

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: - (1970)
Heft: 1589

Artikel: My visit at the Clayton Aniline Company
Autor: [s.n.]
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-687128>

Nutzungsbedingungen

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. [Mehr erfahren](#)

Conditions d'utilisation

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. [En savoir plus](#)

Terms of use

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. [Find out more](#)

Download PDF: 13.12.2025

ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>

licity and said that he would like to see more being said about the Rifle Association's activities in the Swiss Observer. Another suggestion was to reintroduce the badges carried in the old days by range officers. He had a few of these badges with him and they were passed among the members.

Finally, Mr. Abegglen distributed the medal of the "Association Suisse des Carabiniers" to four proud recip-

ients: Messrs. Wetter, Magnin, Fischer and Bucherer.

Mr. Bucherer then declared the meeting officially closed and we proceeded on for dinner. It was a quiet old boys' party which lasted from about eight to ten. Wine was being downed slowly but steadily and we had plenty of conversation on shooting and the virtues of the Sturmgewehr.

(PMB)

produce their brand products but leave the marketing to them. Clayton Aniline has thus become solely a manufacturing plant responsible for the dyestuff production of three companies. It has no publicity and no marketing department and this is why the name is practically unknown".

I pointed out that the Ciba building across the road looked quite large and asked whether there was any production going on there.

"Ciba employs about two hundred people here", said Dr. Bolliger, "they are exclusively concerned with marketing and solving the particular problems of their customers, the dyers, and act as chemical consultants".

"How does this common ownership of one factory by three companies work out in practice? Aren't there some problems in co-ordination?" I asked.

"There were a few knots in the past. Nowadays there may be an occasional rub when one company is not content with its allocation of Clayton Aniline' production. The plant employs 1,200 workers, produces 10,000 tons of dyestuffs a year and 10,000 tons of various chemicals, some of which enter in the dyestuff-production process. This amounts to about ten tons of dyestuff per year per worker, which gives you an idea of our productivity. We are second in line after ICI, who produce roughly 18,000 tons of dyestuffs a year. There are about five other competitors well behind us. Much of our production is actually re-exported towards the parent company in Basle. This applies in general for what we can produce more cheaply in Great Britain than in Switzerland. This is also due to the acute shortage of labour in the home factories. As you know, Swiss employers have the right to a very restricted quota of foreign labour, with the result that their production is halted at a certain limit. This holds especially true of the big chemical companies, who are forced to expand through their outside subsidiaries. Our own production is in constant increase. Starting in 1952, we've accomplished a complete reconstruction and reorganisation of our plant and have spent over £10 million in capital expenditure".

"What about your research and development, is it linked with the work done in Basle?"

"We naturally work on Ciba processes but, as we have our own problems, we do quite a bit of independent development ourselves. I have a team of 60 chemists who are mainly concerned with applied problems like improving reaction yields".

"Are there any Swiss in your staff?"

"The scientific staff is British, apart from the occasional trainee".

"Are you difficult in the choice of your candidates?"

"We obviously try to get the best men. I'm always more happy to have men with doctorates. This isn't an absolute rule and we won't turn down a bril-

MY VISIT AT THE CLAYTON ANILINE COMPANY

Three weekends ago I made an enjoyable trip to Manchester in order to attend the Annual General Meeting of the Manchester Swiss Club. Mr. B. Simon, the President, very kindly arranged an interesting programme for me. I was invited by Dr. H. R. Bolliger, member of the Committee, to the modern production plant of the company of which he is research manager, the Clayton and Aniline Company, and the following day, I was shown around some of the Geigy plants in the Manchester area by Mr. Simon himself. This tour ended with a lunch at the home of Mr. Rolf Born, the Swiss Consul in Manchester.

The Vice-Consul, Mr. W. A. Zellweger, was at Manchester's Piccadilly Station to greet me. He put me in the care of the Clayton Aniline chauffeur, who drove the company's shiny Zephyr to the factory, some three miles out of town. This was my first trip to the Lancashire capital and, with the mist and the snow, the slums which girdle the central area and are in the course of demolition gave me a dismal first picture of the city.

As the main road reaches the Mancunian suburb of Clayton, there are two modern groups of buildings, those of Ciba on the left, and, on the right, the imposing complex of the Clayton Aniline Company. The car had hardly stopped in front of the administrative block when Dr. Bollinger, coming across the wet tarmac from another building, arrived on the dot to greet me and invite me to have lunch with him and the other managers of the company.

We climbed up a flight of stairs and entered the managerial dining-room. Dr. Bollinger's collaborators were already there drinking their aperitifs. Time for a quick Dubonnet and a short conversation of the virtues of soft water fish with the production manager and we sat down. All managers enjoy a comfortable dining-room—one of the consolations of their heavy responsibilities and hard work. At Clayton Aniline's they had the additional advantage of having a choice of three menus. There were also wines and cigars in plenty.

As Dr. Bolliger later explained to

me, the company is run on the Swiss model. All decisions are taken by a board of seven managers, three of them being Swiss, including the Managing Director, Mr. E. P. Banderet, who comes from Neuchatel and who sits on the common board of Clayton Aniline's controlling companies.

After a very pleasant meal flavoured with plenty of good humour, Dr. Bolliger invited me to his office for a briefing on the history and the activities of his Company.

"The chemical industry", he explained, "and by chemical, understand the dyestuffs industry, began when Sir William Perkin changed benzine into nitrobenzene and nitrobenzene into aniline, thus discovering the basic component of dyestuffs. That was around 1860. The first dyestuff factories sprouted up during the last third of the 19th century and a company called the Manchester Aniline Company got started here in Manchester. One of its employees, a Frenchman called Dreyfuss, got the sack for some reason and decided to move outside Manchester, to Clayton, and founded the present company. The Manchester Aniline Company failed. The Clayton Aniline Company fell on the brink of bankruptcy a couple of times, and got properly bankrupt in 1911, when Ciba intervened and salvaged it".

"Then came the first World War, the company switched over to war production. Britain was absolutely unprepared for the war and was buying German explosives on the eve of the fighting. At the end of the war, the British Government voted a bill that was intended to be temporary, but which in fact lasted for over thirty years, to protect the home chemical industry by forbidding the import of all chemicals already produced in the U.K. This of course made life difficult for the Swiss chemical industry, particularly for the two other large Basle-based companies, Geigy and Sandoz".

"The Clayton factory being an ideal way of penetrating the British market, the three firms Ciba, Geigy and Sandoz agreed to control it in common in the 1920s. Ciba held 50% of the shares, the two other firms 25% each. The Clayton Aniline Company was to

liant graduate. But in general, the DSc is a better performer due to the fact that in doing his doctorate, which is an exercise in independent research, he has learnt to stand on his own feet. The graduate leaves college crammed with knowledge which he has never had the chance of applying. There's no guarantee that his knowledge is working knowledge, and, what is more important, he has not had the chance of solving new problems by himself".

"How do you distinguish a good chemist from a less good one?"

"The good chemist is a man to whom I can entrust a problem. I'll tell him in which direction he should look just to get him started, and I expect him to come back to me within a practical lapse of time with the answer. If my initial indications proved wrong, then he should be able to discover this soon enough to find alternate ways by himself. The bad chemist tends to remain glued to the method given to him as a guideline and will come back to me continually when it doesn't work. He may drag on for months because he can't make the breakthrough. People like him involve much more supervision and take more of my time. The good man must show independence, know his way around the literature and know where to find what he is looking for".

"Do you manage to keep abreast of the tremendous developments in your particular field?"

"With great difficulty. I find that

I am having less and less time to concentrate on the pure problems of chemistry. I may have half an hour to look into the problem of one of my young chemists then the phone rings. Managerial status involves an exile from the laboratory. I sometimes dream of setting up a research laboratory with a small team of chemists and devoting myself once again to unadulterated chemistry!"

"I suppose that you have a complete library and a computer for information retrieval", I asked.

"We naturally have a chemical library but we don't use our powerful 304 computer for scientific storage. We use it for salaries and planning of production. This is a most difficult problem involving extremely complicated systems. We have systemised the production of one of our workshops and have analysts working full time to complete the optimisation of the whole plant.

"What is the nature of the problem?"

"Well, to get an idea of the complexities of the tasks we have to solve, you must remember that we produce thousands of different dyes and that this programme changes every day. Some dyes come recurrently into demand, some only appear very rarely. Each one of them has a particular series of components and is produced according to a specific process. There are then thousands of different processes, that is, thousands of different sets of operations

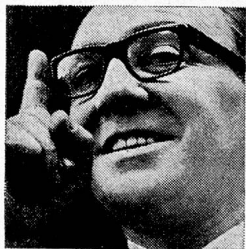
in time and space for a limited number of machines. The problem is how to share these machines so as to have a maximal production programme and know exactly which machines must be used, in which sequence, and to know how much primary product must be allotted to each one of them. In the old days, chemists had to do the job themselves by using thumb rules of their own. For example, they could establish a central process and align the whole production of the day on to it. This may have worked very well but it is not optimal. Whatever hunch and experience can do that the computer can't, they cannot find the optimal solution of such fantastically complex problems because this is beyond the speed and memory of any human brain".

We had been talking for an hour and Dr. Bolliger offered me a visit of the factory under the guidance of a senior member of his staff. He phoned to call him and, some ten minutes later, an elderly chemist, Dr. Eberhardt, appeared and kindly showed me around the main departments of the factory.

We had a look inside a huge chemical warehouse filled with palletised containers. We reached for other plants, walking under the overhanging pipeline which feeds the various parts of the 40-acre factory from a paraphernalia of silvery tanks in the factory-perimeter known as the "storage farm". We had a glance inside the *azo* plant, with huge reaction vessels, monstrous pipes, ven-



I've always had a straight answer from the Union Bank of Switzerland



UNION BANK OF SWITZERLAND

SCHWEIZERISCHE BANKGESELLSCHAFT
UNION DE BANQUES SUISSES
UNIONE DI BANCHE SVIZZERE

117 Old Broad Street, London, E. C. 2



**Swiss
Industries Fair Basle
11th-21st April 1970**



The most outstanding
show of Swiss quality
products. In 1970:
participation of the
groups machine tools
and electrical engineer-
ing. Information,
booklet, identity card
and catalogue obtainable
from Swiss Embassies,
Consulates and
Chambers of commerce

The Swiss Embassy, 77-81 Gloucester Place
London, W.1 Tel: 01-723 0701, Ext. 57

The Swiss Consulate, Sunley Buildings,
Piccadilly Plaza, Manchester 1. 061-236 2933

tilators, dryers and vast trolleys packed with coloured blocks of dyestuff of a powdery texture. My guide warned me not to handle them since this material would also dye my clothes! The noise in a modern chemical plant appeared to me to be very much smaller than that of a metal-working workshop. It was possible to speak without shouting. There were very few workers present and a chemical shopfloor seemed less densely populated than most other manufacturing floors. We walked through some of the less modern and amenable parts of the factory and thus had an idea of the progress of working conditions. Walking towards the mechanical workshop, we passed an incredibly high chimney. Dr. Eberhardt said that all the factory's fumes were forced up the chimneys by blowers and that its double shaft had a special slating from Germany which protected it from chemical attack. I pointed out that the view from up there must be beautiful.

"Dr. Bolliger has climbed up the chimney 15 years ago, when it was just built".

Dr. Eberhardt added that it wasn't possible to climb on to it any more, and I supposed that such a lofty structure was beyond the efforts of any steeple-jack.

(In the next issue, I shall be looking at the Geigy premises under the guidance of Mr. B. Simon, and report on the Manchester Swiss Club's AGM). (PMB)

EASTER

A message by Father Paul Bossard, chaplain of the Swiss Catholic Mission in Westminster

Asked about the Feast most valued by Christians, the majority of us would undoubtedly point out *Christmas*. The idea of God having entered into our world as a little helpless baby, cared for with tender love by a young couple living in poverty and with no more comfort to offer but their affection has always had a strong appeal on people of goodwill and certainly has a deep religious and human value. It has inspired artists all over the world and they have tried to reproduce the atmosphere of peace and tenderness which it conveys in countless works of art. Even the most materialistic civilisation would think twice before abolishing Christmas. It would not pay to do that, especially in our Western world.

Easter is different. It is not conveyed upon us with the same emotional impact and the pagan myths woven around this feast still dominate it considerably. Indeed, many Christians will first think of an Easter egg or a chocolate rabbit when the name of Easter is mentioned. This is not surprising, because the sweet and holy child of

Christmas has grown into a man, and a dangerous and troublesome man at that. People have often tried to cover him with a thick coating of sugar—but without lasting success. His provocative personality frustrates every attempt at softening him down and places us before the decision of being either for or against him. He stands for God, he is the truth and the cornerstone on which one can build a house or be dashed. He brings the sword that reveals and divides good from evil. And this is not very pleasant.

His public life was short. But by every action and every word he revealed the true situation of man in this world, his misery, his hypocrisy and his deep desire of redemption and forgiveness. He showed how God is and how he thinks about man: "Who sees me, sees the Father, who listens to me, listens to Him!" (John 14:7). Loved by few people, mostly by the poor, the despised and the sick, he was hated by the priests and theologians for spoiling their business at the temple (Jesus in the souvenir shop) and even more so for having questioned the relevance of their established religious teaching and their accepted standards of justice, order and morals. He was despised by politicians and men of finance because he not only refused to comply but openly opposed their interests and aspirations. Moreover, his influence went against their control over the masses. Wherever he talked he was spied upon, denounced, abused and slandered. He was finally imprisoned and tortured, stripped of everything he had and nailed to a cross, naked and debased, until he was dead, all in the name of God and the interest of religion. This is *Good Friday*, a day when the final victory of evil and wickedness seemed accomplished. God thrown out of human history by his own people!

For those who can identify themselves in any way with these people, there is really nothing to be proud about. And who can't? Let no one say: "Am I a Jew? What responsibility have I got for things that happened 2000 years ago?" It is the same Christ who replies: "Whatever you have done to your neighbour you have done to me!" (Mt. 25:41). So *Good Friday* is not past history. It should be read in the present tense because it concerns you and me. You will find it in the newspaper and in your own life. And the same applies to *Easter Sunday*.

It is God's answer to what happened on that fateful Friday. He never changes his mind and his love never turns into hatred or revenge. He gives us the resurrection of Christ, the final victory over evil and death, redemption and the new life. True, human goodness and whatever we consider positive in man have no merit in this gift. Neither can we even prove that the resurrection happened. There was an empty grave but this can, and has been, explained

away. The resurrection of Christ is entirely and absolutely a free act of God's love and we only have his Word for it. We can accept it in faith or reject it: it won't alter the facts, but it will change our lives.

Christ has risen and he continues to live in our midst. He invites us to take part in his Love, a love greater than any human love, and in his Life, a life richer and deeper than any life in this world. This is the new hope we have received. It cannot be wishful thinking because man neither wished it nor ever will. What he wishes is to redeem himself by his own means, but that he can't! This is certainly difficult to understand. It certainly doesn't appeal to our pride, nor does it satisfy our enquiring minds. It simply asks for a completely new appraisal of our most cherished values so that we may accept from HIM as a free gift, on pure faith, hope, life and love.

And this is the joy and peace of Easter. Perhaps we have not grasped this fully and that is why they are not widespread. "You men of little faith!" was a word Christ used several times in addressing his disciples. It is still valid for us.

At present our world is in a mess. In spite of our much-praised civilisation and achievements (we have even reached the moon) two thirds of the world's population live in misery and privation. A frightful demographic explosion threatens the balance of our resources and supply, and this at a time when the pollution of atmosphere, water and earth is becoming a real problem. There is a fast rising rate of violence and crime, a youth fascinated by drugs and rebellion and, above all, the well-founded fear of an impending world conflict bringing with it total destruction. We really live in a tempting situation for any prophet of doom!

And the Message of Easter is victory, joy and peace: "Do not fear, I am with you until the end of time!" A true Christian is not a dreamer believing in some kind of God or supreme being created by his imagination and philosophical conjecture. He is a realist who accepts the cross, evil, sin and death caused by evil and fights them as something bad, as a threat to human happiness. But he does not see the cross alone. God, as Christ risen from the dead is present for him as a living reality. He can therefore fight with hope and courage against crime, violence, hunger, sickness and even death. He can help to improve the human condition in research, technical development and social work because his faith in Christ gives him the conviction that God is on his side and that he is fighting to win a better world.

Do you wish to accept this message of joy? Be careful, it has consequences. Truth has its obligations and the disciple does not stand above his master!