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theoretical and practical importance. The Alpinarium Lagalb serves another purpose, too, as Prof. Hediger informed us. Many tourists who visit our mountains and national parks would like to take pictures of typical representatives of our alpine fauna and are disappointed if they do not meet them at the roadside as one encounters elephants, rhinos, lions and antelopes in African national parks. These friends of nature may now have their wish for in the alpinarium they will be able to photograph typical alpine animals to their heart's content at close range and in their natural habitat just slightly altered. The alpinarium is open during the same hours as the aerial cableway is in service. Admission is free.

(SNTÖ)

## SWISSAIR NEWS

### Air Taxi Services for Swissair Passengers

Swissair passengers departing from or arriving at U.K. airports can now make use of connecting flights by chartered aircraft under an agreement between the airline and the U.K. Air Taxi Operators Association.

Bookings for the air taxi service can be made through Swissair offices or travel agents at the same time as those for the scheduled flights. Such bookings can be accepted by any member of the Association or delegated from one member to another; since the Association has 11 members throughout the U.K., the chances of a charter aircraft being available when required, particularly at short notice, are proportionately improved and the booking procedure is simplified.

### New Hotel opens in Zurich

The Hotel Atlantis, Zurich, the first of the three major Zurich hotels in which Swissair has a share and a management interest through PROHOTEL AG, a joint hotel management company, is opening on November 6.

It is located in a large park a short distance from the town centre and has 400 beds in 235 rooms, including 60 studio singles, all with bathroom, balcony, colour television, radio and telephone. There are also some luxury penthouse suites.

General amenities include an elegant grill room and a rustic style restaurant, indoor swimming pool, sauna gymnasium, ladies' and men's hairdressers, various shops, a Swissair information and reservations desk and Avis car hire service.

A convention room is available with a complete range of audio-visual equipment and simultaneous translation facilities. The hotel will be linked with Zurich Airport by a direct Swissair coach service. Prices range from Sfr. 40 for single rooms and from Sfr. 58 for double rooms, including service.

Reservations can be made through all Swissair offices.

# ACME-GOTH, A HUNDRED YEARS OF FORWARDING

The name of ACME is well known to readers of the Swiss Observer as this important forwarding firm counts among our welcome advertisers. Thirty years ago, our paper was already reserving space for "ACME-GOTH SERVICES". But the former British firm of ACME has been completely taken over by GOTH & Co. AG of Basle in 1966 and now forms part of a powerful transport and forwarding organisation with worldwide connections. GOTH & Co. is 100 years old this year.

In 1869, Julius Peter Goth and Ferdinand Niebergall, managers of the transport company of Gaudet Frères, purchased the firm from its former owners and set up the new firm of Niebergall & Goth, initially incorporated in Antwerp, and a few months later in Basle.

The Franco-Prussian war of 1870 didn't prevent the firm from starting off well and carrying out intensive business with British and American ports through its Antwerp branch. GOTH & Co. became the representatives of the American Red Star Line. The Basle branch prospered too and thrived on the exports of St. Gall embroideries to the U.S.A. It figured among the first 55 subscribers to the Basle telephone exchange in 1881.

The firm was taken over by the Goth family in 1910. Julius Peter Goth, the co-founder, handed over the responsibility of the firm and its destiny to his two sons, Ferdinand and Julius August Goth shortly before his death at the age of 70. Julius August took charge of the management of the Antwerp branch and his brother Ferdinand ran the business in Switzerland.

The First World War hit the firm badly. Part of its business was diverted from Antwerp to Bordeaux, but the Antwerp offices had to close down and the most important documents and ledgers had to be copied and sent to Switzerland and safety.

After four years of standstill, the firm gradually re-established its connections and the threads of its business. The war had been the beginning of a new era and the profound changes which it had brought about were particularly marked in the field of communications. Shipbuilding improved, railways extended their networks and road transports developed. GOTH & Co. knew how to make the best of these changes and expanded. New branches were opened in the main cities of Switzerland. Bonded warehouses were erected or enlarged in its Basle and Antwerp centres and GOTH became engaged in the transportation of motor vehicles.

On May 8th, 1939, the firm was converted into a limited company with a capital of 750,000 francs divided into 750 nominal shares of 1,000 francs each. Four months later the war broke out and the border was closed again. Part of the staff was mobilised and much of the business came to a stop. The watch trade continued to prosper however and this warranted the opening of a branch in La Chaux-de-Fonds. Another branch was opened at Chiasso during the war and ran very well. Trade filtered through Antwerp with difficulty and part of the overseas business had to be diverted via Lisbon.

But the company emerged practically intact from six years of war and was ready to start on a new lap of expansion. Julius Goth had died in 1941 and his brother Ferdinand, who was to die twenty years later, stepped back in favour of the third Goth generation. A grandson of the founder, Peter Goth, was appointed Vice-Chairman of the Board of Directors at the 1955 general meeting.

The GOTH concern has now become a five-pronged enterprise with a dense network of connections and affiliated companies on every continent. GOTH has eight branches in Switzerland and subsidiaries in Belgium, America and Great Britain. The latter is of course ACME. It has offices and facilities in the City, in the London docks, at London Airport, at Harwich and at Manchester. Present members of the Board are Mr. Peter Goth (Chairman), Mr. P. B. Haberstick (Life Director), Mr. G. H. Lyons and Mr. F. Augstburger.

GOTH's colourful centenary brochure gives a varied account of what forwarding actually involves. The nature of the work of a company like

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GOTH is basically to take the care and responsibility of a very wide range of goods from the moment they leave the hands of their consigner to the time when, a few thousand miles and national borders later, they are received by the consignees. Forwarders take charge of all the articles which Post Offices cannot usually accept. The work has two main aspects: the one is to act as a freight agent and the other is to be a carrier. In the first case, GOTH employees have to make use of their experience in such matters as issuing documents, handling despatch formalities, transshipment, warehousing, customs clearance, transit handling, shipping, chartering, groupage shipment, insurance and goods control. They take on the pyramid of paper-shuffling which the international transportation of costly goods entails and make sure that these goods take the best itineraries, the best timetables and the most advantageous routes. Their job is to secure the best deal for their customers at both ends and this often involves tight and exciting deadlines. GOTH's are also equipped for carriage and own special wagons for the transportation of motor cars, international trucks, bonded warehouses and safe storerooms.

Are forwarders really necessary? GOTH's certainly claim they are in their centenary brochure, which relates the story of an unfortunate and pretty missionary who returned from several years of life in the bush with her cases

and a pair of elephant tusks. Apparently ignoring the existence of forwarding companies, a member of her mission assisted her with shipping formalities on her arrival at Marseilles and entrusted all her belongings to the first trucker he could find, according to a rather unwarranted trust in the goodness of human nature. The trucker, who had no connection with Switzerland, carried her few hundred pounds of cases and her elephant tusks in his 8-ton capacity lorry! When this vehicle arrived at the Swiss border, the question of customs clearance arose. The missionary had already arrived at her home and some friends advised her to see GOTH's local office. They sent a customs declaration clerk to submit the list of articles contained in her baggage to the customs officer. But the elephant tusks, mentioned in the list, were nowhere to be found. This was only the first misfortune. The truck driver demanded to be paid cash down for the transportation of an 8-ton load before he would consent to have the goods unloaded. No money, no goods! The young missionary was understandably upset and sought the counsel of a Minister, a Communal Councillor and a vet. But none of these notabilities could assist her in her adversity. GOTH advised her to deposit the demanded money in a French court with a view to a later legal settlement. But the lawyer whom she finally resolved to consult felt too uncertain of the out-

come of the case to advise her to go ahead with it and incur the costs. Besides, the trucker was going to charge for all the time he had to wait!

From that day on, the Missionary Society made use of the services of a forwarding agent . . .

The conclusion is, that "do-it-yourself" can be a risky business in international forwarding. It is better to leave it in the hands of the experts. Those who work with GOTH are prepared to transport or forward every kind of goods anywhere—from electronic apparatus, liquors and lobsters to jewelry, tyres and 30-ton machines. This versatility is the result of a century of experience. It is also the saving grace of the job. There is indeed hardly any routine in forwarding and each job has its particular challenge—especially when something unforeseen and accidental crops up! The centenary booklet mentions a number of uncommon cases. How does one transport a 300-ton turbo-set in the South American jungles, or, how does one solve the quandary of a trucker trapped in the snows of the Gothard with a precious load of ladies shoes, for example? These are the kind of problems in which GOTH officers revel. Their only hope is that such problems will always recur occasionally and continue to try their skill and their experience.

(PMB)

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