

News at random

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NEWS AT RANDOM

Federal

The annual conference of Swiss Ministers accredited to foreign countries took place in Berne under the presidency of Federal-Councillor, M. Max Petitpierre. 21 Ministers, who are at present spending their holidays in Switzerland, attended the conference.

* * *

M. Carlos Blattner, Hon. Consul-General in Havana, has retired from his post.

Consul Blattner was born in 1879, and is a citizen of Küttigen (Ct. Aargau). He was appointed Swiss Consul in Havana in 1918 and Consul General in 1935.

* * *

During the month of July, 1951, the Swiss Federal Railways carried 17,18 million passengers or 57,000 more than in July, 1950. The receipts from passenger service increased by 126,000.—frs., and reached the sum of 30.58 million francs.

Goods traffic too increased by 201,000 tons over last years figures, and is returned as 1.82 million tons, the receipts reaching 31.42 million francs (July, 1950 : 27.72 milion francs).

* * *

Customs receipts in the month of August, 1951, totalled 47.3 million francs or 12.5 million francs less than in August, 1950. During the first eight months of the current year receipts reached the sum of 412.6 million francs which represents an increase of 49.9 million francs over the same period in 1950.

* * *

The Board of the Swiss Federal Railways has appointed Dr. Max Strauss to the post of General Secretary.

Dr. Strauss was born in Zurich in 1913 and studied law at the University of that town. From 1938-1941, he practised as a lawyer in Zurich. He entered the service of the Swiss Federal Railways in 1941, where he occupied various important posts.

* * *

Mr. André Marguerat, Manager of the Montreux Oberland Bernois Railway has been appointed

Divisional Manager (Lausanne) of the Swiss Federal Railways. He was born at Lutry in 1902, where he received his primary education. Afterwards he attended secondary and technical schools in Lausanne, and the school of Engineering at Lausanne University, where he took his diploma as Mechanical Engineer in 1924. He received practical experience in the Swiss Federal Railway's shops at Yverdon in 1924 and after a year at the Oerlikon works, served in the shops at Bienne and Berne. Between 1927-37, he passed through various grades in the motion power and workshops services at Lausanne and at Berne. In 1935, he was transferred to the 1st Division to gain experience in station and train working, and subsequently became Operating Inspector at Lausanne. In 1937, he was recalled to motion power duties at Lausanne with the title of Chief of Section, and in 1945, he became Manager of the Montreux Oberland Bernois railways.

He is succeeded by Mr. Robert Widmer, at present Manager of the Aigle-Leysin and Aigle-Sépay-Diableret railways.

* * *

Japan has asked Switzerland to be allowed to open a commercial bureau in Geneva.

Cantonal

The traditional "Knabenschiessen" at the Albisgütli near Zurich took place on the 10th of this month and was attended by about 1,500 young riflemen. Amongst the visitors who attended the competition were: General Guisan, Army-Corps Commanders Iselin and Wille, Colonel of Division Schumacher and representatives of the government of the canton of Zurich.

Heinrich Landolt, of Grafstal (District Pfäffikon-Zurich) was proclaimed "Schützenkönig" with 34 points. [A.T.S.]

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R.A.C.

Dr. Ernst Bärtschi, Mayor of the town of Berne, has announced that he will retire from his post at the end of the current year. [A.T.S.]

Dr. R. Friedli, since 1941 a teacher of mathematics at the "Realschule" in Berne, has been elected rector of the school, in succession to the late Dr. Max Moser. [A.T.S.]

Three valuable pictures originating from the XVIIIth century "Baptism of Christ", "Apparition de la Vierge à Saint Benoît" and "Guillaume de Glâne" by the painter Ackert, were stolen from the small chapel of the St. Apollinus in Fribourg. [A.T.S.]

The "Comptoir Suisse" was opened on the 8th of this month at Lausanne by M. Emmanuel Failletaz. On the "Official Day" Federal Councillor Rubattel addressed the numerous distinguished guests who included the Presidents of the two Federal Chambers and the Supreme Courts, former Federal Councillor Stampfli, General Guisan, Colonels of Division Montfort and Brunner, etc., etc. [A.T.S.]

Dr. Hans Steiner, a judge of the Federal Supreme Court in Lausanne, will vacate his post at the end of November next.

Dr. Steiner (aged 68) is a citizen of the town of Schwyz, and entered the Supreme Court in 1924 in succession to M. Emile Perrier (Fribourg). From 1919-1924, he sat in Parliament (National Council) as a representative of the Cath. Conservative Party. [A.T.S.]

A Vandois paid a fine of 500.—frs., which was inflicted upon him for driving a car when under the influence of alcohol, with 10,000 five-centime pieces. [A.T.S.]

Army

An army Vampire machine, piloted by Captain Gustav Wildi (aged 44), crashed on landing in Dübendorf. Captain Wildi, who was married and father of three children was killed. The machine was completely destroyed. [A.T.S.]

The following deaths are announced from Switzerland:—

Dr. h.c. Werner Reinhart, since 1912 a partner in the firm of Volkart Brothers, Winterthur, in Winterthur, at the age of 68. The "Manchester Guardian" writes:—

"The death at his home at Winterthur of Werner Reinhart, which has just been announced, means an incalculable loss to music, not only in his native Switzerland but in musical quarters generally and more especially in England where he had close cultural links and many friends. A brother of Oskar Reinhart, the well-known picture collector, and a member of the family firm of Volkart, he took an active part in the ramifications of this famous business house, he travelled widely, he was intimate with the history of art and letters, oriental as well as European, and he lived with choice examples of books, paintings, furniture, and textiles in his several beautiful houses. In spite of numerous claims on his interest, he devoted most of his spare time to making music (he was much in demand as one of the few surviving players on the

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basset-horn), to furthering the performance of music old and new (though intensely critical he was very catholic in his range), and to providing for the needs of individual musicians. The International Society of Contemporary Music, the Chamber and Orchestral Concert Society in his native town, and countless other organisations as well as performers have had the advantage of his advice, moral encouragement, and financial assistance, all of which was given with such discretion that very few even of his intimate friends know the extent of his benefactions.

To the public at large his name is best known as that of the friend and patron of Rainer Maria Rilke, for whom he purchased the medieval château of Muzot in the Valais above Sierre, where the poet spent some of his happiest years, wrote the "Sonnets to Orpheus," and completed the "Duinese Elegies." What Reinhart did for Rilke was the typical gesture of a man who wanted to make available for others what he cared for most himself, and whose lifelong devotion to the arts was only equalled by his kindness and generosity to his friends."

Hans Gabazzi, for 31 years secretary of the "Schweizerischen Gewerbeverbandes" in Thun, aged 61. The deceased was from 1922-1946 a member of the Municipal Council of Thun over which he presided in the years 1927, 1939 and 1942.

Dr. h.c. Jakob, Adolf Bühler, formerly Chief Engineer of the Swiss Federal Railways, in Berne, at the age of 69.

Emanuel Vincent, Journalist and author of a number of novels and plays, in Lausanne, aged 56.

Pastor Franz Burnand, son of the painter Eugène Burnand. The deceased had been a preacher at Tramelan, Berne and Lausanne. From 1918-1928 he had held the post of Assistant-Director of the "Diakonissen" home in St. Loup. He died in Lausanne at the age of 61.

Adolf Günther-Marx, Embroidery Manufacturer in St. Gall, aged 62.

Professor Ernest Delaquis, in Davos at the age of 73. He was born in Egypt and received his schooling in St. Gall and afterwards studied law at the Universities of Heidelberg, Munich and Berlin. Later on, he received appointments as Professor at the Universities of Frankfurt a. M., Berne and Hamburg. For some time he held a post at the Federal Justice and Police Department in Berne, and for many years was Director of the Touring Club in Geneva. He retired in 1948.

Charles Messmer, etcher and cartoonist (Nebelspalter) in Lucerne, at the age of 58.

Professor Georges-Alexis Mottier, Professor of philosophy and French literature at the Girls High School, Geneva, in Geneva aged 42. [A.T.S.]

The following anniversaries are announced in Switzerland:—

Dr. Carl Burckhardt (60) Diplomat and Historian, born in Basle. He has held the following appointments: Presidents of the International Red Cross Committee, High Commissioner of Danzig and Swiss Minister in Paris.

Ernest Macherel (70) Director of the "Banque d'Etat" Fribourg. He entered the Bank in 1901.

G. Beerli (70), President of the "Bürgererrat" Basle of which he has been a member of over 30 years. [A.T.S.]

The undermentioned Members of Parliament are not seeking re-election at the next Parliamentary elections which will take place shortly:

Dr. E. Hirzel (Lausanne); Henry Cottier (Lausanne); U. Péclard (Yverdon); René Robert (Neuchâtel); Konrad Müller (Winterthur); Dr. Georg Sprecher (Chur); Albert Malche (Geneva); Christian Eggenberger (Grabs) and Dr. Vinzenz Winiker (Lucerne). [A.T.S.]

The recent return of favourable weather in the Alpine regions has been accompanied by a new increase of accidents, mostly due to imprudence, as in four cases out of seven the victims were climbing alone.

Near Grindelwald a Swiss Tourist was killed after a fall on the Strahlegg path, and another by falling on the Roselau rocks, yet another had a fatal fall at Barberine (Valais).

Mr. & Mrs. Brucker, of Lucerne, were crossing the Glattenfirn glacier between the Spannort and Krönten huts when Mrs. Brucker fell into a 60 ft. deep crevasse. Her husband fixed a rope to an ice axe and went for assistance. When he returned four hours later with rescuers he found his wife was dead.

[A.T.S.]

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Traffic accidents in Switzerland are unfortunately still on the increase. Here are some figures: *Ct. Berne*, August, 1951: 516 accidents, 12 killed and 441 injured; *Ct. Aargau*: 137 accidents, 3 killed and 119 injured; *Ct. Vaud*, January to August, 1951: 1,059 accidents, 41 killed. [A.T.S.]

* * *

With the financial help of the communes of Lausanne and Martigny a syndicate has been formed with a capital of £4,000 to study the possibility of boring a road tunnel under the Grand St. Bernard to link the Rhône Valley with Aosta. At its first meeting at Lausanne Count Marone, Chairman of the Turin Chamber of Commerce, announced the creation of a similar syndicate in Italy which will work in co-operation with the Swiss body.

* * *

Swiss scientists discovered a glacier 180ft. underground in the Alps near Meiringen.

* * *

Building in Switzerland in the first quarter of 1951 showed an increase of 21.4 per cent. over the figures for the corresponding period of 1950.

* * *

Although passed by the Swiss Parliament in June, a proposal to prolong until the end of 1955 the law designed to restrict the opening of new hotels and the enlargement of existing hotels in Switzerland is meeting with a number of objections among the public.

Leading the protest against the move is Mr. Gottlieb Duttweiler, the head of a Swiss multiple store chain.

He has said that if he can obtain the necessary 30,000 signatures to a petition the proposal will have to be put to a referendum before the whole Swiss electorate with a view to having it rescinded.

The Swiss Hoteliers' Society, on the other hand, want to see the measure continued. They already have

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the support of the Federal Council and the majority of the two Chambers, but if the majority of the electorate vote against it the Government will be forced to withdraw it.

It was in June, 1949, that it was originally decided that all hotel construction, or the opening or enlargement of hotels or similar establishments, would need a special permit.

* * *

Swiss engineers recently completed a new aerial cableway, 2.8 km. in length, between Stalden and Gspon, which was brought into service on August 5th. The vertical rise is about 1,100 metres. The cableway cost over £800,000. The lower terminus is at Stalden on the Brig-Visp-Zermatt Railway, at the point where connection is made with the Post Office bus service to Saas-Fee. From Stalden (2,621 ft. above sea level) the aerial cable goes to Staldenried (3,468 ft.), a village of 90 families, most of whom work in a factory at Visp and to whom the new means of transport is a godsend compared with the steep and difficult path to and from the station. The next stage of the cableway ends at the mountain village of Gspon (6,204 ft.), overlooking the Saaser Visper River, which has its confluence with the Mattervisp at Stalden.

* * *

A list of countries which showed a sharp fall in unemployment between June, 1950, and June, 1951, is announced by the International Labour Organisation.

The Swiss drop in registered unemployment was 73 per cent. during that period. Finland came next with 64 per cent., Australia's decrease was 50 per cent., United States 42, South Africa 41, Canada 39, Saar 36, U.K. 31, France 26, and New Zealand 22.

West Germany recorded a 14 per cent. decrease only. No figures are available for Italy.

Israel and Norway had increases in unemployment of 25 and 24 per cent. respectively.

* * *

Few of the many tourists who take the Jungfrau Railway to the Jungfrauoch, the highest railway station in Europe, know as they stand on its lofty terrace looking at the breathtaking panorama of the Aletsch glacier and the Bernese and Valais Alps that they are within a stone's throw of a great research station.

Yet the station, at a height of 12,000 feet, is of great importance to the world of science. Here physicists study cosmic rays, and scientists from many countries work on problems concerning astrophysics, astronomy, geophysics and medical subjects, as well as glacier movements.

In the Sphinx observatory British research workers have installed an electromagnet weighing 14 tons and propose to carry out research there from time to time for the next five years.

Belgian professors have taken with them to the Jungfrauoch special instruments to measure ultra-red solar radiations.

Last year 162 research workers and technical assistants used the Jungfrauoch observatory. Ninety-two of them were Swiss, who spent a total of 416 nights at the station. Twenty-six British workers, compared with 18 in 1949, spent 652 nights there, 21 Belgians (five in the previous year) were there for 451 nights, and 19 French (six) for 329 nights. Germany, which was not represented in 1949, sent four men, who spent 131 nights there.

According to a reports by the Swiss National Commission on Switzerland's contribution to the programme of UNESCO, the high altitude research station is an international foundation created in 1930, of which the members are the Royal Society of London, the "Kaiser-Wilhelm Gesellschaft zur Foerderung der Wissenschaften" of Berlin, the "Akademie der Wissenschaften" of Vienna, the University of Paris, the Helvetic Society of Natural Science, and the Jungfrau Railway Company. It is financed by the Swiss Confederation, the cantons of Basle Town, Basle Country, Berne, Fribourg, Soleure and Vaud, the Jungfrau Railway and the countries of members of the Foundation. UNESCO makes an annual contribution of 5,000 dollars and recently made a gift of 6,500 dollars for the construction of a cupola for the observatory.

* * *

The second section of the aerial cable-way between Stalden and Gspon was officially opened on August 5th. In 14 minutes now passengers can travel a distance of 2,800 metres, with a difference in altitude of 1,100 metres. Work on the project cost a million Swiss francs (£817,000). Stalden, at a height of 799 metres, is an important point on the Brig-Visp-Zermatt railway, where passengers for Saas-Fee leave the train to continue their journey by Postauto. Staldenried (1,057 metres) is a village consisting of 90 families who mostly earn their living in the Lonza factory at Visp. From Stalden station the path leading to the village is very steep and difficult to use

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in winter. The mountain village of Gspon, 1,891 metres above sea level, overlooks the Saas section of the River Visp, which joins the Zermatt section at Stalden.

* * *

Thirteen English competitors are among the 329 musicians from 32 different countries who will be competing in Geneva's International Music Competition at the Conservatoire from September 24th to October 7th.

Of the 329, women number 175 and men 154. Other nationalities taking part are 71 French, 48 Germans, 39 Italians, 32 Swiss, 28 Austrians, 19 Americans, 10 Belgians, nine Mexicans, eight Yugoslavs, six Poles, four Canadians, four Spaniards, four Finns, three Greeks, three Dutch, three Hungarians, three Israeli, two Bulgarians, two Danes, and one candidate each from the Argentine, Australia, Colombia, Estonia, Ireland, Monaco, Rumania, Russia, the Saar, the Ukraine, Uruguay and Venezuela. Six of the candidates are stateless.

Most entries are for the piano competition — 123 of them, of which 75 are women and 48 men. In the

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choral competition there are 103 (83 women and 22 men), and in the sonata for piano and violincello there are 38 (14 women and 24 men). There are 20 candidates for horn competitions, and 45 flutists.

The final winners' concert will be held on Sunday, October 7th, in the Victoria Hall, Geneva. The Orchestre de la Suisse Romande, conducted by Ernest Ansermet, will be taking part, and the programme will be broadcast over a number of foreign radio stations.

* * *

At a cost of nearly 10,000 francs (£817), Switzerland's famous monument, the 26-ft.-long Lion of Lucerne has been completely restored. Since it was finished in 1821 the monument has suffered much from the weather and after numerous different attempts at renovation it was decided to undertake a complete replacement of parts which have either rotted or been worn away by time. The Lion of Lucerne was chiselled out of living rock on the face of a cliff 60 feet high by the sculptor, Ahorn, of Constance, after a model by the Dane Thorwaldsen.

* * *

For more than a quarter of a century Neuchâtel, charming capital of the Swiss canton of the same name, has celebrated its famous wine festival year by year with a programme that grows in scope and brilliance. This year it is being held on Saturday and Sunday, September 29th and 30th. On the Sunday afternoon the traditional procession will wend its way through the Streets of the old town. More than a thousand people will be taking part, as well as numerous carriages gaily decorated with flowers, with spectators having their share of the fun with confetti fights. As usual visitors from the rest of Switzerland and many parts of Europe will be in Neuchâtel for the Festival, and everyone is hoping for the fine weather that traditionally accompanies the event.

* * *

Special trains took to Zermatt on July 30th some of the many friends of Otto Furrer to pay their last respects to the celebrated Valaisan guide, Alpinist and skier. Otto Furrer, who was 48, was killed on the Italian side of the Matterhorn, which he had climbed more than 180 times, when a rope snapped and he fell 280 feet to his death. Everyone in the valley was present at the funeral of the man who had spent his life working for the development of Zermatt. Alpine guides carrying 80 wreaths preceded representatives of Alpine Clubs from all over Switzerland, Italy and

France. At the cemetery Dr. Franz Seiler, a native of Zermatt and president of the Swiss Hoteliers' Society, gave the funeral oration. Among others who spoke in tribute was Arnold Lunn, founder of the Kandahar Club, who two years ago presented Otto Furrer with the Club's coveted diamond badge.

* * *

Some of the most valuable stamp collections in Switzerland will be on view at Lucerne's Museum of Art (Kunsthau) from September 29th to October 7th on the occasion of the Swiss National Philatelic Exhibition. The value of the exhibits is more than ten million Swiss francs (£817,000) and will include many old and rare stamps from Europe and countries overseas. Switzerland's leading stamp collectors have also been invited to take part in a special competition.

* * *

A selection of photographic art from nearly every country in the world will be on show in Lucerne next year. A vast World Photography Exhibition has been arranged there for May 15th-July 31st, 1952, and there is the possibility at the same time that an international trade fair for photographers and opticians will be held as well as a number of technical courses given by specialists.

The exhibition will be organised under the auspices of the Lucerne authorities with the assistance of a number of technical organisations. Hundreds of the best works by professional and amateur photographers from all parts of the world will be presented in an entirely new form.

Sites already chosen for the different events include the Congress House (Fine Arts Museum), a large part of the square in front of the station, and the Festival Hall.

* * *

Well-known private collectors and curators of museums in both Switzerland and other countries are sending many beautiful examples of table decoration since the days of Louis XIV towards the "Three Centuries of Table Art" exhibition which is being held at Lausanne from September 1st to October 21st.

* * *

Organised by the Lausanne Tourist Office, it is being held in the city's Municipal Theatre, which is being completely redecorated for the occasion, and visitors will be able to admire rare tapestries, silverware, jewellery, cutlery, earthenware and ceramics. Contemporary styles, too, will have their place in the sumptuous display.

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