

News from the colony

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NEWS FROM THE COLONY

THE EXTRAORDINARY WORK OF A SWISS INVENTOR IN LONDON

Rats hold the grim privilege of being the most harmful and difficult to destroy of all pests of nature. This crafty little beast has been responsible for millions of deaths in the history of mankind, at times when the knowledge of hygiene and of the ravages of germs was not at hand. But even today, when the developed sanitation of urban civilisation and the victories of modern medicine have driven the rat to a manageable distance, they still have the means of being a serious nuisance.

It has been recently discovered that they carried the virus of syphilis. They have also been responsible for diseases which have laid up lions and other dwellers of numerous zoos, and they have infected cattle. But perhaps their worst depredation, most acutely felt in an under-nourished world, is their ravenous appetite. A glaring example is India, a famished land which relies strongly on imports of wheat. It has been estimated that the foray of rats in all the storehouses of Indian farmers amounted to a quantity of grain equal to that supplied by all outside countries to India. Rats thus consume millions of tons of food direly needed by an under-nourished population.

How can their disastrous action be averted? In the case of India, one primary step would be to modernise all food storing facilities. Change the traditional grain wicker baskets to metal containers, impregnable to rats, for example. But this is no lasting protection against rats. They can finally always get where they wish, as every farmer in developed countries knows.

Farmers indeed spend millions annually on elaborate pesticides to ward off rodents. But they are just too crafty. An important rat-killing product has been developed, among others, by the Rentokil company. Its usefulness has been short lived because the rats, having suffered a few casualties, were intelligent enough to recognise spray-infested food and neutralise it by dousing it with urine. There is a growing tendency to limit the use of pesticides, as they are often indiscriminate in their effect and often have unwanted victims. A known case is that of a pesticide which was applied to kill the noxious ladybird, but which killed the innocent hedgehog as well. Pesticides not only have the disadvan-

tage of destroying unaimed species, they can upset the balance of nature by destroying their intended or unintended victims too abruptly and there has been a resulting trend in developing biological pest controls, which consist of injecting alien and out-balancing living species instead of chemicals into animal populations.

Rats also stand out by the fact that their extinction wouldn't impair the balance of nature. They are a race totally unneeded by the rest of creation and their disappearance would by no means create a sudden natural upheaval. Killing rats would certainly not lead to the kind of sudden fall in harvest which the widescale killing of sparrows achieved in China under the guiding light of Mao Tse Tung led to.

Pesticides having proved insufficient, biological control being impractical in the case of rats (it would require an army of cats of the most plucky character) how can man overcome the problem? Chemistry being of no avail, there remains the purely physical means of killing rats directly by means of arms. This would obviously be impractical, even in an agricultural country like China, where it would be possible to mobilise 700 million peasants in a national crusade against rodents.

There is another possible solution, it is to discover some kind of *rat-killing ray*. Wouldn't it be simply wonderful if a simple and cheap machine could be devised which, placed in a convenient location on a farm, could ensure that the whole property would be *absolutely free of rodents*? The rat-killing machine would be a fantastic boon to agriculture.

Such a machine has been invented. It has been invented by a *Swiss*, and moreover a Swiss resident in London known to many members of the Swiss Rifle Association. He is Mr. Charles D. Naegeli from Zurich.

Mr. Naegeli is one of the rare surviving examples of the lone scientist, working by himself in his laboratory, contriving arcane electronic gadgets and improvising on a modest budget. Scientists among our readers (who may be suspicious of these revelations) may be tempted to look into the engineering "Who's Who" and look up the name of Naegeli. They will most probably search in vain because Mr. Naegeli, although he graduated from

the Zurich Polytechnikum 31 years ago and has spent 24 years in research, has never published a scientific paper. Indeed, Mr. Naegeli is a modest and retiring man, who dislikes publicity and wishes only to pursue his research as unobtrusively as possible. At a time when a multitude of scientists vie with one another to have their names appearing in scientific publications on the pretext of the least tid-bit of sterile new knowledge, it is quite refreshing to see such a degree of unassumption. Mr. Naegeli even shudders at the thought that his device may perhaps one day be designated as a "Naegeli Machine".

Having spent six academically-wasted years as a mobilised private, he left Switzerland at the end of the war and, with a business partner, made a healthy living by redesigning the national transmitters of African capitals for 6 years. He went to Indo-China in 1952 and pursued the same occupation, being engaged for a while in China. A few years later he was in South America, working in various capitals and finishing his stint with a lucrative contract with the Columbian Government. In the course of 12 years of globe-trotting activity, he overhauled the broadcasting stations of Kingston, Kuala Lumpur, Saigon, Tsien-Tsin, Bogota and other cities. But his enthusiasm for research never waned and he spent his spare time in the African technical wilderness by measuring the ionospheric scattering of radio waves. This totally independent research undertaken as a hobby with a business friend produced an empirical formula giving the optimal ionospheric scattering angle of radio waves. Mr. Naegeli never published these results because, as he unassumingly asserted, they were but a small rose in the bulk of research done all over the world on the same subject.

In the mid-1950's, Mr. Naegeli was offered a chair in electronics and nucleonics at the University of Paris. He was also given a laboratory with the complete freedom of undertaking the research he chose. He was not bound to give accounts of the use of his time and his expenses and he enjoyed what is to him an essential working condition—scientific freedom. He thus had the opportunity to investigate a phenomenon that had struck him at the age of 12—the surprising difference in the psychoneurological effects of individual sounds of the auditive register. How was it that a C-sharp produced a different emotion than, say, a B-flat? Mr. Naegeli thus devised electronic machines that mixed various sounds and harmonics and demonstrated their uncanny effects on his students in the auditorium. His apparatus would sound a note able to induce

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joy in his volunteer students, and another throwing them into dejection. But Mr. Naegeli realised that the effects of sound waves on the mind had definite limitations and he conceived the possible use of radio waves to obtain similar but more powerful psycho-neurological effects. It was this fundamental "hunch" that was to guide his ensuing research and his professional life up to the present day. Staying true to his discrete methods, Mr. Naegeli didn't publish his results, but disclosed them privately to scientist friends working in the same Faculty and sponsoring his research. But despite his enjoyment of teaching, undivided research was Mr. Naegeli's fare and teaching, with its administrative chores, prevented this. He therefore decided to leave Paris for South America, where he lived for four years.

On a return trip from Europe, he stopped in London to see a sick relative. His serious condition required Mr. Naegeli to prolong his stay in London, and this gave him the opportunity of meeting his future wife. Matrimony was to ensure his permanent stay in Great Britain. Hardly a year after his marriage, he was the victim of a serious car accident in which he broke five lower vertebrae. For a year he was shuffled through a series of London hospitals and for two more agonising years, he lay on his back in a Stoke Mandeville ward. He was set free to resume an active life after three years and declared an 85 per cent paraplegic. He made an application to the disabled resettlement office, which made him pass a B.Sc. examination in electronics, and he set about looking for a job. He staggered to over 20 of the most prestigious electronics firms of the country. But his offer was rejected everywhere on the grounds that, being partly paralysed, he was not in a position to accomplish regular hours and stand in a laboratory from nine to five. When a personnel manager politely raised this point for the twentieth time, Mr. Naegeli blew his top,

told his interviewer to let his company bloom without his services and slammed the door.

No company would have him. There were, therefore, no other solutions but to set up shop himself. Those days were, as Mr. Naegeli told me, the hardest in his life. But his Swiss grit helped him along, and strapping together all the mental and physical resources left to him, opened a television repair shop in a run-down house on Balham Hill. The first customers trickled in. He used the family pram to go and fetch the first ailing television sets of his clientele. Business however gradually picked up and in a few years, Mr. Naegeli had sufficient means, if not time, to re-plunge into his beloved research. Pursuing the lead picked up in Paris, he experimented alone in a dim workshop crammed with electronic gear, amid a maze of wires, meters and disembowelled TV sets, in pursuit of a radio wave that would have an effect on mind and behaviour. Success shone on a day in 1967 that may, who knows, become a scientific landmark, when he killed his first rat within two minutes at a range of 4 metres.

Mr. Naegeli did not savour this stupendous result, the climax of years of research, with unmixed joy. His satisfaction was marred by second thoughts—thoughts which can be inferred with the help of a little imagination. For two days Mr. Naegeli was plagued by the awareness that if the rays that he had managed to produce were able to kill a rat, they should surely have similar effects on other mammals as well, starting with human beings. After two sleepless nights of gnawing hesitation, Mr. Naegeli wondered whether to continue to tread on such a blighted path and not drop his red-hot discovery altogether. He felt like the Sorcerer's Apprentice, dreading that he and his hypothetical successors would not be able to daunt the spirits which he had just invoked. The burden of responsibility pressed on

him like a millstone.

But any invention primarily designed for a constructive purpose can be given a destructive use, depending on the foolishness of mankind, and refraining from venturing into new fields on the grounds that this could be destructively applied was tantamount to sacrificing research altogether.

Thus Mr. Naegeli decided to continue to work on his ominous invention, researching in his attic on Balham Hill when the heap of silenced TV sets brought to him by an eager neighbourhood left him time. Because of his research activities he refused the assistance of any electrician in his breadline occupation. He could not allow any Peeping Tom to put his nose into the incendiary nature of his research.

The tide of lame televisions increased and Mr. Naegeli had to begin turning down disappointed customers. He continued to refine his machine, killing the neighbours' cat by mistake in the process. In 1968 the device was tested by the Henry Doubleday Foundation in Braintree, an institution devoted to the development of off-beat inventions in the agricultural field with no immediate commercial gain. They placed the machine near a horse slaughter house usually infested with rats. Within three days the rats were gone and, incredibly, no rats have revisited this spot in two years. Other experiments were carried out, all proving that these "Naegeli rays" had the primary effect of frightening the rats to an extremely high pitch, initially chasing them away. But the rats would very soon lapse into an irrevocable coma and die within a few hours. Experimenters at Braintree eventually recovered herds of rats not far away from the "rat repeller" (the official designation of the machine) clustered together in death under bushes and shrubs. The machine became the theme of a number of radio and television broadcasts last year. Mr. Naegeli remained obstinately in the background. But the director of the Henry Doubleday Foundation, Mr. Lawrence D. Hill, exulted over its marvellous performance and potentialities. I phoned Mr. Hill for precisions on the progress of his tests, and he told me that the machines he had tested were highly selective in choosing their victims and left all the other fauna of the farm intact. It had a proven range of 600 metres. Mr. Hill enthusiastically qualified Mr. Naegeli as a "genius" when I asked him how they had come into contact. In July of the same year, Mr. Naegeli successfully applied for a patent for his device. By then he felt it was time to devote his undivided attention to serious matters and drop his job as a TV technician. He needed a laboratory, working conditions which suited his deficient physical state and financial backing which, however conditional, should leave him the master of his invention.

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Mr. Naegeli broke his silence for the first time by allowing the gist of his research to be presented in an editorial in the November 1968 issue of *Industrial Electronics*. It was actually his first "publication". The replies were not long in pouring in. In one day, Mr. Naegeli received 74 offers. Some of them were fabulous, like the one from the British leaders in pest control, Rentokil, who were laying on the table £250,000 for his secret and the exclusive right to use it. But he shrugged off these extravagant offers with a laugh. No amount of money could replace the satisfaction of continuing a research, which to Mr. Naegeli meant everything.

He went to see a number of firms willing to give him financial support. He eventually fixed his choice on David Griffin Ltd., a small but up-and-coming company in Dorset which produces a patented low-voltage electric blanket and other electrical appliances. They drew an agreement whereby Mr. Naegeli was to assign all his inventions to David Griffin Ltd. but get a handsome share of their proceeds. The agreement also provided that the firm was to take charge of all Mr. Naegeli's research expenses during the development and production stage of the rat repeller and give him a token salary.

Thus Mr. Naegeli moved the centre of gravity of his research down to the pastoral surroundings of Dorset, where he works two to three days a week. David Griffin's plan to erect a special plant to produce the rat repeller when it will have been sufficiently perfected for commercialisation. They received a visit from an Indian Gov-

ernment official who had heard of the device and was enthralled by its prospects. He asked David Griffin Ltd. how many million rat repellers they could supply—a clear indication on their potential market! They will probably be sold at about £35.

Now about the technicalities of these rat-killing rays! As mentioned above, they are nothing more than radio waves, more generally, electromagnetic waves of very high frequency. Their original effect on the nervous system of animals is solely due to their particular shape and periodicity. The secret of producing a rat-killing electro-magnetic wave lies, literally speaking, in a correct mixture of primary waves. Mr. Naegeli stumbled on the formula by chance (or so he modestly pretends) and he is so far the only man to possess this secret. The fact that these waves act by their configuration alone lends them a tremendous technical advantage over other kinds of destructive rays, such as X-rays and laser beams which act on their sheer energy. The rat repeller will be no larger than a medium sized transistor set supplied by a 9 V source—a feat which no X-ray machine could ever achieve!

The machines which will eventually be mass-produced in Dorset will be aimed specifically against rodents. But their principle could be applied against other mammals—it would only be necessary to alter the periodicity of these waves. As it were, the brain of each animal species is sensitive to one kind of wave only or, in the lingo of electronics, *resonates* under the impulse of a unique wavelength. Humans are not immune to the effects

of such waves but (lest readers think I am trying to introduce a Dan Dare ray gun from outer space) it must be recalled that, like all radio waves, these rays can be stopped by a thin metal foil or grid. This means that their effectiveness on a battlefield would be entirely annulled by the helmets of the combatants. The range of these rays is furthermore limited by the horizon.

One should however look at the positive side of things as well. These rays may one day have fantastic applications in brain treatment. Mr. Naegeli foresees the day when they will replace the painful method of electro-choc, which destroys thousands of brain cells. He also claims that they will help to cure paralysis and various forms of mental retardation. Tumours, he says, are not beyond their beneficent reach. A new wave treatment will avoid the unwanted destruction of cells by the high-powered radiations currently used in cancer treatment.

Some medical research has already been undertaken to find how these "Naegeli rays" affect the brain and practically every important gland in the body, starting with the thyroid, the spleen, the testes and the hypophysis. It appears that by interfering with the vibratory pattern of the brain, they affect the pituitary gland, which commands the adrenals. The adrenals are made to produce an excessive amount of adrenaline, which greatly excites and frightens the living probes submitted to these rays, but by over-working the adrenals come to become congested and eventually totally inactive. This leads, by various biological reactions,



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to an irrevocable coma and to death.

In conclusion, we can say that something pretty important has sprung up from the midst of Swiss residents in London. Mr. Naegeli works in secret and eschews publicity. I am all the more grateful to him for having received me in his laboratory in Balham Hill and given me permission to disclose an outline of his work to our Swiss readers. I even venture to believe that this is one of the first times that indications of Mr. Naegeli's life and work have come into print. Secrecy is Mr. Naegeli's professional way of life. Aside from commercial imperatives, the reasons for which he wants to keep his discoveries to himself are a keen sense of responsibility (spurred by a distrust of politicians) and the understandable pleasure of being the lone leader of a field of research. It is indeed far more exhilarating to break new ground by oneself. A day will probably come when political powers will be throwing armies of scientists in the search of the most lethal applications of Mr. Naegeli's invention. They will probably find it. But Mr. Naegeli means to put off that day for as long as possible.

(PMB)

THE SWISS CONSULAR AGENT IN EDINBURGH MOVES TO A NEW ADDRESS

We should like to inform our northern readers that Mr. Otto Hartmann, Swiss Consular Agent in Edinburgh, has moved his office from Canongate to Hanover Street. Here is the Consular Agency's new address: 112 Hanover Street, Edinburgh EH2 1DR. Telephone No.: 031 226 5513.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We should like to thank the following readers most warmly for supporting us with their donations: Mr. O. Stettbacher, Mrs. M. Welsford, Sir Lionel Lamb, Mr. W. A. Worpe, Mr. J. A. Gluck, Mr. E. Gallizia, Mr. P. Lehrian, Mr. E. Zwicky, Mr. F. Bossert, Mr. O. Rothlisberger, Mrs. V. Tripp, Mrs. G. Beckmann and Mr. L. O. Wildi.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Every Thursday from 6 to 7.30 p.m. Discussion Circle in English. Young men especially invited. Tea from 6 to 6.15 p.m. Swiss Room, YMCA, Gt. Russell St., W.C.1.

Secours Mutuels des Suisses à Londres. No meetings until October.

SWISS RIFLE ASSOCIATION. Shooting at the Siberia Range, Bisley, on Sunday, 27th September and Sunday, 11th October (Gruempelschiessen).

Thursday, 1st October. Dinner organised under the auspices of the Institute for Swiss Trade Promotion at the Dorchester. 6.30 for 7 p.m. (Orchid Suite).

Friday, 2nd October. "Music without Distraction" concert at St. Martin's in the Fields, 8 p.m.

Wednesday, 14th October. Swiss Mercantile Society monthly meeting. The occasion will be a Veteran's Evening.

Wednesday, 27th October. City Swiss Club monthly meeting at the Dorchester Hotel, Stanhope Suite at 6.30 for 7 p.m. **NOTE POSTPONEMENT OF ADVERTISED DATE BY ONE WEEK!** Dr. Jürg Iselin, First Counsellor at the Embassy, shall be the evening's speaker. His theme: "Are diplomats really necessary by someone who should know . . . ?"

SWISS CHURCH BAZAAR at Westminster Central Hall on Sunday, 31st October.

Friday, 20th November. City Swiss Club Annual Banquet and Ball.

FORTHCOMING MUSICAL EVENTS

Tuesday, 29th September, Royal Festival Hall at 8 p.m. Paul Kletzki, leader of the *Orchester de la Suisse Romande*, conducts the New Philharmonia Orchestra in a Haydn, Mozart and R. Strauss programme.

Saturday, 3rd October. Charity recital by LENNART RABES, piano and MADELEINE BAER, soprano, in support of the preservation of wild life. Humane Education Centre, Avenue Lodge, Bounds Green Road, London, N.22. 7.45 p.m. Send 10/- for your ticket to this address now!

Tuesday, 13th October. Wigmore Hall at 7.30 p.m. A recital by the Hungarian violinist Katharina Hardy and the Swiss pianist Rudolf am Bach. The programme includes works by Leclair, Brahms, Mozart, Sandor Veress and Bartok.

Saturday, 17th October, Coventry Cathedral. Evening concert with Henriette Barbé (harpichord) and Peter-Lukas Graf (flute).

Wednesday, 9th December, Queen Elizabeth Hall, 7.45 p.m. Concert by the English Chamber Orchestra to mark Frank Martin's 80th Birthday. Paul Sacher will conduct. The soloists will be Swiss.

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SWISS Y.M.C.A.: see Forthcoming Events.

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