

Electronics applied to the Railways

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THE "SWISS OBSERVER" THIRTY YEARS AGO

The issue of 7th July 1934 brought news of the Norwegian Government appointing Prof. Max Huber as arbitrator in their dispute with Poland. A piece of china depicting an eagle was sent as a personal gift to the "Tir Fédéral" in Fribourg by the German Reichspräsident von Hindenburg (whose death was reported a few weeks later). Other countries also presented prizes, so for instance the French Government who sent a piece of Sèvres porcelain. Colony reports included the Swiss Sports at Herne Hill (with funny drawings) and the Unione Ticinese's coach outing to Southsea.

The 14th July brought Federal Councillor Motta's address at the Sempacher Schlachtfest, and in every issue a list was published of prize money for the "Tir Fédéral", collected in London.

The next issue stated the Swiss Alpine Club's veto with regard to nudism and sunbathing in their huts. The last issue in July carried the First of August message by the President of the Confederation Federal Councillor Pilet-Golaz and reported the millenary celebrations of Einsiedeln.

On 4th August appeared an article from the "Journal Suisse d'Egypte" called "La Vie Sociale des Groupements Suisses à l'Etranger". The Swiss Rifle Team had sent a telegram from Fribourg — "5th prize of twelve foreign clubs — silver laurel".

On 11th August, a report appeared of the Assembly of the Swiss Abroad on 1st August in Fribourg, and an announcement that there would in future be a Roman Catholic Priest at the disposal of the Swiss community in London.

A week later it was reported that the German stunt flyer Ernst Udet had landed his plane on the highest slopes of the Jungfrauoch. There was a charming article on "Switzerland's Only Circus", our Swiss National Circus Knie.

The next issue gave news of Swiss exchange troubles, and an unusual number of deaths in the London Colony were reported, J. C. Rathgeb, J. Hauenstein, C. J. Duruz and L. E. Jaccard.

Having previously read of the death of Colonel Sonderegger, late Chief of Staff of the Swiss Army and notorious for his activities in the "Fronten" movement, and of Army Corps Commander de Loriol, we learned in the first issue in September that Army Corps Commander Biberstein had died. There was a report on the "Eidgenössischer Kunstturnertag" in Basle.

On 8th September we read that the Dreirosenbridge in Basle had been opened, and the first part of "ST's." "My Flight" was published, written in the amusing style of the then Editor. "Notes and Gleanings" by Kyburg appeared in several issues (how the present Editor wishes she could find a kind reader who would contribute regular comments on various happenings . . .)

The issue of 15th September brought news of the Swiss expedition to the Easter Island, headed by Prof. A. Métraux, and the following week the twentieth anniversary of the Swiss Flying Corps was reported. The Swiss Socialist Party had rejected a proposal made by the Communist Party to form a common front. Several columns were taken up by the speech made by Federal Councillor Motta, Swiss Foreign Minister, on the occasion of the election of Russia as a member of the League of Nations, defending the Swiss attitude in opposing it.

The last issue in September brought the good news of improved trade and increased exports. Swiss claims for

war damages had been taken to the League of Nations by the Swiss Foreign Minister.

Of all the news given in the "Swiss Observer" during those three months of 1934, the most disturbing one to the present Editor (then in Basle) was an item on 15th September, which said "We extend our best congratulations to Mr. W. Meier on his recent acquisition of an hotel at 35/37 Upper Bedford Place . . ." She wrongly imagined this to be the W. Meier who later became her husband and she was very perturbed because he had not written her of his new venture! She ought to have known better and realised that Meier was not exactly a rare name, but then she was in love . . .

CABLECAR TO THE ETERNAL SNOWS

The opening of the third and most dramatic stretch of the cablecar system running up to the Diablerets-Massif now enables visitors to the western Bernese Oberland and the Alps of Vaud to reach a region of perpetual snow. Guests at Gstaad and at Les Diablerets, the popular resort on the Vaud side of the Pillon Pass, can now reach the year-round winter playground of the Diablerets Glacier far more easily and less expensively than was previously possible. From the Vaud side, one enters a four-seater gondola car at the Col du Pillon (5,090 ft.), which is now open to automotive traffic in winter too. At Pierres Pointes (7,220 ft.) the second stage begins, in thirty-seater cars which make a 1,690-foot, nearly vertical ascent to the Cabane des Diablerets, which is a junction point with the cablecar from Reusch-Oldenegg in the Bernese Oberland. From there, a sixty-seater cabin goes over a breathtaking abyss — without a single structural support — to its final destination, the Diablerets Glacier (9,800 ft.). New, unlimited possibilities have thus been opened up for skiers and mountain climbers alike. A summer ski-school will soon be inaugurated.

[S.N.T.O.]

ELECTRONICS APPLIED TO THE RAILWAYS

For some years now, the railways have been living through a revolutionary period, brought about in particular by the introduction of the semi-conductor, one of the best known forms of which is the transistor.

A big Swiss firm in Geneva has just taken an important step on the way towards the automatic running of railway trains. The engine driver sets the required speed on a graduated switch situated on the control panel, and the train is then automatically made to run at this speed by the electronic equipment.

This automatic control offers very definite advantages: among other things, it makes it possible to cover certain trips in a minimum time for a given power of the driving vehicle. This advantage is particularly important in suburban traffic, which usually presents rather tricky problems for railway companies. In addition, the drivers employed on trains fitted with speed regulators do not require such advanced training as previously. Furthermore, by freeing the driver of the responsibility of continually adjusting the power developed by the locomotive, this system allows him to concentrate all his attention on the signals. It is also interesting to note that the precision of the automatic speed setting makes possible a saving in energy amounting in certain cases to as much as 40 to 50%. Finally, among the latest advantages of the use of electronic components as compared with classical equipment, mention should be

made of freedom from wear, and resistance to dust, damp and vibrations, thus considerably reducing rolling stock maintenance costs and eliminating the sources of breakdowns.

Therefore, with its new speed-setting device, this Geneva firm has just taken the final step leading to remote control. Among this firm's applications in the field of transport, it is interesting to note that twelve trolleybuses which have been in operation on the Geneva network for over a year now are equipped with an electronic acceleration control device; two identical trolleybuses are in operation at Fribourg (Switzerland) and Offenbach (Western Germany). A self-propelled vehicle of the French National Railways, fitted with an automatic speed regulator, is running on the Paris north suburban lines. A prototype equipment, combining acceleration control on starting with braking speed control, has been in service for two months on the Zurich tramway lines; another prototype equipment has been in operation for a year on the Swiss Federal Railways.

The following equipment is in the process of manufacture at the same Geneva works: twenty speed-setting regulators for French self-propelled vehicles on the Paris north suburban lines; twenty articulated trolleybuses for the Geneva local services (acceleration control); several self-propelled vehicles for various Swiss private railway companies; finally twenty high-powered suburban trains for the Swiss Federal Railways with automatic speed setting device.

It should be pointed out that these achievements have been made possible thanks to an electronic calculation centre which enables the running of a train to be simulated exactly down to the last detail on an analogical calculator.

[O.S.E.C.]

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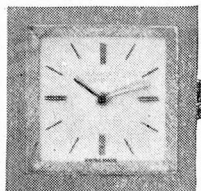
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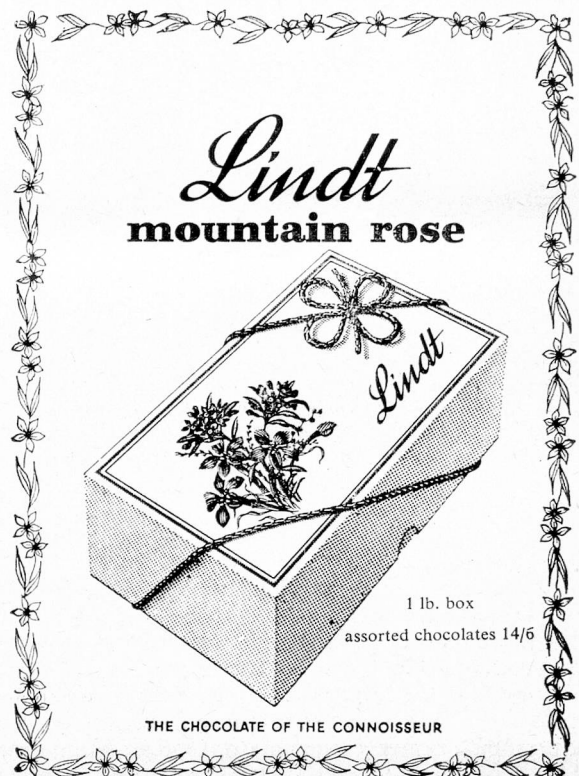
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