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News from Switzerland

A CONGRESS PALACE IN BIENNE

In 1966 the town of Bienne, one of Switzerland's watch centres, built a Congree Palace. After two years of internal organisation and trials, the building is now operating full time. The modern and attractive premises include a lounge, a big hall for concerts or plenary sessions, several other halls for meetings, conferences and committee meetings, a restaurant and a large covered swimming bath with two pools.

In addition, the technical equipment of these various premises is absolutely modern and includes among other things, the latest projection and sound amplification equipment, as well as devices for simultaneous translation into four languages, etc. The building is set in its own grounds with lawns, trees and games facilities.

Bienne, which is situated on the shores of the lake of the same name, is a charming town of 70,000 inhabitants, possessing 15 hotels with 770 beds in the centre of town and 30 hotels with 649 beds in the outskirts—everything needed, in fact, to welcome congresses, exhibitions and other important events.

“INVESTORS’ CLUB”—THE WORLD’S FIRST

A British Minister of Finance once called, not without hidden malice, the bankers of Switzerland's commercial metropolis who allegedly rule the world and its currencies, the “gnomes of Zurich”. If there were a newly added reason for envying the unique position of these “gnomes”, it could be because of an idea which they originated and materialised.

The Union Bank of Switzerland, one of Switzerland's “Big Three”, has recently opened in the vicinity of Zurich's famous Bahnhofstrasse a luxuriously furnished place which is a happy medium between a public coffee house, a private club and an information centre for all banking and investment problems.

At the “Investors’ Club” as the new institution is called, while having a cup of coffee and cake or a snack, one can obtain advice regarding stock exchange and banking matters from hostesses who are as pretty as they are expertly trained and who maintain direct connections with all the world's important financial centres. TV screens up to Cinemascope size show the latest quotations of the world's leading stock exchanges. And to celebrate the inauguration small laurel trees along the street were richly decorated with (imitation) gold coins.

NEW PLANT FOR AMERICAN ALUMINIUM COMPANY

The Swiss firm of von Roll Co. Ltd. has just received an order from the biggest aluminium producer in the world, the Aluminium Company of America (Alcoa) for the construction of a new plant for rolling aluminium foil for coil weighing nearly 5 tons. The machine, weighing a total of 270 tons, will enable the American company to double its output in the field of aluminium strips and foil. (osec)

LAUSANNE — PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

Next year will see the start of building operations for a new 500-bed economy class hotel, the "Hotel - Tour d'Ouchy", costing £2½ million. The project includes a congress hall seating three hundred persons, a dance hall, several dining rooms, restaurant, bar and a covered swimming pool. It is planned to open the hotel in 1971.

Lausanne is the seat of the International Olympic Committee and has an olympic museum. Plans for the construction of a 1000ft high Olympic Tower have just been announced. This will house the olympic museum as well as a vast film library containing records of the various summer and winter olympics.

Helicoidal in shape, the Olympic Tower will have a width of 90 feet at its base and 45 feet at the top. A central well will contain two very fast elevators. The lower part of the building will have nine storeys (museum, film library, exhibition halls, offices) and the upper part, with two panoramic roofs, a luxury restaurant, grill-room and snack bar, six storeys.

The next few years should witness the completion of this spectacular project which is a positive addition to Lausanne's touristic and olympic character.

SWISS EAT MORE MEAT AND CANNED GOODS

According to the statistics published by the Secretariat of Swiss Farmers on foodstuffs, the annual consumption of flour for bread per inhabitant averaged 179.3 lb in 1965-66 as compared with 201.7 lb in 1956-57. The consumption of potatoes has also fallen off, 121.4 lb as opposed to 155.5 lb ten years earlier. Husked rice is also losing ground, 4.81 lb as opposed to 11.6 lb.

While the Swiss eat fewer green vegetables, averaging 128.5 lb per inhabitant per year in 1965-66 as compared with 150.9 lb, they go in more on the other hand for canned vegetables, 41.4 lb as compared with 20.2 lb. The consumption of fruit and vegetable juice rose from 24.2 to 38.5 lb for the ten-year period under consideration.

The Swiss are also eating more meat, poultry and fish than ten years earlier. However, they are drinking less milk, 91 pints as opposed to 169 pints ten years before. (osec)