

Zeitschrift: The Swiss observer : the journal of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK

Herausgeber: Federation of Swiss Societies in the United Kingdom

Band: - (1954)

Heft: 1221

Rubrik: News at random

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The Swiss Observer

FOUNDED IN 1919 BY PAUL F. BOEHRINGER.

The Official Organ of the Swiss Colony in Great Britain

Advisory Council: R. DE CINTRA (Chairman); O. F. BOEHRINGER, LS. CHAPUIS, J. EUSEBIO, GOTTFRIED KELLER, R. J. KELLER, R. PFENNINGER, A. STAUFFER, G. E. SUTER.

EDITED BY A. STAUFFER WITH THE CO-OPERATION OF MEMBERS OF THE SWISS COLONY IN GREAT BRITAIN.

Telephone: CLERKENWELL 2321/2.

Published Twice Monthly at 23, LEONARD STREET, E.C.2.

Telegrams: FREPRINCO, LONDON.

Vol. 29. No. 1221.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 12th, 1954.

PRICE 11d.

PREPAID SUBSCRIPTION RATES.

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NEWS AT RANDOM

Federal

Monsieur R. Rubattel, President of the Swiss confederation, has consented to assume the Honorary Patronage of the HOSPES exhibition. (International Tourist and Hotel Trades Exhibition).

He will open in person the exhibition in Berne on the 14th of May.

The Federal Council has re-elected for a further period of three years the following to the Board of Swissair: Prof. E. Amstutz, "Direktionspräsident der EMPA", Zurich, Dr. Max Iklé, Director of the Federal Finance Administration, Berne, Dr. E. Weber, General Manager of the PTT, Berne, and Dr. H. Gschwind, President of the Swiss Federal Railways, Berne.

Dr. Edwin Stopper has been appointed Delegate of the Federal Council for commercial treaties.

He was born in Winterthur in 1912, and studied Economics at the University of Geneva, where he obtained the degree of doctor of Economic Science. He entered into the service of the Confederation in 1939. Dr. Stopper has represented the Swiss Government at various missions abroad.

Customs receipts for the month of December, 1953, amounted to 54.1 million francs, or 6.2 million francs more than in December 1952.

The receipts for the whole year of 1953 total 462.8 million francs, which is 34.7 million francs more than in 1952.

Cantonal

During the year 1953, 1,415 traffic accidents have occurred in the canton of Lucerne. (1952: 1,588). 926 persons were injured of whom 41 succumbed to their injuries. [A.T.S.]

A collection which was made in the canton of Glarus for the victims of infantile paralyses brought in an amount of 56,305.— frs. [A.T.S.]

Traffic accidents in the canton of Zurich during the year 1953 amounted to 9,178 (1952: 8,857). 4,195 persons were injured, 129 casualties proving fatal. [A.T.S.]

The Government of the canton of Berne has voted a credit of 20,000.— frs. for the avalanche victims in Switzerland and Austria. [A.T.S.]

On December 31st, 1953, the town of Delsberg (Jura Bernois) numbered 7,876 inhabitants. [A.T.S.]

Edouard Coendet, the oldest living Swiss, has celebrated his 104th birthday in Burg, nr. Murten. (Ct. Fribourg). [A.T.S.]

An amount of 25,000.— frs. has been given by the Government of the canton of St. Gall to the avalanche victims in Switzerland and Austria. [A.T.S.]

The American Embassy in Berne has presented 4,300 books to the Library of the Basle University. [A.T.S.]

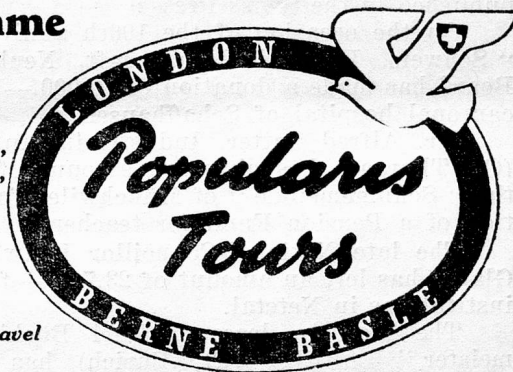
A fire which broke out at "Chicorée, S.A." in Rennens (Ct. Vaud) caused damage to the value of several hundred thousand francs. [A.T.S.]

The community of Münchwilen (Ct. Thurgau) has nominated Army-Corps Commander Hans Thomann, an honorary citizen. [A.T.S.]

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Miss Francis Willis, American Ambassador, was officially received by the Government of the canton of Vaud. [A.T.S.]

The Geneva Government has made a donation of 10,000.— frs. to the avalanche victims of Switzerland and Austria. [A.T.S.]

The following deaths are reported from Switzerland:

Emil Spörri-Graf, from 1898-1907 President of the commune of Wetzikon, and from 1925-1937, "Statthalter" of the Hinwil district, in Wetzikon, at the age of 87.

Hermann Kaeslin, Proprietor of the Hotel Matt in Schwarzenburg, and for many years a member of the Grand Council of the canton of Lucerne, in Lucerne, aged 63.

Edouard Reutter, formerly Manager of the "Neuenburgischen Bodenkredit-Anstalt" (1937-1950) in Neuchâtel, aged 63.

Dr. Max Niedermann, Neuchâtel, aged 78. From 1903-1944, he was Professor of Philology at the University of Neuchâtel, and for several years a member of the Grand Council of the canton of Neuchâtel. He was a *doctor honoris causa* of the Universities of Riga, Besançon and Basle.

Hans Burkhardt, Manager of the firm "C. Haessig, A.G.," Basle, and Consul General of the Netherlands, in Basle, aged 54.

James Pellaton, formerly Director of the watch-makers school in Le Locle, and a *doctor honoris causa* of the University of Neuchâtel, in Le Locle, at the age of 80.

Victor Tripet, a lawyer, and former member of the Municipal and Grand Council, Neuchâtel, in Neuchâtel, aged 64.

Joh. Friedrich Mumenthaler, a member of the Superior Court of the canton of Berne, in Berne, at the age of 60.

Hermann Haefliger, for many years President of the Chamber of Commerce, Neuchâtel, and the "Comptoir", Neuchâtel, in Neuchâtel, aged 73.

Fernand Ruffieux, Author and Journalist, in La Tour-de-Peilz, at the age of 70. [A.T.S.]

The undermentioned Legacies and Donations are published in the Swiss Press:

On the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the "Schweiz. Industrie-Gesellschaft, Neuhausen", the Board has made a donation of 10,000.— francs to the cantonal hospital of Schaffhausen.

Mr. Alfred Sutter, Industrialist in Münchwilen, (Ct. Thurgau) has given an amount of 60,000.— to the "Schulgemeinde" of Münchwilen for the foundation of a Pension Fund for teachers.

The late National-Councillor Ludwig Zweifel of Glarus has left an amount of 23,700.— frs. to various institutions in Netstal.

The recently deceased Karl Büchi, "Schmiedmeister" of Elgg (Ct. Zurich) has left various legacies amounting to 12,000.— frs. to different charitable institutions in Elgg.

Mr. Otto Keller, who died in April, 1953, in Oberkulm (Ct. Aargau) has left an amount of 50,000.— frs. to various charitable institutions. [A.T.S.]

The following Swiss Banks have declared their dividends for the year 1953: Schweiz. Spar- und Kreditbank, St. Gall: 4½ per cent (1952: 4½%), Volksbank Willisau, A.G.: 5 per cent (1952: 5%); Solothurnische Leihkasse, Solothurn: 6 per cent (1952: 6%); Gewerbe Bank, Zurich: 6 per cent (1952: 5%); Bank in Burgdorf: 6 per cent (1952: 6%); Gewerbekasse, Berne: 8 per cent (1952: 8%); Gewerbekasse, Baden: 5 per cent (1952: 5%); Handwerkerbank, Basle: 5½ per cent (1952: 5½%); Solothurnische Handelsbank: 6 per cent (1952: 6%).

[A.T.S.]

The accounts for the 1951 Avalanche Catastrophe in Switzerland have just been published and show the following interesting figures:

Collection in Switzerland:	... 13,626,880.— frs.
Collection of the Swiss abroad:	... 425,246.— "
Donations from various countries:	151,211.— "

the total sum collected (including interest) is returned as 14,399,462.— frs.

The total damage caused was 17,546,893.— frs. of which 12,043,453.— frs. was not covered by insurance.

More than 1,615 houses were either totally destroyed or badly damaged, 600 cattle were killed, 1,800 "Hektaren" of wood were destroyed and 96 persons killed in 1,200 avalanches.

There remains a credit balance of 2,760,012.— frs. which will be used to compensate the victims of the recent avalanche catastrophe. [A.T.S.]



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The Committee of the 1st of August collection has rendered their accounts for 1953. This collection was earmarked for the benefit of the Swiss abroad. The result is 1,144,00.— frs. collected. From this amount the Day school of the Swiss Mercantile Society, London receives 10,000.— frs., the remainder is distributed as follows: 7/10ths to the "Ausland-schweizerwerk" of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique, and 3/10ths for Swiss schools in foreign countries.

[A.T.S.]

The following anniversaries are mentioned in the Swiss Press:

Dr. Arnold Haerry (70) of Zurich, for more than 40 years Secretary of the "Schweiz. Wasserwirtschaftsverbandes".

Charles Schnyder von Wartensee (80) of Lucerne. From 1901-1907, he was Manager of the Banking House Vonwiller & Co., in Milan, and from 1907-1910, Manager of the Società Bancaria Italiano, Genoa. For a number of years he was Manager of the "Banque Française et Italienne pour l'Amérique du Sud" in Sao Paola and Rio de Janeiro. On his return to Switzerland he was appointed Manager of the States Bank, Fribourg, and in 1920 he was nominated Vice-President of the "Direktorium" of the Swiss National Bank. [A.T.S.]

Exports of the Swiss watchmaking industry last year totalled £90,562,000, almost £2m. more than in 1952.

Switzerland has accepted an invitation to play two international ice-hockey matches in Moscow on February 16 and 18.

* * *

The Swiss Government announced that the sealed packet left by the Empress Elizabeth of Austria, to be opened by the Swiss President, 55 years after her death, contained two volumes of poems written by her, but no letters or other documents. The packet was handed to M. Etter, President of the Confederation, at the end of December by Herr Schleinitz, Austrian Minister in Berne, in whose presence it was opened. It had been hoped that the parcel would contain a clue to the mystery of the death of the Archduke Rudolph at Mayerling.

* * *

The Swiss are to adopt an Oerlikon 20mm. anti-aircraft gun of the newest type 6JLa/5TG, according to an announcement in Berne. Credits already earmarked will equip the A.A. troops of Swiss infantry and artillery units, and partly equip the rest of the army.

Details of the new Oerlikon include: a muzzle velocity of 3,600ft. per second; a rate of fire of 1,000 rounds a minute; and a simple circular sight of new design. The shell is filled with a novel explosive with particularly good incendiary effect. In action, the gun is handled by one man.

* * *

At the end of September, 432,000 motor vehicles were on the roads in Switzerland — about one to every 10 Swiss.

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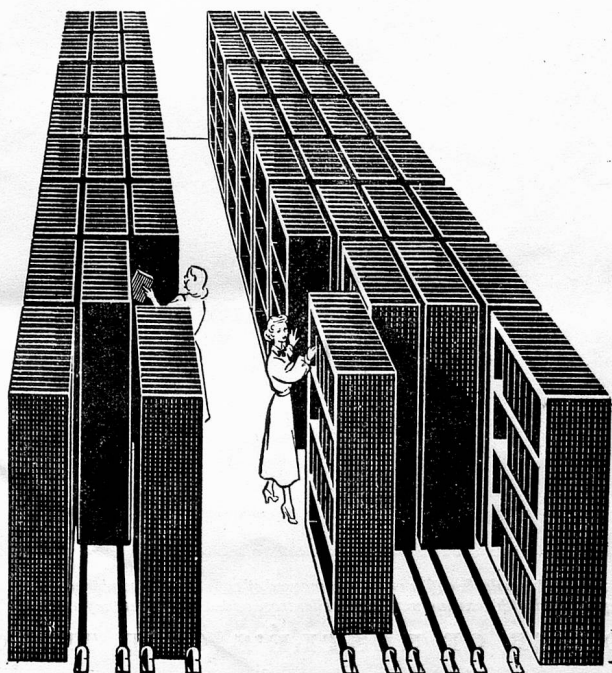
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The Hoelloch ("Hell Hole") cave near Muotathal, in Central Switzerland, is the longest cave in Europe, after the discovery of previously unknown galleries had extended its known length to 29 miles, says Professor Alfred Boegli, leader of a group of scientists and specialists who explored the caves.

* * *

The 11th Swiss Exhibition of Farming, Forestry and Gardening will take place from September 16th to October 11th, 1954 in Lucerne. On a vast site just outside the town, 34 groups of exhibitors will display all the latest products interesting to farmers, vintners, gardeners, huntsmen and fishermen, nature lovers, tourists, folklorists, and so on. The programme of the Exhibition includes many Special Events. All information can be obtained from the Exhibition Enquiry Office (S.L.A., Postbox, Lucerne).

* * *

A plate carrying a red funnel has been fixed to 71 third-class passenger cars (with padded seats) of the Swiss Federal trains. The sign means that the cars are equipped with loud speakers.

* * *

The Federal Post and Railways Department has refused to grant a concession to a private company for the building of a chair lift from the village of Mörel (15 minutes from Brigue in Canton Valais) to the Blausee. The refusal of the Federal authorities was dictated chiefly by the desire to protect the natural beauties, animal and plant life of the region. The scheme put forward would have involved the conversion of a ski-tow, already operating through the winter months for several years past. In the summer months, however, the operation of a chair lift in the Riederalp region would have changed the character of the Aletschwald National Park. For this reason, the State Council of Canton Valais and the Federal Commission for the Protection of Natural Sites had already proposed that the concession be refused. The working of the ski-tow in winter is not, however, affected by this decision.

The Riederalp region is serviced by an aerial railway (cable cabin) from Mörel to the Riederalp Hotels, located at an altitude of about 5,799 ft. above sea-level.

* * *

The Musée Cantonal de Beaux-Arts in Lausanne is housing an exhibition of modern Swiss tapestries, which has attracted attention not only for the intrinsic merits of the exhibits but because it is the first public manifestation of a national movement, which has hitherto secured little publicity, to revive the art of tapestry weaving, and to some extent that of embroidery as well.

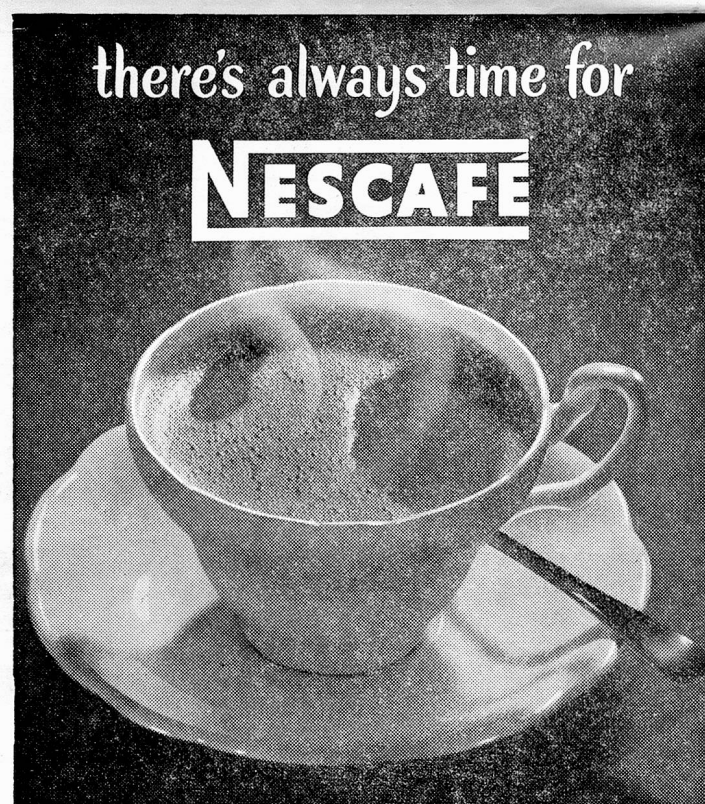
The exhibition has been organised by the Vaudois Women Painters, Sculptors, and Decorators, who are also showing their own productions under the same roof as the tapestries. With the vitalising example of Lurcat to follow, the artist weavers, who have in many cases actually carried out their own designs though they have sent some to be executed in ateliers at Aubusson, have gone straight to the root of the matter. There are no wallhangings elaborately woven to imitate pictures, with subtle gradations of tone merging into each other, nor attempts at realistic perspective or other kinds of painters' devices to "trick the eye." The designs, whether simple or complex, are formal and imaginative in treatment

with only a very occasional touch of deliberate archaism. They include a dignified, dramatic Annunciation and a poetical St. Francis preaching to the birds, verile groups of dancers and acrobats, delicate panels depicting the Seasons, and groups of angels playing musical instruments.

While naturally differing in merit, they all have this in common that their designers, who have obviously been thoroughly trained to have a contemporary outlook, are quite sure of their aim and of the limitations as well as the capacity of the loom. They have obtained effects of remarkable richness by restricting the number of tints employed and by juxtaposing either soft or brilliant passages of pure colour in the interests of decorative design rather than the claims of the visible world. In other words, the tapestries are technically on traditional lines but are modern in feeling.

The exhibition of these tapestries at Lausanne following after a not very long interval on those of the Angers Apocalypse at Basle, is a reminder to artists and public alike of a living art which the skill of the weavers of the Renaissance and succeeding generations diverted from its finest traditions in the Middle Ages, and, indeed, nearly succeeded in killing. One leaves the gallery exhilarated at finding how many men and women of to-day in a small country like Switzerland can produce examples (often made in their own homes) which might well be utilised in enriching the walls of churches, public buildings and even private homes.

L.H.



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