

# It happened in the Canton of Geneva

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## IT HAPPENED IN THE CANTON OF GENEVA

On 1st June this year it will be one hundred and fifty years since the Canton of Geneva joined the Confederation. On 31st December last Geneva celebrated the Restoration of 1813. Geneva had been under French occupation for fifteen years, and the Republic was restored that year. The "Société de la Restauration et du Premier Juin" organised a procession to celebrate this historic event. A regimental band in the uniforms of the "Musique Rouge" (founded in 1799) opened the procession, followed by the Commune Presidents and former Councillors, most of them descendants of the men in office in 1813. Two companies of grenadiers came next. At several points on the route the proclamation of 1813 was read, the last time in front of the National Monument where the authorities of Canton and Municipality had assembled. At the Cathedral of St. Pierre and in several other churches and the Synagogue commemorative services were held.

On 30th November the Canton of Geneva counted nearly three hundred thousand inhabitants, almost two thousand more than at the end of October. This included eleven thousand six hundred seasonal workers. The town of Geneva's population has reached one hundred and eighty-five thousand inhabitants. The foreign workers employed in the Canton now number fifty thousand, of whom ten thousand are engaged in the building trade, seven thousand in industry, nearly six thousand in hotels and restaurants, but only three thousand in domestic service. The increase in births has caused serious concern as regards maternity facilities in hospitals, which are not adequate to cope with the growing birth-rate.

In July a delegation of the Federal Council received the Government of the "Republic and Canton of Geneva" *in corpore* in order to discuss problems of housing shortage, the excessive economic boom, international organisations and the position of federal employees in Geneva.

The increase in traffic has also been considerable, and several schemes to improve conditions and to eliminate bottle-necks have been planned, amongst others the widening of the Mont-Blanc Bridge. Already in April the forty-five Communes were informed of far-reaching schemes of town planning. These include a suspension bridge and a tunnel.

The airport at Cointrin, too, has its problems. When it was built in 1949 the planners did not expect passenger traffic to reach the million mark before twenty or thirty years. In reality it already reached one million two hundred thousand passengers in 1962, and traffic is still going up and up. Alterations and extensions have already been made.

Building has been on a considerable scale in and around Geneva. A sixty-one million franc project for a water purification plant has been passed. The market hall has been re-built. A new TV studio will cost two and a half million francs. The old "Bidonville", the slums of Geneva, have disappeared to make room for modern dwellings for foreign workers. A new students' home was opened in December. The largest hotel in Switzerland has been erected: eighteen storeys, four hundred rooms with bathrooms (eight hundred beds), three restaurants one of which is on the top floor, subterranean garage, swimming pool; cost: forty million francs. The International Labour Office is increasing its size by taking over "Les Fougères". New buildings were inaugurated near

the Cantonal Hospital, containing 149 flatlets and rooms for nurses. The slaughter houses are being rebuilt, new sports grounds are being erected, and the parks "La Grange" and "Eaux-Vives" are to be improved. More flats at moderate rentals are being built or converted.

The cantonal accounts for 1962 showed a surplus of seventeen million francs, and the budget for 1964 also estimates a surplus. If vast sums have been spent on building and planning and increases of salaries have been given amongst others to the State Councillors, generous donations have also been made on the other hand. Old people, widows and invalids have been granted increased benefits, the orphans of Humlikon received Fr.10,000.— from the Municipality of Geneva who, as well as the Canton, donated Fr. 10,000.— each to the Red Cross for the victims of the earthquake in Skoplje, etc.

Talking of finance, it may be interesting to hear that the State of Geneva has to incur extremely high expenditure for official receptions due to the fact that there are so many foreign delegations accredited in Geneva. The budget for 1964 estimates Fr.150,000.—, an increase of Fr.25,000.— over the sum budgeted for 1963. In 1962 the State Council of Geneva sent over 19,000 invitations to official receptions and dinners.

The new President of the State Council for 1964 is M. R. Helg, a lawyer, who has been on the Council since 1957.

The Geneva Council as elected earlier in the year consists of twenty-one Social Democrats, sixteen Liberals, fifteen Radicals, fifteen members of the Workers' Party (Communists) and thirteen independent Christian/Socialists. For the first time women were able not only to vote but also to stand as candidates.

On 7th November the first ten "postwomen" in Switzerland started work in Geneva. After a theoretical course each candidate had to deliver mail in different parts of the town for a week, always accompanied by an experienced postman. They wear a smart uniform and use a small lightweight metal trolley specially constructed for the delivery of letter post. Incidentally, the male colleagues objected to the employment of women when the plan was first mooted.

Apart from the Red Cross Centenary events, 1963 was a very busy year in Geneva. Many international conferences, exhibitions and courses took place, such as the Fourth Meteorological World Congress (which worked out a plan about exchanging experiences in atmospheric radioactivity), a special course for diplomats from new states, the twenty-sixth international conference on education and the tenth congress of ORCA (organisation for the co-ordination of research into dental decay). The Swiss Authors' Association held their general meeting on the shores of the Léman, the Geneva architects celebrated their centenary, and in August the "Fêtes de Genève" took place, a large festival with pageants and fireworks.

In the same month the directors of the International Council of Nurses met in Geneva. Half a million nurses belong to this organisation which was founded in 1890 by an Englishwoman (Bedford Fenwick). In September the "Rencontres Internationales" the traditional forum for lectures and discussions on problems of our time were held, and eight million metalworkers all over the globe belonging to the International Metalworkers' Federation, were represented at their central committee's meeting.

Another important event took place in November when the Palais de l'Athénée celebrated its centenary. It is there that the Committee of the International Red Cross was founded in 1863.

The international music competition took place in September, followed by the congress of the International Federation of Young Lawyers. Another conference was that of the organisation for a world parliament, and Federal Councillor Bonvin delivered an address during the "Quinzaine à l'Université de Genève". Finally, the Council of CERN met in Geneva in December.

Other news from Geneva is about considerable damage in the Cathedral of St. Peter where a main burst during the cold weather and of an armed robbery on the branch office of the Union Bank of Switzerland. On New Year's Eve a bad fire broke out in a mansion on the Route de Malagnou, and a few days later damage of some ten million francs was caused by the worst fire for twelve years when the "Bon Génie" Stores near the Place du Molard was gutted. Two hundred firemen and thirty policemen took part in the fire-fighting.

The Geneva Authors' Prize was awarded to Nicolas Bouvier for his travel book "L'Usage du Monde". The widow of Prof. Charles Bally has bequeathed her mansion at Chêne-Bougeries to the Geneva Academic Society. The house has been a centre of linguistic research for thirty years. A Charles Bally Fund for the promotion of linguistic studies and classical philology has also been created. An anonymous woman sold her Renoir picture in New York and donated part of the proceeds, Fr.125,000.—, to the Geneva Holiday Camps.

The report of the "Grand Théâtre" foundation created a stir. A considerable deficit was made in a short time and the Trust complained about the bad state of the theatre when it was opened in December 1962. "The Times" described it as "Comedy of Errors at Theatre — 'Hasty Opening' brings headaches".

Finally, three items of news concerning lake and river. The wreckage of a transport ship was accidentally discovered at a depth of two hundred metres when a group of divers made experiments with an underwater television camera. Two months later a taxi chauffeur successfully landed a pike 1.18 metres long and weighing 12.6 kilos. And a little while ago the Geneva club for underwater sport discovered a lake-dwelling, one of the most important finds in the Lake of Geneva so far. The village is some four thousand years old and extends for roughly sixty thousand square metres near Versoix.

*(Based on news received by courtesy of the Agence Télégraphique Suisse.)*

### MACHINE TOOL PRODUCTION IN GENEVA

In Geneva the five firms specialising in the field of machine tools each year produce over seven hundred machines of different types, over 80% of which are exported to European and overseas markets. The value exported amounts to approximately seventy million Swiss francs a year. The fine achievement of these factories is all the more striking when it is considered that they are up against very keen foreign competition.

[O.S.E.C.]

### SWITZERLAND ON THE MAP

When the Genevese Henry Dufour, the later general of the Swiss army, issued the first sheets of his topographical map of Switzerland in 1809, the outstanding job accomplished by him and his assistants was highly controversial. On the one hand, it found fullest recognition and praise while, on the other, sharp criticism was voiced because of "the slanted light and the system applied to mark altitudes". That was long ago. The Topographical Survey of Switzerland, which has its offices near Berne, is celebrating its 125th anniversary and may be rightly proud of the excellent reputation which Swiss cartography enjoys in the world today. While in 1838 General Dufour was able to sell but three hundred copies of the first four sheets of his map, sales of maps in 1963 totalled 1.1 million copies.

[S.N.T.O.]

### INNOVATIONS IN SWITCHING ON THE NATIONAL RAILWAYS (SBB)

The Electrotechnical Research Department of the Swiss National Railways (SBB) has just developed a system which will increase the traffic in the humping operation in switching yards while resulting in savings in personnel and money. Conclusive trials at the switching station at Basel-Muttenz have been made where the new device has been used on forty-one tracks.

The principle of the installation rests on two elements recently developed: a braking device for the rail and an electrodynamic accelerator. The first element is placed at the beginning of each one of the tracks of the control group and it automatically gives a constant speed to the cars. The second element stretches over about half of the aforementioned tracks and its control gadget, activated by a linear motor, releases itself as soon as the car stops or when its speed exceeds 1m./sec. The new installation doubles, or indeed triples, the capacity of switching operations. It will make obsolete present braking systems and dispense with the necessity of brake shoe installations. Thanks to it, there will be no more accidents nor damages in the course of switching.

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### DINING CAR ANCESTRY

The first dining car to be introduced by the Swiss Railways was the 1888 model which operated between Basle and Milan. This innovation which added considerably to travel comfort found such favourable echo with the public that the "Compagnie Internationale des Wagons-Lits" established in Brussels (Belgium) extended the service. Since 1903, the "Swiss Dining Car Company" (SSG) takes care of restaurant service for the inland traffic while CIWL cars are hitched to some international trains. Today, the Swiss Federal Railways have forty-five dining and snack cars of most modern construction. One of the old models, built 1914 in Smichov near Prague, may be visited at the Swiss Traffic Museum in Lucerne where it still serves its purpose although it is now stationed and far less rickety than formerly en route.

[S.N.T.O.]