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CENTENARY OF A SWISS BANK

The "Schweizerische Volksbank" celebrates

At the beginning of the year, a Foundation was started with 2 million Swiss francs, whose income should benefit science, the arts and other cultural efforts. A jubilee coin in silver was presented to members of the board and the staff, and shareholders received a 3% bonus. The same amount (4.5m. francs) was distributed amongst the staff.

The jubilee was celebrated in a different way from normal practices. The general theme was the future of Switzerland. Three young film producers were asked to make three short films, to be presented as one called "Swiss made". The première was the opening of a general public discussion on "Switzerland after Us". The three young men (Yves Yersin, Fritz E. Maeder and F. M. Murer) were completely free to produce their chosen episodes in their own manner, provided the future of Switzerland was portrayed. The premières took place on 13th May in four towns. It is not art, but a documentary of a young generation which has to witness an ever-increasing "inhumanity" of the future. The young are concerned, but also without illusion, and the film has shown just how far their worries and hopes go.

In many Swiss towns, young school children painted murals on "Our town in the year 2000", and journalists and students confronted each other with the theme of what the future of Switzerland would bring.

Federal Councillor Celio attended the celebration in Berne, including a reception after a special performance of Beethoven's opera "Fidelio". Local celebrations will take place in the autumn.

To mark the jubilee, the bank published two books. One is the history of the "Banque Populaire" which started out as a local Bernese bank. It is beautifully produced with coloured photographs and text taking the reader through the fascinating story. The book was translated into English, too, and it is so well conceived that even the layman will find it interesting to read. It is in three parts, "Major Political Events in Switzerland and its Economic and Social Growth", The Swiss Economy during the past One Hundred Years" and "The Banque Populaire Suisse". The history was written by Dr. Emile Dupperrex.

A Century of Swiss Art

The second book the "Schweizerische Volksbank" published in spring is called "Ein Jahrhundert Schweizer Kunst", a fine volume of 240 pages showing paintings and sculptures from Böcklin to Alberto Giacometti. It is published by Skira's in Geneva, and the text is by Christoph von Tavel, young

Swiss art historian. The book describes in detail the attitude to art in Switzerland, how it developed, the problems of art at the National Exhibitions, with general conception such as historical and soldierly aspects, man in his surrounding and landscape. And then it takes the reader through the various generations, enumerating Swiss artists from intimate landscape painters like Menn and Steffan to the surrealists. The coloured reproductions are not necessarily connected with the text, but they give a fine selection of some of the greatest works of the hundred years under review. The production of the book is impeccable, and there is a wealth of information and data which interests every lover of art, not to speak of the beauty of the pictures to delight the ordinary reader. What gives the book special distinction, is that the photos are not reproduced direct onto the pages, but on special art paper and then fixed loosely onto the vellum pages. What clarity the etching of Karl Staufer's "Gottfried Keller", what depth Vela's bronze "Victim of Work", what brilliant colours in Anker's, Böcklin's, Schider's and Hodler's paintings! How delicately the blues are reproduced in Appia's "Vor der Ankunft Wotans", how graphic appears Vallotton's naked woman in the "Red Salon"! What superb red and blue in Cuno Amiet's "Emmy" or his "Garden"! Then there are the fine drawings of G. Glocemetti and Auberjonois and Forestier's neat little flowers, Le Corbusier's angular "still life with egg". Paul Klee's cube mosaics and Alberto Giacometti's wire figures and his "Annette", the lovely study in pale blue and grey, with the brown lines "scratched" on the body.

A real treasure this book may be called, and it decidedly fills a gap. If the Volksbank wanted to stress the role of Switzerland in the future, it has certainly succeeded, not only by producing the film and opening the general discussion on the country After Us, but by this beautiful volume leading from the past through the present and pointing determinedly to the future.

MM.

ADDENDUM to the Lucerne Festival of Music

One of our subscribers, Miss Ursula Strebi, is the Manager of the English Chamber Orchestra. We should like to point out that she has been successful in getting a true British production for the Lucerne Festival of Music (Lucerne is her home town): Purcell's Fairy Queen in the new Britten/Holst/Peas version with an all British cast and orchestra and Benjamin Britten conducting. This concert will take place on 17th August. On the following day, the English Chamber Orchestra are doing a second concert, conducted by Daniel Barenboim, and with his wife Jacqueline du Pré as soloist (cello).

No doubt, music lovers will make a note of this and wish Miss Ursula Strebi and "her" orchestra the best of luck.

MORE MUSIC FESTIVALS

Zurich Festival Weeks

The Zurich Opera House is going to participate in Zurich's International June Festival Weeks first of all by presenting the first Swiss production of the opera "Il Re Cervo" ("The Stag King") by Hans Werner Henze; the entire company of the Municipal Theatre of Frankfurt (Germany) which has made known to Switzerland Prokofiev's opera "The Fiery Angel"; also two Canadian ballet companies, and numerous operatic performances. Zurich's "Schauspielhaus" Theatre will enhance its foreign language touring companies' presentations with a Japanese performance; and the "Theater am Hechtplatz" offers international variety show festival weeks.

Zurich's exhibitions feature "Johann Heinrich Füssli" at the "Kunsthaus" (Art Museum); "Serial Products" at the Museum of Applied Arts and "Zurich in the History of Music" (autographs) at the "Helmhaus". Big symphony concerts of the Tonhalle Orchestra, two concerts of the Zurich Chamber Orchestra and the first Swiss performances of "The Passion according to St. Luke" by K. Pederecki at Fraumünster Church complete the generously conceived and diversified programme of Zurich's Festival Weeks.

Opera and Ballet in Lausanne

The fourteenth International Festival of Lausanne will end its big concert series with soloists' evenings by Sviatoslav Richter (20th June) and Arthur Rubinstein (26th June), after the big opera performances have taken place. The Belgrade opera company will appear in Lausanne with 280 performers, its own orchestra, soloists, choir and ballet, to present "La Khovantchina" by Mussorgsky (adapted by Chostakovitch) on 11th June, "Eugene Onegin" by Tchaikovsky (on 12th June), "The Love of the three Oranges" by Serge Prokofiev (14th June) and finally "Ivan the Terrible" by Rimsky-Korsakoff (17th June), a less well-known work. In addition, the ballet company from Belgrade will present (on 16th June) its own evening "Joan die Zarissa" by Werner Egk and the Geneva Theatre Ballet will follow on 22nd June with a guest performance.

Finally, the Berne Opera Week 1969 should be mentioned. It will present nine performances at the Municipal Theatre in Berne from 14th to 22nd June.

(S.N.T.O.)