

News at random

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The Swiss Observer

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NEWS AT RANDOM

Federal

The Swiss Federal Railways have carried during the month of December (1948) altogether 16.44 million passengers or 1.22 million less than in December, 1947. The receipts from passenger traffic show a decline of 1.48 million francs and are given as 19.99 million francs.

1.39 million tons of goods were dispatched or 247,312 tons less than in December, 1947, the receipts reached 26.99 million francs.

Customs receipts during January, 1949, amounted to 34.5 million francs, or 10.1 million francs less than in January, 1948.

The Federal Council has nominated Hans Martig, hitherto Swiss Consul in Istanbul, to the post of Swiss Consul in Tunis.

Hans Martig, who hails from St. Stephan (Ct. Berne) entered into the service of the Federal Political Department in 1923, and was at one time at the Swiss Legation in London. In 1928, he was transferred to Istanbul where he was appointed Consul in 1944.

The net profit of the Swiss National Bank for 1948 is approximately Frs.5.4m. Net profit for the previous year was Frs.5,413,000. The dividend is repeated at 6 per cent.

During the past year, gold transfers by foreign central banks amounted to Frs.200m. Taking into consideration a transfer by the Swiss Confederation of Frs.434m., the National Bank's total gold stocks reached the value of Frs.5,821m., of which as much as two-thirds were deposited abroad. In addition, the Confederation owns gold worth Frs.182m.

Foreign exchange holdings, consisting almost exclusively of dollar assets, were valued at Frs.236.6m. at end-1948.

Bank notes in circulation at the end of December were Frs.211m. up at Frs.4,594m., against an increase of Frs.293m. during the previous year. The gold cover at end-1948 amounted to 127 per cent., the cover prescribed by law being only 40 per cent.

The balance-sheet total at Frs.6,400m. was Frs.470m. higher than a year previously. The main revenue item, Frs.7.17m. (1947: Frs.10.67m.), was derived from gold and foreign exchange transactions..

Visas will no longer be needed by Swiss nationals visiting New Zealand and South Africa.

The Soviet zone of Germany has concluded a new trade agreement with Switzerland.

The agreement contains a list of goods to be exchanged and stipulates that 30 per cent. of Swiss payments must be used for purchases by the Soviet zone in Switzerland.

Under the previous agreement trade had consisted mainly of Soviet zone export to Switzerland by which the Russians had gained large quantities of Swiss currency.

A contract has been signed between the Swiss authorities and the de Havilland aircraft and engine companies in England, whereby, following the supply of a large number of Vampire aircraft from the English de Havilland factories, the type will be manufactured in Switzerland under a licence, thus increasing the overall output of Vampires.

It was necessary for the Swiss Air Force to try out exhaustively the functioning and general practicability of the Vampire in the Alpine country which it must defend, and for which a short take-off run with full war load, and a high standard of manoeuvrability and docility, are obviously indispensable. Satisfied on these points, the Swiss Government have already ordered 75 Vampire Mk. 6's from de Havilland, de-

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liveries of which are just commencing. Now, looking further ahead, the manufacturing licence has been taken up.

It was announced in Berne recently, that initially 100 Vampires would be built in the Swiss factories. As is usual under such licence arrangements, a certain amount of the components and materials will be supplied from England in the early stages of the project. The Goblin engines will all be supplied by the de Havilland Engine Company.

* * *

Werner Hirs, Swiss Consul in New York, has been appointed Consul in Istanbul, in succession to Consul Martig.

Mr. Hirs, who is well-known in the Swiss Colony in Great Britain, was born in 1895 in Berne, he entered into the service of the Federal Political Department in 1927, and held various posts in the Consular Service first in Bombay and afterwards in Manchester and New York.

Cantonal

Dr. Johannes Schwendimann, one of the founders and editor of the paper "Kompass" in Lucerne, has celebrated his 80th birthday anniversary. He was for 30 years in the service of the town of Lucerne. [A.T.S.]

* * *

The "Männerchor" Lucerne, one of the largest and most important Male Choirs in Switzerland has celebrated its 75th jubilee. [A.T.S.]

* * *

The following conductors have been engaged for the International Music Festival, which will take place in Lucerne from the 10th-28th August, 1949: R. F. Denzler, Wilhelm Furtwängler, Herbert von Karajan, Paul Klecki and Bruno Walter. [A.T.S.]

* * *

The M.V. "Waldstätter," which was built at the shipyard of the "Dampfschiffgesellschaft des Vierwaldstättersee" in Lucerne, was recently launched. The new vessel can carry altogether 550 passengers.

[A.T.S.]

* * *

During the year 1948, altogether 6,212 traffic accidents occurred in the canton of Zurich (1947: 5,646). Eighty-seven persons were killed and 2,805 injured.

[A.T.S.]

* * *

Professor Gottlob Schrenk, of the theological faculty of the University of Zurich, has celebrated his 70th birthday anniversary. [A.T.S.]

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Oscar Helbling, Manager of the "HESTRA" (Treuhandgesellschaft) of Zug, has been arrested in Paris, where he was in hiding. He is charged with embezzling large sums of money amounting to 200 to 500,000.—frs. [A.T.S.]

* * *

A fire which broke out at the "Filature de Laine, S.A." in Porrentruy (Ct. Berne) caused damage amounting to 30,000.—frs. [A.T.S.]

* * *

The "Seeländer Bote" in Bienne has celebrated its 100th anniversary on which occasion a special 80 page number was published. [A.T.S.]

* * *

Albert Möckli, Director of the "Telegraphen-und Telephonabteilung der Generaldirektion der P.T.T.", has celebrated his 40th service jubilee. [A.T.S.]

* * *

The town of Fribourg numbered 28,371 inhabitants on the 31st of December, 1948. [A.T.S.]

* * *

Eugène Péquignot, since 1939 general secretary of the "Eidg. Volkswirtschaft Departement" in Berne, has celebrated his 60th birthday anniversary. Péquignot is a *doctor honoris causa* of the University of Lausanne and an honorary citizen of the town of Saignelégier (Ct. Fribourg). [A.T.S.]

* * *

A student from Schwyz, aged 23, who, under the influence of alcohol, caused an accident when his car collided with a motor cycle, resulting in the death of a woman, was sentenced to six months imprisonment by a Fribourg District Court. [A.T.S.]

" Hepple Lodge,"
Holly Park,
London,
N.4.

31st January, 1949.

To the Swiss Colony in Great Britain.

PRESENTATION TO MR. E. P. DICK.

We should like to bring to your notice that Mr. E. P. Dick has completed 30 years' service as Conductor of the Swiss Orchestral Society, a service which he has performed in an entirely honorary capacity. In addition, he has also been conducting the Swiss Male Choir for many years. Mr. Dick has carried out his task with great devotion, unfailing enthusiasm and at the expense of many of his leisure hours and we feel sure that all who have been privileged to enjoy the musical entertainments of the Orchestra and the Choir will agree that these have been instrumental in bringing happiness and pleasure to the Swiss Colony and their friends.

The completion of thirty years' faithful and efficient service would, therefore, seem a fitting occasion for the Swiss Community in London to show their appreciation in some tangible form. On the suggestion of some music loving friends, an Organising Committee has been formed, consisting of the Presidents of the Swiss Orchestral Society, the Swiss Male Choir, and the Swiss Accordion Group, with a view to arranging a celebration in honour of Mr. Dick, some time later this year, coupled with a presentation, consisting of a cheque of the equivalent of any money collected in the Colony in the meantime.

If this matter has your approval and you are desirous of supporting the Committee, perhaps you will kindly detach the lower portion of this letter and return it together with your subscription to the undersigned. The Organising Committee suggest that subscriptions should not generally exceed 5/-, although higher amounts will, of course, not be refused.

Details of the presentation ceremony will be published in the Swiss Observer in due course, and any friends who wish to attend this celebration will be given an opportunity of doing so.

With anticipated thanks for your co-operation,

I am,

For and on behalf of the Organising Committee:

F. G. SOMMER.

To: Mr. F. G. Sommer,
" Hepple Lodge,"
Holly Park,
London, N.4.

Date 1949.

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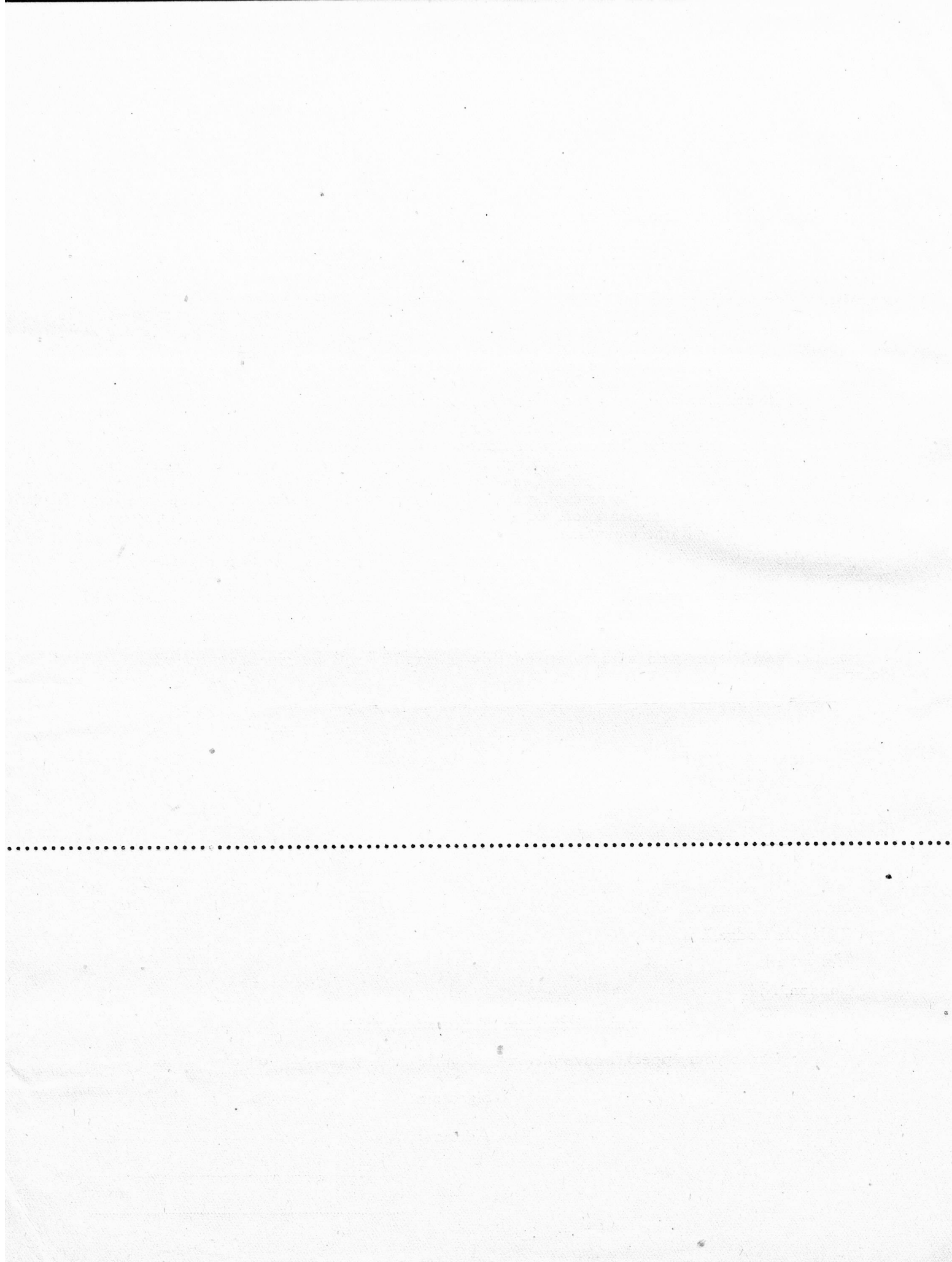
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Professor, Dr. Rudolf Geigy, head of the Swiss Tropical Institute in Basle, has been made a Fellow of the Royal Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene, and a corresponding member of the Zoological Society in London. [A.T.S.]

A fire which broke out at a cabinet making firm in Oberwil (Ct. Basle-County) caused damage amounting to over 100,000.—frs. [A.T.S.]

Hermann Hobi, at present Manager of the Hotel Hecht in St. Gall, has been appointed Manager of the Grand Hotel Hof, Bad Ragaz and the Kursaal. [A.T.S.]

The 15 million francs loan issued by the "Nordost-Schweiz. Kraftwerke A.G. Baden" at $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. interest, has been considerably oversubscribed. [A.T.S.]

During the year 1948, altogether 62 motorists in the canton of Thurgau, had their licences suspended, of these, 43 were driving under alcoholic influence (!). [A.T.S.]

M. Ernest Béguin, President of the Board of the Swiss Federal Railways, has celebrated his 70th birthday anniversary. M. Béguin, was from 1918-1938 a member of the government of the canton of Neuchâtel, and sat in Parliament (States Council) for 22 years. [A.T.S.]

The taxpayers of the canton of Neuchâtel, who have paid their income tax within the prescribed time

will receive a reduction of 5 per cent. owing to the fact, that the cantonal exchequer has a large surplus. (This is the place to go. Ed.)

[A.T.S.]

The following deaths are reported from Switzerland:—

Dr. Alfred Senn (Basle) a noted geologist, at the age of 50.

Dr. Gustave Grunau, well-known publisher in Berne, aged 74.

Abbé Paul Lachat, teacher at the Collège St. Charles in Porrentruy and priest in Beurnevésin, at the age of 43.

Dr. G. A. Wehrli, founder of the "Medizinisch-geschichtlichen Museums" and lecturer of medicine at the University of Zurich, aged 61.

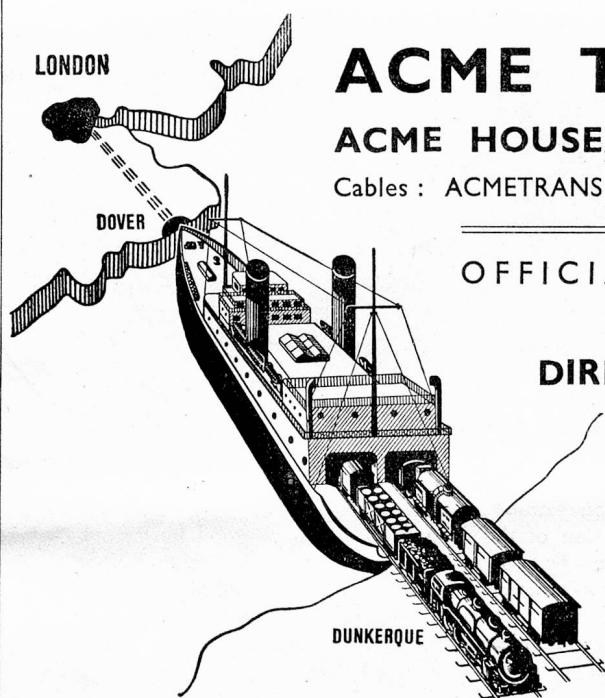
Albert Renggli-Gloggner, for 60 years in practice as a dentist in Lucerne, at the age of 89.

Theodor Kalbermatten, a well-known mountain guide, in Blatten (Valais) aged 87. On his 70th birthday, he ascended for the first time the "Bietschhorn."

Colonel of Brigade Alfred Strübi, at one time commander of the Solothurn regiment 11 and later on of the Infantry-Brigade 11, and Frontier Brigade 4 at the age of 60. He was also chief of the "Eidg. Meliorationamtes" in Berne.

Jules Chapuy, from 1920-1934 Manager of the "Schweiz. Bankgesellschaft" in Neuchâtel, aged 77.

Katharina Waldisberg (Lucerne) author of a number of fairy tales, amongst them "Das ferne Land", in Berne.



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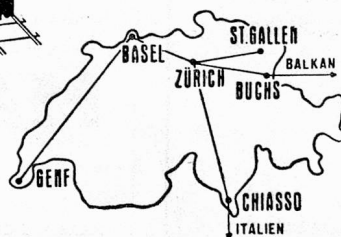
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Thomas Bertran, for many years teacher of Spanish at the Commercial School in Neuchâtel, in Neuchâtel at the age of 79.

H. Kummeler-Sauerländer, Founder and Director of the A.G. Kummeler & Matter, in Aarau, at the age of 85. He retired from this concern some years ago.

Edwin Matter, co-founder of the above firm, and a Director for 46 years, in Aarau, aged 73.

Albert Paschoud, from 1935-1943, a member of the National Council, and for 20 years President of the "Westschweiz. Winzerverband" in Corsy s/Lutry, at the age of 72.

Percival Frutiger, President of the Philanthropical Society in Geneva, and lecturer at the University of Geneva, in Geneva, aged 53. The deceased was a valued collaborator of the International Red Cross.

Christoph Iselin, organiser and founder of the Swiss Ski Sports, at the age of 79.

[A.T.S.]

* * *

M. Paul Ruegger, President of the International Red Cross Committee, and former Swiss Minister in London, has left Geneva by special plane, for an inspection tour of the various Refugee camps in the Near East, he was accompanied by Madame Ruegger, Dr. A. Escher, Commissioner of the International Committee of the Red Cross for Relief to refugees in Palestine M. J. de Reynier, Chief of the Near East Delegation and M. R. Hunziker, his *chef de cabinet*.

On completion of his tour to the various Delegations, M. Ruegger will pay a courtesy visit to the Turkish Government at Ankara. [A.T.S.]

* * *

The accounts of the Federal Singing Competition (Eidg. Sängerfest) which took place last year in Berne, close with a deficit of 28,892.77.—frs.; this festival was held in conjunction with the celebration "100 Jahre Schweiz. Bundesstaat." Altogether 104 choirs with 12,035 members attended the festival.

As reason for the deficit the very bad weather which persisted throughout the Festival is given.

[A.T.S.]

* * *

The University of Fribourg will observe its 60th anniversary on September 5th, 1949. It now has 1,043 students, 363 of whom are non-Swiss.

* * *

The appeal by Swiss Radio for Europe's sick and needy children has so far raised £40,230.

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The 17th Annual Congress of the Society of Internal Medicine will be held at Lugano on May 6th to 8th, 1949.

* * *

Legislation has been carried through in Switzerland giving the Government power to use wireless telephony as part of their national telephone service.

It is intended that places which cannot easily be reached by wires, such as isolated villages, mountain hotels and chalets, will be connected to the main network by the new service. Subscribers who wish to use these facilities will pay an additional standing charge of less than a pound per month. Power consumption will be only a few watts per station, and short waves (4-7.5 metres) will be used.

An extension of the service to private motor cars was also approved. These are only further additions to the excellent telephone service which already exists in Switzerland, where even trunk calls are obtained—and charged—automatically by dial telephone.

* * *

The following Swiss Banks have declared their dividends for the year 1948 :

Schweiz. Bankverein : 6 per cent. (1947 : 6%); Genossenschaftliche Zentralbank, Basle : 4 per cent. (1947 : 4%); Swiss National Bank : 6 per cent.; Schweizerische Kredit-Anstalt : 6 per cent. (1947 : 6%); Leu, A.G. : 5 per cent. (1947 : 5%); Banque Populaire Suisse : 4½ per cent. (1947 : 4%); Gewerbe Bank Baden : 5 per cent. (1947 : 5%); Schweiz. Bankgesellschaft : 7 per cent. (1947 : 6½%).



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During the year 1948, altogether 3,622 persons have emigrated to overseas countries from Switzerland (1947: 2,599). [A.T.S.]

The Federal Gymnastic Society (Eidg. Turnverein) numbers 2,442 sections with 210,155 members.

The "Schweiz. Frauen Turnverband" has a membership of 42,875. [A.T.S.]

PETITES CHOSES QUI FONT PLAISIR.

"*Semain Suisse*" (*Service de Presse*).

Le nouveau "Lexique suisse" en 7 volumes, œuvre de caractère universel conçue dans l'esprit indépendant, si caractéristique de la Suisse, connaît un grand succès de librairie. Pendant les fêtes de Noël, à côté de ce Lexique, les Mémoires de Churchill ont accusé la meilleure vente, tandis que la plupart des "Bestsellers" d'outre mer ne rencontrent plus de succès auprès du public qui en est saturé. Les ouvrages parus chez nous sont très demandés et on note une baisse dans la demande des romans policiers.

Le nouveau bâtiment des postes d'Habkern, dans l'Oberland bernois, conçu sur un plan tout à fait moderne, est construit en bois indigènes exclusivement.

L'alpiniste genevois André Roch a été appelé en Amérique pour y organiser, dans les régions fréquentées pour les Sports d'hiver, un service de secours et d'étude des avalanches.

Le sculpteur vaudois Marguerite Anne de Blonay, domiciliée à Rabat (Maroc français) a été nommée membre de l'académie des sciences coloniales de Paris, en reconnaissance de ses travaux et de ses expéditions au Cameroun et en Guinée.

Le dernier concert de la Philharmonie tchèque à Prague a été un triomphe pour le compositeur suisse Arthur Honegger. Son oratorio "Le roi David" a obtenu un grand succès.

La Croix-Rouge suisse, en collaboration avec le Don suisse, a mis à disposition 700 prothèses pour les grands blessés de la Première Armée française du Général de Lattre de Tassigny et a invité un grand nombre de convalescents à faire un séjour en Suisse. Une manifestation de bienfaisance, ayant un but

identique, a eu lieu à Bâle et a été honorée de la présence des généraux de Lattre de Tassigny et Guisan.

Le Dr. R. A. Lindt, près la Légation suisse à Londres, a été appelé au poste de vice-président du fonds de secours international aux enfants de l'ONU.

SWISS PUBLISHING.

Many publications in praise of Switzerland have appeared lately; some of them were reviewed in these pages. There can be little doubt that Switzerland, her scenery, her people and her institutions are becoming increasingly familiar to English readers and it is a gratifying fact that no jarring note has been introduced by any of the modern writers who have chosen Switzerland as their subject. From a technical point of view English publishers are to be congratulated on the high standard they have maintained under the severe handicap of war-time restrictions.

The Swiss publishing trade, on the other hand, is also of a high order and compares favourably with that of Great Britain. Those who have visited the Swiss Book Exhibition held in London a few years ago will concur. The Swiss productions, in fact, are in no way inferior to those of the English publishers and the art of printing which was exercised in Switzerland from times medieval has suffered no decline.

These reflections were prompted by the cursory examination of specimen copies received from the publishing firm "Verlag Paul Haupt in Berne." One of them is a small illustrated periodical called "Der Hochwächter" which provides, in German and in dialect, short stories and essays dealing with Swiss life, arts and handicraft in the manner of a popular magazine suitable for home reading. Another is taken from a collection by the name of "Schweizer Heimatsbücher." These are monographs on various subjects: studies of Swiss writers, towns, monasteries and famous landmarks. One of them "The Lake of Lucerne" is available in an English translation and is adorned with a number of photographs of great beauty illustrating the many beauty spots of the lake-side and the surrounding heights.

Currency regulations complicate the acquisition of such books, however moderate their cost. Nevertheless, with the ever-widening public interest in art and literature, it may not be inopportune to draw attention to the excellence of the work offered by Swiss publishers.

J.J.F.S.

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