

News from Switzerland

Objektyp: **Group**

Zeitschrift: **Helvetia : magazine of the Swiss Society of New Zealand**

Band (Jahr): **30 (1967)**

Heft [11]

PDF erstellt am: **31.05.2024**

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A NEW SWISS PLANE

The prototype of a new plane in the "Porter" series is nearing completion in the workshop of the Pilatus Aircraft Factory at Stans. It is a twin-engined plane which, like the previous models of the same type already found all over the world, is designed for taking off and landing over very short distances. The new "Twin Porter", whose first trials will probably be carried out before the end of this year, is designed to transport ten passengers at a cruising speed of over 160 m.p.h. (osec)

THE SWISS WATCH

The 1967-68 edition of "The Swiss Watch" directory has just come out in an improved form. Among other things it contains a very detailed guide and directory of the various branches, copious information concerning the allied branches of the Swiss watchmaking industry, a list of the trade associations, the addresses of new mergers, diplomatic representatives, personalities in the watchmaking industry, trade unions, the Swiss watchmaking industry's international training centres, etc.

In addition, it gives invaluable information on problems affecting the watchmaking industry, the production, technique and organisation of space research in Europe. Through its information and the details it contains, this directory will simplify the work of offices and departments dealing with the Swiss watchmaking industry. (osec)

THE RESULTS OF "ITMA 67"

The 5th International Textile Machinery Exhibition, "ITMA 67", which was held in the halls of the Swiss Industries Fair in Basle recently, was a complete success from every point of view.

This exhibition, the largest of its kind in the world, featured over 9000 machines displayed by 881 exhibitors from 18 countries, in an exhibition space covering nearly 800,000 sq. ft. During the ten days it lasted, this exhibition was attended by 110,317 visitors from 105 countries, including 661 editors and journalists representing 30 countries. A system of cross-checking makes it possible to estimate that each visitor went on an average 3 or 4 times to the exhibition, making the total number of admissions nearer 380,000.

The exhibitors and organisers, i.e. the "European Committee of Textile Equipment Manufacturers", were completely satisfied with the success of this year's exhibition and the transactions concluded. (osec)

EMERGENCY PLUMBING SERVICE

Following the example given a few years ago by their colleagues in Basle, the plumbers of the town of Zurich have introduced an emergency service designed to operate at night and on holidays in order to come to the rescue of unfortunate householders with water or gas pipes that have suddenly sprung a leak, or drains that have become blocked and risk overflowing, etc.

This emergency team, which has a fully equipped workshop set up in one of its vans, is not intended to undertake big repairs but simply to put a stop temporarily to any defects that might lead to damage or be a cause of danger during normal closing hours. This is a clever collective solution to a trouble common in big towns today: the difficulty of finding specialised personnel ready to help in an emergency. (osec)

ECONOMIC ROLE OF THE SWISS CIGARETTE INDUSTRY

In 1966 Swiss cigarette factories produced the impressive total of 15.6 billion cigarettes from 16,000 tons of raw tobacco. This output consumed in addition the following commodities supplied by the Swiss economy: 500 tons of cigarette paper; 1170 tons of aluminium foil; 1500 tons of paper for cigarette packets; 4700 tons of cardboard for manufacturing the cartons and 1500 tons of wrapping cardboard for despatch.

In 1966, this industry contributed S.Fr. 340 million in taxes to the Swiss economy, benefiting in particular the State's old-age pension and dependents insurance scheme. (osec)

CULTURAL DECENTRALISATION IN SWITZERLAND

Federalism, which is one of Switzerland's outstanding features, would tend to have a restrictive effect if it were not accompanied by an equally strong trend towards cultural decentralisation. In this connection, let us call attention to the creation of a "Solothurn Film Festival Society" in Solothurn, a town of some 20,000 inhabitants in an industrial area. This group, founded by a number of cinema enthusiasts, who had organised a Film Festival in Solothurn in 1966, has sought and found support outside the canton, in various parts of Switzerland such as Zurich, Lausanne, Geneva, the Ticina, etc.

The eminence of its committee members and the very favourable comments in the Swiss press reporting its first two festivals augur well for the success of the 3rd Solothurn Film Festival, to be held in Solothurn on January 20th and 21st, 1968. The programme includes an examination of independent Swiss film production during 1967, with the projection of all films that have been awarded prizes by the Confederation, together with the showing of foreign documentaries, a lecture by a foreign producer, as well as open debates between producers, critics and the public, which will form a very important part of the meeting. (osec)

AS OTHERS SEE US . . .

Early in the year, the Brazilian weekly "Manchete" (circulation 350,000) published a 30-page coloured report on the Swiss Confederation. It gives a comprehensive picture of historic and present-day Switzerland, well documented and well presented. The publishers were advised by "Pro Helvetia", the Swiss National Tourist Office and the Information and Press Service of the Federal Political Department in Berne.

"Britain and Switzerland 1845-60" is the title of a book by the American historian Ann G. Imlah (published by Longmans, London 1966). It was reviewed on 4th July in "Schweizer Monatshefte" by the Cultural Attache at the Swiss Embassy in London, Dr Paul Stauffer. He comments favourably on the fair account of the special relationship between Great Britain and Switzerland, of British diplomacy during the Sonderbundskrise, the foundation of the Confederate State and the Neuchatel conflict. Dr Stauffer praises the author for considering the British position in each case in the light of the existing political constellation at the time but deplores the fact that her research was confined to unpublished material and left out all published accounts. This led to unfortunate mistakes and statements such as that the Swiss electorate rejected by public vote the proposal that Switzerland should join the United Nations.

On the other hand, nothing but praise was shown in a book published in 1965 and reviewed in the Swiss Review of World Affairs. The author is Kenneth D. McRae, Professor of Political Science in Carleton University, and the book, "Switzerland, Example of Cultural Coexistence", was published by the Canadian Institute of International Affairs in Toronto. Prof. McRae shows extensive knowledge of Switzerland and its languages and "succeeds in condensing a large and unwieldy body of historical and constitutional data into an outline that is as precise as it is readable". The reviewer (Miss Melanie Staerk) recommends the essay as "a must on any good reading list on Switzerland today".

Great praise is heaped on Switzerland in two articles published by Reader's Digest. One was called "The Land that runs like a Watch" by Frank Taylor, which could be described by the prefacing paragraph: "With efficiency, expertise and sheer hard work, Switzerland more than holds her own among her larger neighbours". The writer calls the country a "man-made miracle". He describes the National Exhibition, geography and economics, the "Military Might" and the Voter who is Boss. Quite some humour comes into the account, such as what Basler likes best about Zurich — A ticket back to Basle!