

News from Switzerland

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THE CAUSES OF ROAD ACCIDENTS IN SWITZERLAND

The number of road accidents in Switzerland increased faster than the number of road vehicles last year. There were 68,096 recorded accidents, 41,060 of which produced only material damage. 30,018 people were wounded and 1,577 killed. The police have made a breakdown of the various causes of road accidents. The first and deadliest cause was **speed** unadjusted to road conditions. Then came disrespect of priority, inattention, coasting too near, bad weather conditions, branching off without sufficient warning, rash overtaking, driving on the left (Switzerland is driving on the right-hand side) and vehicles not in order. About 12 per cent of all accidents involved pedestrians. Over two-fifths of these victims were children. The total cost of these accidents to insurance companies was a record 180 million francs.

NEW DIMENSIONS IN AIR TRAVEL FOR THE 70s

Long range tri-jets such as the Douglas DC-10 and Lockheed L-1011 are the aircraft with the greatest potential to carve out new dimensions in tomorrow's mass air transportation rather than the Boeing 747 "Jumbo Jets". Such is the view of Mr A. Baltensweiler, Executive Vice-President of Swissair. The Swiss national airline recently announced plans for the introduction of both DC-10s and 747s to its fleet.

Commenting on recent trends in aircraft development, Mr Baltensweiler said that the DC-10, with its smaller capacity of 250 passengers, was an ideal substitute for the 747 over a large number of the world's air routes that do not have a passenger potential large enough to require the 360 passenger capacity of the big jet. According to Mr Baltensweiler, Douglas realised that they could take away quite a number of potential 747 orders from Boeing by extending the range of the DC-10. This was achieved by adding some 20,000 lbs of fuel in the centre section of the wing, extending the wing tips by three feet on either side and boosting the thrust of the General Electric engines. He said that the resulting "extended range" DC-10 will permit Swissair to fly a route such as Zurich-Chicago or Zurich-Singapore with a full passenger payload, non-stop.

The obvious question resulting from such a statement is: will the large number of passengers who can be carried by 747s and DC-10s mean a reduction in air fares? According to Mr Baltensweiler the answer is "yes . . . but only indirectly".

"The operating costs of transport planes, that is the cost per seat-mile, has fallen consistently since the days of the old DC-3.

The manufacturers through aerodynamic refinements, the use of better materials and greatly improved production techniques — on one hand, and the airlines — through higher utilisation and automation — on the other, have pushed the operating costs of their airplanes down to an all-time low”.

He went on: “Although we have reason to believe that the direct operating costs of the 747 or the DC-10 may actually go below that of a DC-8, the airlines must realise that the days of reducing costs through the introduction of new and more modern equipment have come to an end.

“The most airlines can hope for is to hold fares at current levels which, in view of the continuous increase of the cost of living index throughout the world, will in effect amount to a reduction in air fares”.

LABOUR PEACE

The Swiss machinery and instruments industry has at its disposal a traditionally skilled and conscientious labour force. In order to keep up the high level of qualification, a programme of professional training has been worked out, comprising in particular a remarkable system of apprenticeship. The improvements in working conditions (wages among the highest in Europe, professional training policy, etc.) make it possible to attract workers to this industry which, like all industries in the country, nevertheless suffers from the great shortage of manpower.

It should also be remembered that the Swiss machinery industry enjoys the benefits of the labour peace reigning in the country; the “Peace pact between employers and employees in the machinery and metallurgical industry”, signed in 1937 and regularly renewed ever since, represents a considerable advantage to this industry’s competitiveness, since it prohibits strikes and lock-outs.

SWISS COWS FOR BRITAIN

Three hundred opulent, spotted Simmenthal cows took the plane at Cointrin airport with a British destination. They had just spent three weeks of quarantine in the stables of the Comptoir Suisse in Lausanne. On their arrival in Britain, they had to spend three more weeks of quarantine. These were enough reasons for taking the great precautions in protecting them from contagion during their journey. Switzerland exported 2,120 head of cattle of the Simmenthal breed and 7,150 head of the brown, or “Schwytz” breed in 1969. The main importers were the Italians, who prefer the brown or “Schwytz” cows. Other clients were the eastern European countries such as Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Russia and Hungary. They were mainly interested in Simmenthal cattle. South Africa, Bolivia and Lybia had also imported specimens of Simmenthal cattle in 1969. There are 900,000 Simmenthal cows in the world. The aim of these British imports is to improve current breeds by regenerating them.