

Misfortune and tragedy

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RECENT DEATHS

The following deaths have been reported from Switzerland recently:

- Mrs. Charles de Szilassy-de Sikorski, Bex (Vaud), the last of an old Hungarian family who has lived on the "Soressex" Estate for almost a century; the family had created two Foundations at Bex, one "Szilassy", the other "Hope Billard", since the mansion on the "Soressex" Estate had been built by Lady Hope, widow of a British General. The deceased's husband had bequeathed the Estate to the Canton of Vaud after his wife's death.
- Léon de Torrenté (65), Sion, former Manager of the Swiss National Bank in Geneva, earlier with banks in Payerne, Berne and Neuchâtel.
- Dr. h.c. Ernest Geiger (83), Frauenfeld, geologist and secondary teacher at Huettwilen.
- Prof. Dr. phil. nat. Adolf Buergin (64), Director of the Pharmaceutical Institute of Berne University; Professor of Chemistry since 1955.
- Dr. Otto Zinniker (71), Bienne-Madretsch, poet and author originating from Strengelbach, Aargau.
- Canon Gebhard Ammann (69), Widnau, St. Gall, Commune Priest since 1933; killed in a road accident.
- Prof. Dr. med. Rudolf Simmen (61), Arona, *Chefarzt* of the Solothurn Cantonal Hospital; interested in the cultural life of the town.
- Fritz Bill (69), Flamatt, *Gemeindeamann* since 1962.
- Paul Calame (80), Porrentruy, Chairman of the Board of the "Democrate" and member of the Board of the Bernese Power Works.
- Dr. med. Hans A. Frey (83), Berne, from 1923 to 1954, Director of the "Inselspital".
- Dr. Werner Balsiger (79), Berne, the first Chief of Federal Police when it was formed in 1935; distinguished himself particularly during the war in a period of foreign propaganda and espionage.
- Arthur Hoffmann (85), Thun, senior partner and Honorary President of the well-known *Blechembalagen-und Cartonnagefabrik* Gebrüder Hoffmann AG.
- Paul-Ernest Jeanmonod (69), Berne, former Deputy Director and Head of the French editorial section of the "Schweizerische Politische Korrespondenz".
- Mrs. Clementine Magé-Verges (102), Geneva, the oldest inhabitant of the town, originally French.
- Paul Fluehmann (72), Wilderswil, former teacher and member of the Bernese Cantonal Parliament for 28 years (Social Democrat); for 20 years Chairman of the Board of the *Bezirksspital* Interlaken and for 30 years hon. Secretary of the Bernese Cantonal Federation of Cattle Breeders. (A.T.S.)

MISFORTUNE AND TRAGEDY

Swiss newspapers usually carry a column "Accidents and Crimes". It is not the policy of the "Swiss Observer" to adhere to this. But there have been so many recent happenings of a serious nature, in some cases bordering on catastrophe, that we feel we ought to report them.

Soon after the fire at the **Hottingen Telephone Exchange**, which disconnected 30,000 subscribers, a "**Mirage**" fighter crashed into the Lake of Lucerne near Ennetbuergen. One of the two pilots lost his life. This is the first crash with a "Mirage" after 11,000 flights. Another military plane, a "**Vampire**", crashed near Samaden in the Grisons, and the pilot lost his life.

One of the worst **explosions** ever occurred at **Dottikon**, a village on the road Lenzburg-Bremgarten in the Aargau. This is the sixth serious explosion in Switzerland in the last two decades, with a total loss of 36 lives. At Dottikon, the catastrophe cost 17, possibly 18 lives. It occurred at the Federal Explosives Factory. Everything within a diameter of 200 metres was destroyed, and a huge, 40-metre wide crater filled with water was in the place of the explosives washing shop where the explosion occurred, the fourth at this factory, though the previous ones were on a minor scale.

Another explosion took place at **Wettswil (ZH)** factory for electronic apparatus, due to a huge fire. Fortunately, the factory was empty at the time. At a varnish factory in Zurich, an explosion caused heavy damage but no loss of life. At Brigue Station, a fire gutted a depot of 2,000 sq. m.. The inside of the "Café Spitz" in **Basle** was completely destroyed for the second time within a short period. Arson is expected, and the Criminal Police have offered a 5,000-franc reward. The building is of historical value. It was neglected for a long time, but restoration plans have been made.

A heavy **mountain slide** in the Waegital near Siebnen (Schwyz) killed six people. The road where the accident occurred is 105 years old, and this is the first time, anything like this has happened. The Army helped to recover the bodies and to clear the road from rocks, earth and tree trunks. Another mountain slide took place in the quarry of Arvel (Vaud), fortunately without loss of life.

Four people were killed early in April in **avalanches** in the Grisons, and three soldiers lost their lives in the same way in the Upper Engadine at the end of the month.

Fifteen mountaineers were **snowed up** for five days at the Hollandia Hut in the Loetschental, at an altitude of 3,238m. A helicopter finally transported the stranded party to safety. The Valais Cantonal M.P. Michel Rouvinez has not yet been found — he disappeared in the heavy snowstorm which forced the alpinists into the hut.

Forty mountaineers fought for several days in the Monte Rosa Group — all members of youth organisations, who learned the hard way how to behave in an emergency.

A terrible **murder** was committed at the Sanatorium for Tuberculosis "Adelheid" at Unteraegeri (Zug), when a porter (employed there for the past 24 years) shot four women, three sisters and a maid, killing two of them and dangerously injuring the others. The killer of three people (son, colleague and rescuer) Viktor Weber, has been sentenced to 15 years imprisonment by the District Jury of Winterthur. He committed the murder while of unsound mind in May 1967. The same Court dealt with the case of the 70-year old inventor, forger, impostor and murderer Karl Angst. On going to press, the verdict was not known.

In Zurich, a trio of young criminals are on trial; they have no fewer than 48 **burglaries**, thefts, etc., to their "credit". Geneva had more than its share of crime in April: a post office was raided by an armed gang which got away with 7,436 francs. Two considerable thefts were made at jewellers', one an armed raid in which the criminals got away with goods worth 400,000 francs. Another theft was discovered a day later, when it was found that two "customers" of English tongue (Australian accent) had departed with jewellery worth 300,000 francs.

Two bad **collisions** took place on the Lyss-Lausanne line within a few hours, causing loss of five lives. Both accidents happened on a level crossing, one with a lorry, the other a timber transport.

Finally an accident of a most unusual nature: On 12th April, the mare "Yasmin" fell from the travelling train and was killed instantly. The horse, a competitor in the Mexico Olympics, was on the way to Pausella, Ticino, where Arthur Blickensdorfer was to have ridden her at the *Concours Hippique*. "Yasmin's" value was 120,000 francs.

(Compiled from news and reports received by courtesy of Agence Télégraphique Suisse.)

LORRY BATTLE

Switzerland v. Italy

Hard bargaining between the Swiss and the Italians has been going on for some time in an effort to find a solution to the problem of Italian goods traffic through Switzerland. The Italians want to use large lorries of 32 tons, whereas the Swiss norm is 21 and 26 tons. With the Italian capacity, Swiss road transport contractors were often at a disadvantage, and Switzerland would like to increase their monthly transports from 100 to 500. Negotiations were stopped, but after a strike of lorry drivers and custom officials, they were Italian authorities.

(A.T.S.)