

Zeitschrift: Swiss review : the magazine for the Swiss abroad
Herausgeber: Organisation of the Swiss Abroad
Band: 19 (1992)
Heft: 2

Rubrik: Mosaic

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(Photo: Keystone)

The Axen rock blasted away

Since February 11 the Axenstrasse between Brunnen and Flüelen has been closed because of the appearance of a new fissure in the overhanging rock, as it was thought that tons of it might fall on to the road below. But the closure of such an important north-south axis from the Gotthard northwards has meant a substantial economic loss to the region. So quicker than originally planned – the rock had split again as a result of the explosions needed for the diversion tunnel – five tons of explosives were filled into 34 large boreholes. In the space of ten seconds 42,000 tons of the huge rock, broken into thousands of pieces of about half a cubic metre each, were blasted into the Lake of Uri. The result was a huge wave over three metres high, which finally spent itself on the opposite bank without doing much damage. The Axenstrasse itself, together with its protective curtain against falling rocks, was completely destroyed over a length of 50 metres and will not be reopened to traffic before June. ■

The holiday scheme for the Swiss Abroad continues under the new auspices of the Stapferhaus

Together round the family table

The holiday scheme for the Swiss Abroad, "Visit Switzerland 1991", was started in 1991, the year of our country's 700th birthday, and it met with a very great success. About 7,000 of our fellow-citizens took part in our "Aktion Begegnung 91", and in almost all cases

friendships ensued (for a detailed report see Swiss Review 4/91). The scheme is now being continued under new auspices, namely the Stapferhaus at Lenzburg Castle in the Canton of Aargau. Swiss people living abroad who are interested will again be put in touch with families in Switzerland with whom they can stay for a few days. Food and lodging will be free of charge.

A new development is that Swiss Abroad can now also apply to have guests from Switzerland in their homes for periods of up to one week. For 1992 the Canton of Grisons is taking up the patronage of the entire scheme. In addition the Patronage Committee includes the Service for the Swiss Abroad at the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, a number of women's organisations and the Secretariat for the Swiss Abroad. The number of contacts which can be established is limited to about 300, and applications are processed in order of their arrival. Detailed information about how to apply for a holiday stay in a Swiss family in either 1992 or 1993 can be obtained by filling in the form on this page. ■

Request for information

Please send me an information kit and an application form for the "Visit Switzerland – See the World" scheme (Do write clearly)

Mr./Mrs./Family _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Country: _____

Preferred language: _____

Please send to: Stapferhaus, "Visit Switzerland", Schloss Lenzburg, CH-5600 Lenzburg, Fax: 41 64 52 07 57.

Telegrams

- The new Federal Office for Communications has been inaugurated in the town of Bienne in Zukunftsstrasse – or Future Street.

- The Federal Military Department has set up a free-phone emergency service for recruits.

- According to an international survey Swiss school children are among the best performers in the world in mathematics and natural sciences. Even better are those from Korea and Taiwan and – for mathematics – China.

- During the 1991/92 winter semester, the number of students registered at Swiss universities increased more than in any similar period during the last ten years. Women now make up 40% of the student body. The rise in numbers is probably a result of the recession, – which has led an increasing number of school-leavers to attend university so as to get better jobs.

- Another positive effect of the recession may be seen in the fact that in 1991 the number of road deaths was lower than in any of the last 40 years – although a figure of over 800 is still much too high for anybody's comfort. Both the hard winter and experiments with new motorway speed limits last summer probably also helped to keep the accident rate down.

- The Swiss Federal Council has recognised the independence of the Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

- The wellknown actor, theatre director and painter, Erwin Kohlund, has died at the age of 77.

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Tel. 055/42 21 21

Specialized International Exhibition in Genoa

In the footsteps of Columbus

The Swiss are present this year not only at the Seville World Exhibition but also at another of this year's memorable events which on the face of it is not quite Switzerland's thing: Genoa's "Christopher Columbus, ships and the sea". One thing is certain – the Swiss are emphatically not among those who claim to have first set foot in the New World, so the Swiss pavilion at "Columbo '92" (May 15–August 15, 1992) has put its accent on something quite different. In the Stella Maris Room, there is a presentation of Swiss pioneering achievements which were milestones in the history of seafaring – such as the on-board chronometer invented by Swiss watchmakers in the eighteenth century. This enabled mariners to determine for the first time the position of a ship on the high seas with a high degree of reliability. In our own century it was above all the research submarines of the Swiss father and son, Auguste and Jacques Piccard, which made a name for themselves: in 1960 the "Trieste" reached a record depth of 11,000 metres in the Pacific Ocean. More recently Pierre Fehlmann gained an international reputation as a winning yachtsman on the high seas (see "Swiss Review"

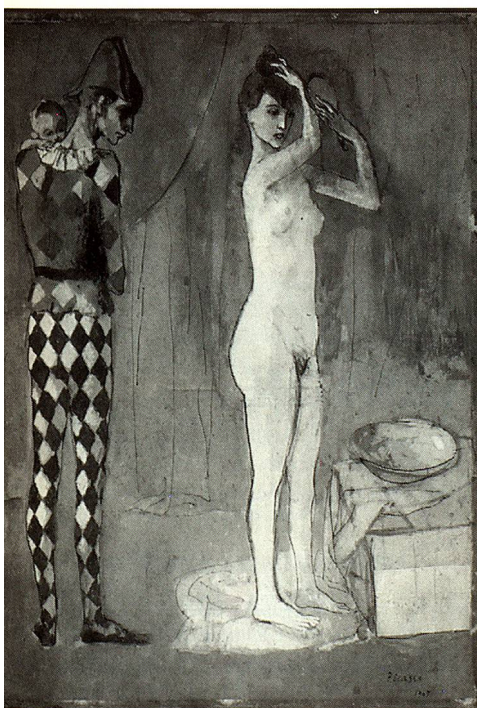
3/90). Such high-quality performances would have been unthinkable without the ultra-modern techniques and intensive research of Swiss universities and international companies. The Aqua Vitae Room is devoted to water as one of the four elements of life and to its importance for survival. This is shown not with a professorial lifting of the finger, but in a spirit of fun and games with the popular "Aqua Puzzles". Well worth a visit. ■

New president for the Farmers Union

On February 20, the delegates of the Swiss Farmers Union elected their new president. He is 48-year old Marcel Sandoz, an agronomist and farmer from Lavigny in the Canton of Vaud. Mr. Sandoz succeeds former National Councilor Jean Savary, who has taken early retirement because of ill health. It was noted with gratification that five candidates in all stood for the post – at a time when Swiss agriculture is going through an extremely difficult period and will certainly face immense challenges in the immediate future. ■

May 8–July 26, 1992

Young Picasso at the Berne Art Museum



Pablo Picasso (1881–1973) is probably the most famous painter of the twentieth century. He evoked both bewilderment and enthusiasm in equal proportion, – and above all he never stopped working. With its exhibition of Picasso's Pink Period, the Berne Art Museum has decided to mount an exhibition of one of the best-known phases of the artist's work – covering the years 1905/1906. It was the high point of his figurative composition before he crossed the boundary to cubism and the abstract art of later years. Among the exhibits are some of his most tender figures – circus performers, lovers, nudes and portraits. ■

Pablo Picasso "Harlequin's Family" 1905. Gouache and ink. Private Collection (Archive collection).

Texts: Heidi Willumat

UN sanctions against Libya

Switzerland is participating in the UN sanctions against Libya. These have been in force since April 15, 1992 and stem from Libya's refusal to extradite two of its citizens suspected of responsibility for the Lockerbie air disaster. Although Switzerland is not a member of the United Nations Organisation, it decided to cooperate with the Security Council resolution as of April 16 – one day after it came into force. The Federal Council has issued an ordinance prohibiting air traffic between Switzerland and Libya and confirming the ban on arms exports to Libya which has been in de facto operation since 1955. The Federal Council justified its decision to comply with United Nations sanctions by the fact that Switzerland has always participated in the fight against terrorism and wishes to express its solidarity with the rest of the international community in this respect.

The vast majority of countries are now taking part in the UN sanctions against Libya.

BOD ■



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