

# The Phantoms of Bern

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## THE PHANTOMS OF BERN

Several ghosts, a resident spook and a skinned cow with the soul of a cruel butcher inside are haunting the Swiss capital and its surroundings.

And what's more — science apparently cannot disprove or explain the existence of at least one of the ghosts.

The ghost has been "living" for many decades in a 16th Century "haunted house" on the sunny side of Junkerngasse Street in the old city of Bern. You can easily tell this house from the others — its shutters are closed day and night.

Even in this time of the atom and jets, no one wants to live there. It echoes with the noise of slamming doors and footsteps creeping up and down the creaky stairs.

Ten years ago the Swiss government decided to put an end to the rumours — and to the waste of leaving a solidly built house stand — unused — by buying it and using it for storing the archives of the Federal Aliens Police.

The ghost wasn't disturbed. The same old creaking and the mysterious footsteps were still heard.

Then some scientifically minded students decided to move in for a night in an effort to disprove the rumours.

They emerged dead frightened the next morning.

"We never could close our eyes for the sound of running footsteps," they reported.

After that, even the most sceptical of Berners accepted the theory of a resident spook. Even the Federal Police, though they still keep the old aliens' files there, refrain as much as they can from disturbing him.

Occasionally, police find that someone has unlocked the front door — the ghost, maybe, needing some fresh air after the long days and weeks among the dusty files. No one, however, has ever seen the ghost of Junkerngasse. He can only be heard, Berners say.

\* \* \*

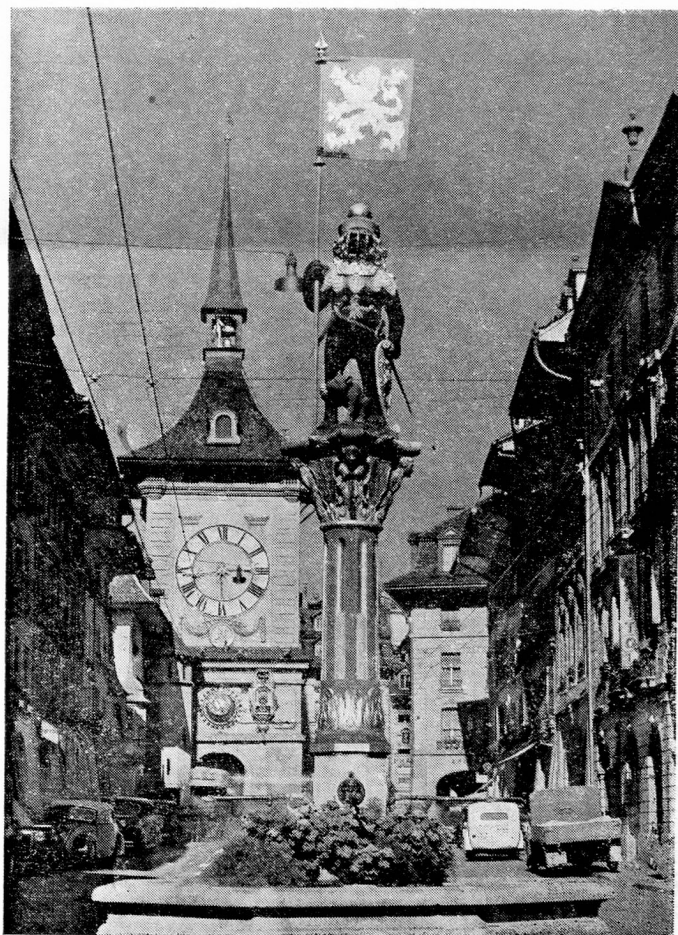
It's another story with Hans Franz Nægeli, a Bern ghost said to live somewhere inside the old city walls.

Hauptmann Hans Franz Nægeli played an important role in Berne's conquest of the Vaud in 1536.

For centuries, many Berners have believed that the ghost of this conqueror of the Vaud is haunting their city. According to legend, two women went to the Fricktreppe, believed to be the place where Nægeli usually

hides away, and appealed to him to help them because they were living in great poverty.

Nægeli appeared from a chink in the old wall and



*Is our capital haunted by ghosts?  
(Photo: Swiss National Tourist Office)*

listened to their plea. When they returned home, the legend says, they found on their kitchen table a loaf of bread and a little fortune in gold coins which never diminished, however much was taken. Little boys still go to the Fricktreppe to call out Nægeli's name — and then run as fast as they can. The old knight, the legend says, slaps those who tease him.

An even more formidable sight than the knight in his armour would be the skinned cow which is said to have appeared for the last time before the destruction of old Berne three centuries ago. The story is that a cruel butcher who skinned a cow alive was condemned to assume the form of the poor animal. For a long time, Berners believed that it roamed the streets on holy days and in time of war, begging for mercy.

\* \* \*

Other Berne ghost yarns centre on General Robert Scipio von Lentulus, an almost 7-foot-tall Swiss mercenary who rose high in the army of Frederick the Great. He is said to live at the edge of a wood on the outskirts of town in a solitary summerhouse.

Whenever Switzerland is in danger, people call out to the general for advice, waiting to hear him reply through the closed shutters.

But the general seems to be at a loss with the weapons and strategy of modern warfare. During the last two wars his reply was silence.

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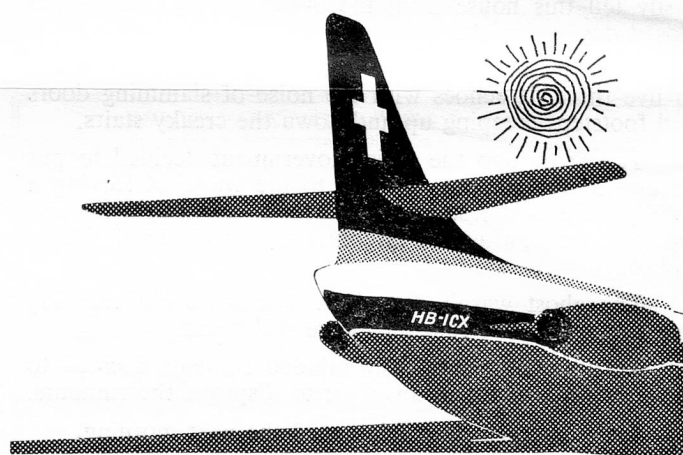
Mr. Tony Plüss has been appointed Swissair's District Manager for the North of England in succession to Mr. A. Weber, who becomes Swissair's Manager in West Africa, based on Lagos, Nigeria.

Mr Plüss, who is 32, joined Swissair in 1953 and has been Assistant Manager in Cairo, and on special assignments in Baghdad, Beirut and Khartoum. In 1958 he was appointed District Sales Manager in Dhahran on the Persian Gulf, a position he occupied until he moved to his new post in Manchester at the beginning of May 1961.

From 1948 to 1952 he was with a travel agency in Switzerland and with the Swiss National Tourist Office in a number of countries, including France, Germany and the United States.

### Three Swiss aircraft for Nepal

Three Swiss-made aircraft, of the Pilatus-Porter type, recently left the Kloten airport, for Nepal. Two of these aircraft are intended for the Nepalese Government, which will use them within the framework of technical assistance for the development of a country. The third machine has been placed at the disposal of the International Committee of the Red Cross, to facilitate aid to the Tibetan refugees.



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