

News from Switzerland

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—and we still thought Tibet a very far-away place. Now we find it an hour's train ride from our office in the faces of these children full of the sensitive strength of a people fighting for "self-determination," that much-worn phrase, which in their case means fighting for the survival of a civilisation unsurpassed in its spiritual aspiration. Yambhu Lagang, alas, is only a gesture; but it is that.

—*The Swiss Observer*

NEWS OF THE COLONY

HAMILTON SWISS CLUB

During the October evening we were fortunate to show, thanks to the courtesy of our Consulate, a film of a recent March Pass of the Swiss Army (Erstes Armeecorp).

This impressive review of our up-to-date armed strength made us proud of our traditional armed neutrality and brought back to most of us many memories of our own army service.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

AUCKLAND SWISS CLUB

This year's Christmas celebrations will take place on Sunday, 10th December, at the Professional Club Hall, commencing at 4 p.m.

Bring the children along and join in the Christmas dinner party . . . and, of course, Santa Claus will be there also.

Members 10/-

Non-members 15/-

Children free

HAMILTON SWISS CLUB

Our Christmas Evening will be held on the second Sunday, 10th December, in the Riverlea. Special entertainment . . . Christmas Tree and Santa Claus for the children.

Would ladies please bring a plate.

Door charge as usual.

Children free

PLEASE REMEMBER TO PAY YOUR
SUBSCRIPTION

The new Membership list will be issued shortly

NEWS FROM SWITZERLAND

SWISS RECEIVE MOST MAIL

According to the figures issued by the International Bureau of the Universal Postal Union in Berne, Switzerland comes first among European countries for the number of letters received per head of the population, with 118.5 letters, ahead of Great Britain (112.1) and Sweden (88.7), the lowest figures being recorded in Italy (37.5) and Finland (29.6). With regard to the amount of printed matter received annually per head of the population, Switzerland with 127 deliveries comes second after Belgium (192) and ahead of the Netherlands (93), with Norway (21) and Finland (16.6) bringing up the rear.

SCHOOL OF ADVANCED DRIVING

An International School of Advanced Driving promoted by a French engineer, Mr Robert Souaille, was opened quite recently in the canton of Neuchatel. It is equipped with a special track for training both professional and amateur motorists, according to the very latest psychological and practical methods, to react and control their vehicles under all circumstances, particularly in the case of skids or sudden unforeseen incidents. This school is intended above all to improve the standard of professional drivers, such as for example ordinary driving school instructors. But car manufacturers and road builders as well as traffic police even could also learn many things from a visit to the new institute.

NEW GAME OF SKILL

As its name suggests, "Goalmate" is an ingenious combination of chess and football! It is not, of course, played on a pitch but with a squared board on which each of two players controls 11 pieces positioned on the squares like a football team. Some of the rules are derived from football while others—governing the movements of the pieces and the method of scoring—come from chess. Each type of piece is, in fact, moved in a particular way as in chess, goals being scored by checkmating the opposing goalkeeper. "Goalmate" is therefore a game of skill needing intelligence and thought but not allowing such elaborate combination as chess. The idea is to play it "for fun" rather than as a profound "art." In short, "Goalmate" is not an easier or more difficult version of chess nor a substitute for it, but an enjoyable pastime for quick-witted people. Devised by an Englishman resident in Switzerland, where it is manufactured, the game calls for a sporting spirit and the ability to plan ahead quick thinking, boldness and caution. As such, it will undoubtedly prove a great success everywhere.

HIGHEST DAM IN THE WORLD

The highest hydro-electric dam in the world is the Grande-Dixence, the last hopper of concrete for which was recently poured during a big official ceremony. This huge dam is situated at an altitude of approximately 8200 feet above sea level in the Alps of the Valais, in Switzerland. An artificial lake, created some thirty years ago, already existed on the spot but its output had ceased to be sufficient. About ten years ago therefore a start was made on the construction of a new dam, lower downstream, at the same time as the boring of tunnels through the mountain in order to bring the water of several other Alpine valleys to the Dixence, the hydraulic resources of the Dixence basin itself no longer being large enough to supply the electricity works planned. The first concrete was poured about eight years ago. Today, the completed dam is an imposing mass of some 210 million cubic feet of reinforced concrete, 935 feet high, 650 feet thick at the base and 49 feet at the top, with a total length of 2454 feet along the crest. The concrete could naturally only be poured during the summer months and during the years 1957 and 1959 the volume of concrete used amounted to over 35 million cubic feet. The artificial lake formed by the Grande-Dixence dam, which has completely submerged the earlier work, has an effective capacity of 14 billion cubic feet of water, or 88 billion imperial gallons. This water supplies two electricity works — at Fionnay and Nendaz—whose joint output will average 1610 million kwh a year, including some 1400 million kwh of winter power. The final completion of this amazing engineering feat is expected to take place in the spring of 1965 but, thanks to the plan of construction by stages, the two hydro-electric power stations are already partially in operation.

NEW ACCESSORY FOR TELEPHONING

A Swiss watchmaking manufacturer has just launched the "Derbyphone," a new type of telephone call timer. This ingenious apparatus is in the form of a narrow rod with a ball on one end for inserting in the holes of the dial, making it possible to dial numbers without breaking one's nails, and advantage likely to be appreciated by the fair sex. At the same time, a slight pressure of the finger pushes the gilt top over the body of the apparatus. As soon as the connection has been made, one has only to release the pressure of one's finger and the top rises slowly revealing a coloured scale marked up to 6 minutes, thus making it possible to time the length of telephone calls. When not in use, the "Derbyphone" is always handy, hanging by the spherical end from one of the holes in the dial. This small contraption makes an ideal gift object for the trade.

STAMP COLLECTING A STRENUOUS HOBBY

Although the Principality of Liechtenstein—one of the smallest states in Europe—is attached to Switzerland for monetary and postal purposes, it issues its own postage stamps, which are eagerly sought by philatelists all over the world for their originality and rarity. On October 3 last, when the Liechtenstein European stamp for 1961 was due to be issued, an unprecedented onslaught was made on all the post offices in the principality. While hundreds of ardent collectors had poured in by private car and coach from far and near and were besieging the post offices at 5.30 a.m., some fanatics and speculators had camped for the night in the open postal motor coach shelters in order to be sure of getting a few stamps. Although the stamps had been wisely rationed, the supply was exhausted by 8.15 a.m. Collectors who had been too far down the queue raced in their cars from one post office to another. But it was all in vain. The only hope of not returning home empty-handed was to try to buy a stamp at an inflated price in the furious market which opened in the streets of the capital, Vaduz, immediately afterwards. A number of youths in particular had realised this was a unique chance of making some extra pocket money and those fortunate enough to obtain a sheet or two of stamps could pat themselves on the back for displaying such business acumen.

MOTORWAY TRAFFIC CONDITIONS FOR SKIERS

Flyovers to avoid intersecting streams of traffic have become commonplace on the great motorways and the same principle is now being adopted for the first time in one of the most famous skiing regions in the Alps. The picturesque village of Grindelwald in the Bernese Oberland can already boast of the longest chair-lift of its kind running in four sections to the 7216ft First. The top section, which starts near Egg at a height of 5133ft, gives access to some of the best skiing slopes and for this reason it has had the heaviest traffic to carry. A ski-lift has now been introduced to help lessen the load. Another ski-lift is under construction from the First to the Oberjoch (8154ft). This will mean not only a further upward extension of the Grindelwald skiing fields but also a longer season, lasting from autumn until early summer. As a rule snow conditions on the Oberjoch are usually good as early as November and some of the runs can still provide enjoyable sport in June. A novel feature of the Oberjoch ski-lifts is the S-bend in its lay-out. Formerly it was possible to build such lifts only in a straight line or with a curve on one side. A novel feature of both ski-lifts, which cost some 1.2 million Swiss francs to build, is a hundred-foot-long bridge where the route intersects the downhill run. In this way crossings are avoided and the "ski traffic" is routed uphill and downhill at two different levels.

BIGGEST ARTIFICIAL SKATING RINK IN THE WORLD

In preparation for the 1964 Winter Olympics at Innsbruck, work has already started in this Austrian resort on an artificial skating rink with a total area of 121,000 sq. ft., i.e. the biggest made so far. It will consist of an outer speed circuit with three 400 metre long tracks covering a total area of 61,000 square feet, two inner rinks measuring 33,000 square feet in all, and a covered stadium with a 19,800 square feet rink. The Swiss firm, Sulzer Bros. Ltd., of Winterthur, was awarded, in spite of very keen international competition, the order for the supply of the complete refrigerating plant and the installation of the tubing. This firm, it should be added, already possesses considerable experience in the construction of artificial skating rinks for winter and summer operation.

CONTRIBUTION TO SOLUTION OF PARKING PROBLEMS

The problem of parking is still—and will probably long remain—a very pressing topical question. A Swiss inventor has just presented a new system of automatic parking, consisting of a series of platforms suspended from a continuous chain moving along rails; these rails describe, in the vertical plane, curves which can be arranged so as to make the best possible use of the available space. This system therefore possesses considerable elasticity and offers great scope, since it is adaptable to all types of premises, either in buildings or in the unused spaces under the intersections of auto-routes, for example. In addition, it can be made either entirely or partly automatic, controlled by the admission and exit signals, thus allowing ingenious combinations ensuring a fast flow of traffic. The car, once driven on to the platform by its driver, goes through no subsequent manoeuvres and stays in its mobile garage until the driver comes back to fetch it; the latter inserts the key he has been given into a special lock, which operates the movement of the chain and brings his car opposite the exit. This system, known as "mobile parking," makes it possible to plan garages of all sizes, with any number of parallel chains. Two outstanding features of the mobile parking system are the small space it requires compared with the methods used so far and the short time required for driving cars in and out; a big building in Switzerland, at present in the planning stage, is being designed to hold 768 cars in a space of 150 - 240 x 50 feet, it being possible for all the vehicles to enter or leave within 20 to 25 minutes.

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ELECTRONIC WATCHMAKING—NEW CREATION

A big Swiss watch production organisation and a well-known watch factory, specialising in ship's chronometers, have produced an electronic ship's chronometer; resistant to shocks and vibrations, the new model is fitted in a comparatively small case. In spite of its small size, this electronic chronometer has all the precision of a quartz clock.

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