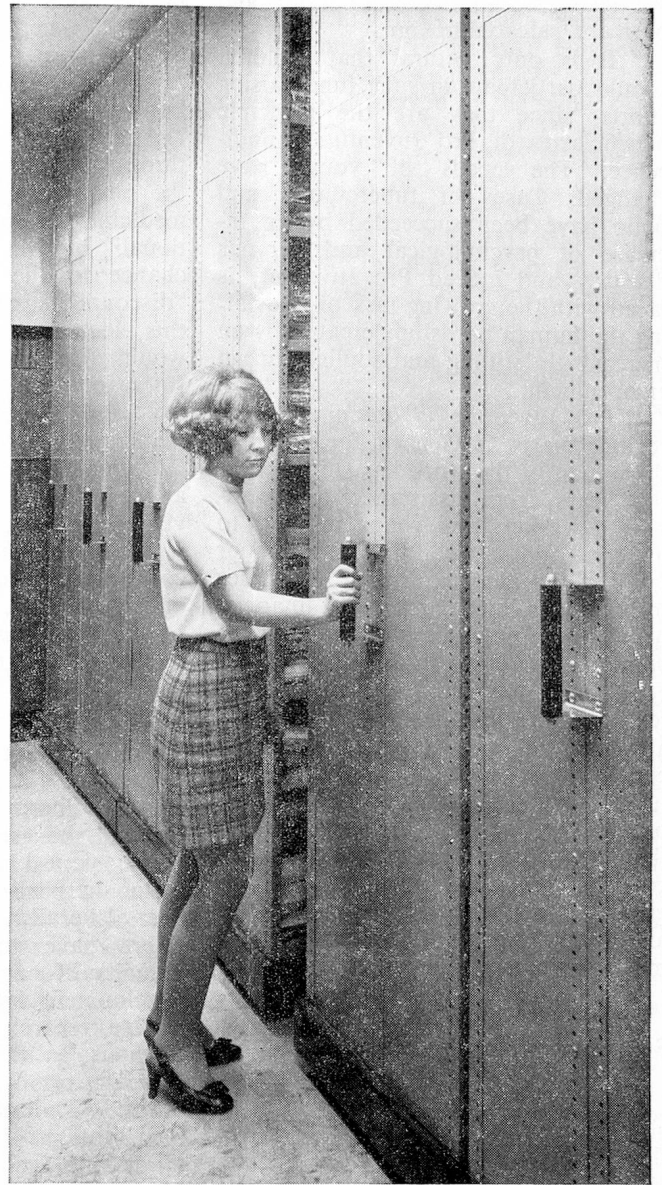
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set out on a Pro Juventute stamp and postcard sales campaign.

It is only natural that children should participate in such fund raising efforts, since they are the principle beneficiaries of Pro Juventute munificence. The needs of youth have changed. Cases of tuberculosis and polio have been succeeded by an increase of psychological and nervous diseases, and indeed Pro Juventute is faced with the growing task of alleviating the human hardships created by an increasingly stifling and soulless urban environment.

Pro Juventute is organised on a regional basis. In Geneva, for example, the accent of the work has shifted over the years from assistance to unemployed workers and young mothers to material aid to children from poor families. Typical cases are: Subsidies for holidays, study grants of financial help for apprenticeships granted to young people living in difficult material conditions; payment of medical bills for large and hard-put families; moral and material aid to young estranged couples. The work of the Pro Juventute Foundation has, in many instances, been taken over by the State. This is the fate of charities in every modern country. Yet it has by no means outgrown its usefulness as new problems arise long before the State and its machinery usually begin to intervene.

Supermarket distribution of vitamins

In relation to its relatively small size (it comes way behind Migros and the Co-operative Stores) the *Denner AG* chain of "discount" stores gets more publicity than any other Swiss commercial organisation. No surprise either. Responsible for launching at least two popular initiatives and waging a constant price-slashing war with its competitors, Denner AG is in the lead of a kind of consumer revolution. The latest initiative, introduced by Denner's outspoken Chairman, Mr. K. Schweri, is to give away free fizzy Vitamin C

tablets, at a cost of a million francs, to all Denner customers having purchased more than 19.50 francs worth of goods. Vitamin C, as everyone knows, helps to prevent colds. Yet Denner's initiative is not pure philanthropy. It is part of a drive to break the pharmacist's monopoly for patent medicine, termed as "anti-constitutional" by Mr. Schweri, and give a chance to the supermarket and the "discount" stores to have a share of this lucrative market. Mr. Schweri would also like to do away with the Intercantonal Office of Medicine Control and have the pharmaceuticals market regulated at federal level.

One commentator was concerned about the possible effects of over-vitaminisation. A dripping nose, he wrote, is less serious than the unknown consequences of excessive absorption of Vitamin C, the consequences of which have never seriously been investigated so far.

No replacement for avalanche dogs

The increasing popularity of skiing and the growing domestication of alpine slopes have been accompanied by a sharp rise in avalanche casualties. Literally hundreds of hapless skiers have to be exhumed from mounds of snow every season. This development has naturally led to intensive research in detection and rescue methods.

All sorts of techniques have been devised. The standard way of finding the location of an interred victim is by poking the snow with long poles. More sophisticated devices have been developed, such as magnetic detectors. These require skiers to carry with them a small magnet, which is of course hardly practical, as there are no means of making sure that the vast resort-hopping population is equipped with his life-saving talisman. One suggested solution is to incorporate a magnet in ski boots.

Other ideas currently developed are electro-magnetic interference, smell and body heat detectors. However, despite the ingenuity of modern technology it has been abundantly proved that nothing can beat the flair of a good avalanche dog in the present state of the art. The breed most suited for avalanche rescues are the German sheepdog, and, of course, the famed St. Bernard. Dogs are trained in their second and third years. Their trainers and volunteer staff are buried under various layers of snow and the dogs, when they have successfully undug them are rewarded with a piece of cervelaz. This, at least, is how the 220 Swiss avalanche dogs are encouraged to learn their all-important skills.

The relative efficiency of the dog and the magnetic detector was tested by a team of experts. It took 23 minutes to find one of two buried volun-

teers by the magnetic methods. The presence of the second was never detected. A dog took two minutes to find the first man and needed seven for the second.

SCHOOLS

How to teach modern mathematics

Following the important decisions arrived at last year to co-ordinate 22 different educational systems, Switzerland's education has, as it were, been centralised while preserving cantonal independence from Berne in this field. The Intercantonal educational agreement was therefore significant both politically and practically.

As a result of Intercantonal co-operation, educational planning is mapped in four regions (western, north-west, eastern and central Switzerland), each of which is related to a Regional Conference with a Chairman and a General Secretary, and a Regional Co-ordinating Committee composed of delegates from the teaching profession. Attached to each Regional Conference are the Cantonal Educational Directors and their Financial Controllers. This organisation is capped by the Committee of the National Conference of Cantonal Educational Directors.

This body last met at the end of December to review a number of far reaching decisions. These are: To introduce a second language in the same syllabus year in each of the three linguistic regions; to adapt school textbooks in consequence; to centralise and co-ordinate educational experiments being carried out throughout the country; to establish a framework for the teaching of "new mathematics" during the first six years of school education.

"New Mathematics" has become the thing in French-speaking Switzerland, which can be said to lead the world in this field. This is not unrelated to the influence of that great *Romand*, Jean Piaget, who was the first to realise that, no matter how much effort was spent in inculcating elementary mathematics in the mind of a child, they would not seep in until his mental processes had reached a certain foreseeable degree of evolution. As a result, educationalists in Geneva and Lausanne have made a break with elementary algebra and much of the morass of meaningless symbols which generations of schoolchildren had to learn by heart, parrot-wise, in order to hate mathematics for the rest of their lives.

The "New Mathematics" stress the importance of geometrical and relational concepts and aim at making a child grasp the logical foundations of mathematics. These are basically intended to develop the child's rational faculties. However, children seem to have as much difficulty, if not more so,

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in absorbing the "new" mathematics as they had with the old one. Parents, who have had to repeat arithmetic with their children ever since the first school was built, are fortunately offered free courses in the new mathematics but appear to have the utmost difficulty in mastering them.

School TV

A seminar of educational programme producers took place last month at Basle. It centred its discussions on the problem of ensuring the participation of young audiences. Educational TV has been particularly well developed in Great Britain, where programmes are delivered from kindergarten to open university level. Yet it appears that this method cannot be generalised indefinitely, because TV programmes rely for their usefulness on the assistance and co-operation of a teacher. Many teachers have however not been trained to derive the best use from these methods. Moreover, TV tends to make them partially redundant and lose the intellectual supremacy in their class.

Basically, TV producers are aware of the absence of communication between themselves and their pupils who become more than ever receptors of knowledge, at the expense of their creative abilities. The absorption of facts pronounced "ex cathedra" from a television box furthermore reduces their critical sense. In order to combat these risks, TV producers try to introduce an element of motivation, expectancy and curiosity in their programme, and aim at conciliating visual captivation with a valid didactical presentation.

The BBC broadcast hundreds of school programmes a year. In Germany, it is possible to pass exams in front of television. The Dutch broadcast about 700 educational programmes a year, but only 700 schools out of 12,000 make use of them. Very little has been done in this field in Switzerland. This is due to the presence of

four languages and a fragmented educational system. Cantonal sovereignty and the reticence of Swiss teachers to adopt this new medium are further factors obstructing the development of educational TV into an established institution. It is a field in which Swiss teaching officials will need a lot more persuasion.

Initiative for new start of the School Year

A popular cantonal initiative aiming at starting the school year from spring gathered the required 35,000 signatures in only two months. These were presented to the Great Council's Office on 12th January. This campaign follows a cantonal vote on the matter in June, in which the people decided by a bare majority of 133 to fix the beginning of the school year in Autumn. Some time later, the Great Council refused to allow a second cantonal vote.

Lucerne's hypothetical university

Most political parties in the cantons of central Switzerland are in favour of a university at Lucerne. This theme has often been debated during the past three or four years. At present, little is known on where the government and the educational establishment stand. Two national councillors, Mr. Walter Gut and Mr. Alfons Muller-Marzohl, are leading the campaign for the creation of a university at Lucerne, which, they say, is indispensable to Central Switzerland. They would like Lucerne's university to be financed by the Confederation and propose a "Lucerne Model" educational finance.

The position of the Federal Council is as yet ambiguous. Mr. Tschudi was asked a Parliamentary question on Lucerne University in December, but his reply left delegates in doubt as to whether the Federal Council intended increasing the number of federal institutions. The Conference of Swiss Universities recommended to postpone the drafting of a project on Lucerne University to 1974 or 1975.

THE HUGHES AFFAIR

It wasn't the first time that a Swiss bank was involved in an international criminal case. This time the affair took the proportion of one of the most ingenious and intricate frauds of the decade.

The New York publishers McGraw-Hill had transferred a total sum of 650,000 dollars, by a succession of cheques, to an account at the Swiss Credit Bank in Zurich, to the name of H. R. Hughes, in payment for the purported autobiography of the recluse millionaire Howard R. Hughes. This autobiography had been written by the American writer Clifford Irving on the

basis of interviews with a person he had assumed to be Howard Hughes.

The account in Zurich had been opened by a person of the name of H. R. Hughes—however, not Howard R. Hughes, but a Mrs. Helga R. Hughes, in possession of a Swiss passport. It was she who, a few months later and with hair of a different colour, had taken away the money to put it, as far as it appeared at the time of writing, in another bank in Zurich.

The whole affair was launched when suspicions were aroused by an American journalist who had claimed that Helga R. Hughes was a real person—the wife of an ambassador posted in Mexico—with whom Hughes was said to have been in love. Concurrently, Hughes had denied all knowledge of the supposed biography in a sworn statement signed in his Bahamian hideout. As a result McGraw-Hill lodged a complaint against the unknown person who had drawn the 650,000 dollars and the District Prosecutor of Zurich instituted proceedings. Part of the mystery was soon resolved, however, because, it turned out that Mrs. Helga R. Hughes was none other than Mrs. Edith Irving, wife of the author of Hughes' purported biography.

Many details will doubtless have to be cleared up. For example, was the passport to "Mrs. Helga Hughes" name a forgery or had it been delivered by the Swiss Consul in Barcelona, as has been reported?

The name of Clifford Irving was not unknown in Switzerland owing to the 55 million dollar libel which the Swiss Art Dealer, Fernand Legros, wanted by American courts but actually living unmolested in Switzerland, had brought against the American writer.

SPEED LIMIT ON SWISS ROADS

The Commission of the National Council agreed in principle to the Federal Council's intention of putting a 100 kmh speed limit on all Swiss roads with the exception of motorways and semi-motorways (of which there are unfortunately very few!) Speed limits are imposed by Order from the Federal Council. Neither Parliament nor the people have to be consulted. Asking the Commission's advice was a polite way of sounding Parliament on this issue.

A STRANGE PUBLICATION

A rather unique publication has been mailed regularly to the "Swiss Observer" for some time. Entitled "Memo Press", published and edited by one man, it appears in the form of a folded leaflet probably printed at home. It comes out four times a year, at the subscription cost of 90 cents and is dated from the village of Hallau, in Schaffhausen.

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SWISS CATHEDRALS

The tendency of its Editor, Mr. Emil Rahm, is combatively to the right. His third "effort" of 1971 has a lengthy article entitled "Wird die Schule auch bei uns zur Verführerin?" of a definitely anti-permissive stand. In this day and age this cost him a fair amount of criticism which he abundantly refutes in his following issue. Besides sex and morals, the themes which this lonely voice dotes on are: Democracy, freedom, religion and student life.

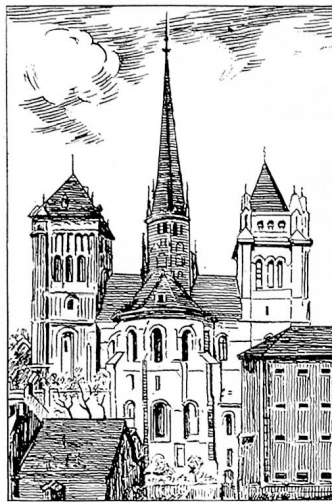
An interesting piece of information appeared in the fourth 1971 issue of "Memopress". Quoting the "Neue Studentenzeitung", Mr. Rahm asserts that there are 69 structured subversive organisations in Switzerland seeking to overthrow the present order. There are 30 Communist and "crypto-Communist" publications in Switzerland with the aim of steering students, teachers and apprentices on a course designed to destroy society. Some of these have details on how to wage urban guerrilla warfare. Subversive elements, many of them students, are encouraged to undertake officer training in the Army. This will put them in a better position to undermine its preparedness and traditional standards.

Communist agitators are well entrenched in the Universities, where they have managed to set up a number of student revolutionary organisations planning to intensify class struggle. Finally, it is claimed that Swiss student leaders (Studentenfunktionäre) are actually being trained in Cuba and East Berlin. Moreover, the "Klein Student-enrat" is allegedly entirely controlled by Communists.

These assertions seem almost farcical. However, they appeared in a well-known student paper and were signed by a philosophy student from the Student Council.

In another part of that particular issue of "Memo Press", a speech at the Thun Officers' Society is quoted as implying that a foreign Communist party is organising subversive cells in the Swiss trade union movement in order to instil a revolutionary spirit in the working population.

The worst fears of the Swiss Little Red Book are coming true.



GENEVA

Saint-Pierre Cathedral

The hill on which rises the old city and crowned by the most important edifice of Geneva, the antique cathedral of Saint-Pierre, gives to the town its characteristic aspect.

On the site of St.-Pierre were erected in succession many religious edifices. The first, consecrated to Apollo, was destroyed by fire in 170 A.D. It was replaced by another, from which subsist a few fragments. This new temple of Apollo was converted into a Christian church at the beginning of the 4th century. When Clovis took possession of the Kingdom of Burgundy, to which Geneva then belonged, he had the church destroyed; but later, Gondebaud had it rebuilt, and Avitus, Bishop of Vienne, consecrated it in 516. Under the reign of Conrad the Pacific, the church of Saint-Pierre was reconstructed on the same spot as a new basilic, which was terminated a long time later, under Conrad the Salic, in about 1035. Since that time, Saint-Pierre has suffered many vicissitudes. Amédée, Count of Genevois, had it set on fire; in 1334, in 1349 and in 1430, new fires caused more damages, and finally, in 1556, one of the towers was

struck by lightning. Those disasters explain why the cathedral of Saint-Pierre has undergone, in the course of time, many modifications, and why the different parts of which it is composed are of varied styles wanting in architectural unity; its porch, of Corinthian order, clashes with the style of structure which is chiefly Gothic and Roman. The interior, however, is remarkable for its beautiful proportions. The cathedral has the form of a Latin cross; it has three naves of a length of 62m. and its transept 37m. Above the latter stand the three towers. The northern tower contains the celebrated bell "la Clémence", given by antipope Clément VII; it weighs 6,500 Kg. The southern tower has been restored in Gothic style at the beginning of the 16th century. Those two towers are 40m. high, between them stands an elegant spire 68m. high, constructed in 1898-99, in the Gothic style of the 15th century; it contains a carillon.

The cloister, which served as residence, was demolished in 1721, the sepulchral stones of Théodore de Bèze and of other celebrated personages were removed to the church of Saint-Pierre where they can still be seen. On the right of the side entrance, one can remark moreover, resting on two lions, a sarcophagus of black marble of the Duke Henri de Rohan, chief of the Protestants under Louis XIII, killed in 1638 at the siege of Rheinfelden. In the chapel of Macchabées were found remains of the tomb of Cardinal de Brogny, president of the Council of Constance; died in 1426.

This chapel, in Gothic style, was built by the cardinal in 1406 and in former times served as auditory to the gymnasium and the faculty of theology; from 1878 to 1888, it was restored and adorned with church windows.

In the interior of the cathedral are beautiful stain glass windows, stalls of sculpted wood, dating from the 15th century, and the so-called pulpit of Calvin.

(Pierre Savoie)

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