

News from Switzerland

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Forthcoming Events

HAMILTON SWISS CLUB

Dance . . . Saturday, 21st October, in the Pine Lodge.
Te Aroha Orchestra.

For Music Lovers . . .

The "Camerata Bern" will hold their concert in Hamilton on 18th October in the Founders Hall.

News from Switzerland

Swiss Participation in Yugoslav Railway Development

About a year ago Yugoslavia ordered high-powered locomotives from the "50-cycle Traction Union," a group of specialised industries of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA), comprising Swedish and Austrian companies and the Secheron Engineering Works of Geneva. Fifty-four of these machines will be imported into Yugoslavia, while the others are to be produced and assembled under license in this country. The locomotives have a unit power of 5500 HP and are capable, depending on the types, of attaining a maximum speed of 160 km/h; they are designed for all operations, from hauling heavy freight cars to pulling fast passenger trains. This summer, the first engine of this type was delivered to the Yugoslav Railways during a ceremony in which representatives of the railway and industrial sectors of Yugoslavia, Sweden, Austria and Switzerland participated.

Seventy Years Ago: the First Swiss Automobile

In Switzerland the first vehicles propelled by internal combustion engines were built in 1897, by three Swiss engineers quite independently of each other: Dufour at Nyon, Martini at Frauenfeld and St. Blaise, and Saurer at Arbon. Only the Saurer factory, known throughout the world for its trucks and motor coaches, has continued to manufacture automobiles throughout the last 70 years. At the Swiss Transport Museum in Lucerne visitors can see the chassis of a Saurer truck dating back to 1903, as well as a Martini chassis dated 1913, with a sectional view of the engine.

ITME 67 at Basle

The 5th International Textile Machinery Exposition (ITME 67) will take place in Basle from 27th September to 6th October, 1967, after having previously been held at four-year intervals in four foreign cities. This is one of the biggest international trade shows and will occupy a net display area of 72,000 square metres in the buildings of the Swiss Samples Fair at Basle.

A preliminary list of exhibitors shows 800 firms from 18 European and overseas countries. The programme of the exposition, divided into 14 groups, includes spinning and twisting machines, machines for pre-weaving processes, weaving equipment, machines for the knit goods industry, textile finishing and processing machines, professional sewing machines, inspection and measuring instruments and devices, laboratory equipment, equipment for the fabrication of non-woven cloth, technical literature, etc.

Holiday Shares for the Ticino

A new vacation system has been worked out for Canton Ticino. Through the purchase of shares one can acquire so-called "Holiday Certificates," which are divided into various categories, have a validity of 10 or 20 years or an unlimited period, and entitle the bearer to an annual one-week vacation in one of the many holiday apartments scattered throughout southern Switzerland and parts of the Grisons. The apartments are furnished and come complete with linen and all necessary household equipment.

A simple rotation system has been worked out for assigning vacation to shareholders, divided into four periods. A different resort may be visited each year. Part of the intent of this system is to encourage more winter sports activities in Canton Ticino. Shareholders' rights to holidays may be transferred to third parties or may be postponed to the following year (but no later) and combined with that year's entitlement to make a 2-week holiday.

Early Medieval Finds in the Swiss Jura

Saint-Ursanne, a town in the Bernese Jura, draws thousands of visitors annually. Part of its attraction is its lovely location between steep wooded slopes, its old bridge over the Doubs River on the frontier, and its excellent fish cuisine. But its greatest point of interest is its Romanesque Cathedral, which was built before 1210 on still older foundations. Famous are its south portal, in the gables of which Christ is enthroned between Peter and Paul, and its 14th-century cloister with its fine Merovingian reliefs. A second restoration of the church, currently in progress, has brought to light twenty sarcophagi dating from the 7th and 8th centuries. And the experts are anticipating further surprising finds, since this site marks the spot on which the pilgrim Wandregiselus founded a small monastic community in the year 635, at the grave of St. Ursucinus.

International High-Altitude Training Centre in St. Moritz

In preparation for the 1968 Olympic Games in Mexico, a new high-altitude training and competition centre has been opened in St. Moritz and Celerina in the Upper Engadine, under the patronage of the Swiss National Committee for Advanced Sports.

The new facilities make possible conditioning and technical training at altitudes between 6000 and 8200 ft. above sea level. Training in the following sports is available: Light athletics, gymnastics, fencing, wrestling, boxing, rowing, markmanship, riding, swimming and cycling.

An Interesting Artistic Initiative in Geneva

The generous voluntary activity of the Association of the Geneva Centre for Contemporary Gravure is worth mentioning. It is a private, non-profit institution which, in order to encourage the development of the art of gravure in Geneva, has created a Centre in this city where artists from all countries can work and meet. The city of Geneva has put a building at the disposal of the Association and this has been converted into gravure workshops, extremely well-equipped with all necessary machines and materials which are available at unusually favourable conditions to professional and amateur engravers of all nationalities. The Centre also offers lodging and restaurant facilities for artists from outside the city who are taking courses.

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Swiss Aid to Thailand: a High Voltage Laboratory

At the end of July, a high voltage laboratory was officially inaugurated at the Faculty of Technology of the University of Chulalongkorn in Bangkok; the realisation of this laboratory is the result of the co-operation of the Swiss and Thai governments on behalf of technical development. The Swiss share of this achievement amounts to 5 million bahts (1,037,500 SwF.); to this amount should be added important Thai contributions in the form of premises, material, labour, as well as of financial facilities granted to the Swiss experts.

The laboratory is already attracting the attention and interest of specialists, power authorities and research bodies. This accomplishment will undoubtedly play a considerable role because it represents an important factor in the economic development of Thailand and the other countries of the Mekong.

The Bicycle: A Practical Means of Locomotion

For nearly 15 years now, Swiss railway stations have been hiring out modern and well-equipped bicycles to passengers. Hundreds of thousands of people so far have taken advantage of this service. Thanks to this possibility of renting bicycles, commercial travellers, holiday-makers or even whole groups are able, on getting off a train, to ride easily to destinations in the neighbourhood or travel in a comparatively wide radius, it being possible to return the bicycle to another station if more convenient.

New Swiss Stamps

The forthcoming increase in Swiss postal rates has obliged the Post Office Department to issue new postage stamps and a new postcard. The four new stamps, intended for parcels (denominations of 70 centimes, 2 francs, 2,50 francs and 3,50 francs), continue the historic monuments series. They are printed on copperplates of the rotary presses belonging to the Post Office Department and will be on sale starting September 18. On the same date the Post Office Department will issue 4 new commemorative stamps; in denominations of 10 centimes and 20 centimes, on the occasion, respectively, of the 50th anniversary of Swiss Week and the 50th anniversary of the National Old Age Foundation; a 30-centime stamp to commemorate the opening of the San Bernadino road tunnel and a 50-centime stamp for the 75th anniversary of the International Rail Transport Office (1893-1968).

Colour Television at the Swiss Trade Show

It was 20 years ago that the Swiss Comptoir — or Swiss National Autumn Fair — presented for the first time a "Television Pavilion." This year, as two decades ago, the 48th Swiss Comptoir will again present an innovation in this field: a TV studio demonstrating the problems of colour television.

NEWS IN BRIEF . . .

Special all-inclusive vacations are being offered by Zinal in the Val d'Anniviers in Canton Valais. A number of new club-hotels and cable car with the largest hourly capacity in Switzerland provide facilities for pleasant and, above all, very moderately-priced holidays.

On the Diablerets Glacier a new hotel has been opened at an altitude of precisely 9900ft. It features a self-service restaurant in traditional style (with 110 and 150 seats respectively), and an 80-seat terrace, all providing splendid views of the surrounding mountains with their eternal snow.

The Swiss postal department has received new buses for its post bus service. The old, tried-and-true dimensions have been retained, but the bodywork is completely new. Despite elimination of the previous observer glass, high side-windows guarantee excellent visibility for all passengers.

The Montreux-Oberland Railway (MOB) and the Rhaetian Railway (RHB) have both instituted innovations worthy of mention. The MOB has totally renovated a 1914 Pullman wagon and even equipped it with a bar. The RHB has introduced a new express train between Chur and St. Moritz, cutting travel time to only 2 hours; with excellent connections available to international trains, this should provide some relief for automotive traffic to the Engadine.

The Hotel Beatus in Merligen on Lake Thun has announced the opening of a new indoor swimming pool, attached to which is a sauna.

A sport pass valid for 10 days and providing resort guests with reductions of up to 20 per cent on all sports and entertainment facilities, has been introduced in Crans and Montana. Guests have freedom of choice as to the kind of sports and entertainment facilities they wish to use. Should interest prove sufficiently widespread, the sport pass will be distributed during the winter season as well.

The Swiss Federal Railways are for the first time providing direct service between Geneva and Lucerne, from July 1 to September 23. The trial train contains both first and second class sections and will leave Geneva daily at 8.49 a.m., arriving in Lucerne at 12.40 p.m. As yet there are no plans for direct service in the reverse direction.

Geneva's open-air performances, which were run from June 13 to August 22, offered a rich cultural programme with the emphasis on folklore performances by well-known soloists and ensembles from all parts of the world.