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TECHNICAL ITEMS

CO-OPERATION BETWEEN SWISSAIR AND ROCO

Swissair and the Roco canning factory, at Rorschach (St. Gall-Switzerland) have decided to build a factory in the south of Ireland for the production of pre-cooked meals ready for consumption. The joint venture, established under the name of Swissco, has a share capital of one million Swiss francs, divided equally between the two partners. The factory will also produce canned goods for export, under the name of another affiliated company, Roco Foods Ltd., in which Swissair has no share. Swissco will specialise in the preparation of high quality pre-cooked meals ready for consumption for the catering services of international transport companies (planes, railways, boats). The production of these meals, packed in aluminium containers, will start next summer. Several airline companies have shown great interest in the idea.

A CHEMICAL PROCESS TO PREVENT THE FORMATION OF BLACK ICE

Some 620 feet high and situated at an altitude of 2,800 feet, "Europe Bridge", on the Brenner motorway in Austria, is the first big roadwork to be given a surface preventing the formation of black ice. This is, in fact, the first large-scale application of the invention of

a chemist at La Crois-sur-Lutry (Vaud, Switzerland) who has spent over ten years on experiments to discover the best composition for a road surface to prevent black ice from forming. He conceived the idea of adding to the top layer of tar various chemical mixtures of impregnated crystals with a thawing power. A chemico-dynamical process is started up as soon as a vehicle passes over a road provided with such a surface; under the effect of the friction and the pressure due to the weight of the vehicle, the thawing products come to the surface, thus preventing any formation of ice; small falls of snow are also melted as a result of the same reaction.

CONSUMER CREDIT IN SWITZERLAND

From a survey carried out by the Union Bank of Switzerland, it appears that while Switzerland holds the record for mortgage loans, it comes next to last among comparable industrial countries for consumer loans. At the end of 1973, consumer loans granted in Switzerland amounted to 266 francs per head of the population, compared with 2,610 francs in the United States, 940 francs in West Germany, 580 francs in Austria and 490 francs in Sweden. Only France comes after Switzerland, with a loan of 220 francs per inhabitant. This comparatively

low figure is the result of a fairly strong reluctance on the part of Swiss consumers with regard to hire purchase, as well as the loan restrictions and legal restraints to which hire purchase is subjected in Switzerland. It is estimated that specialised firms and the retail trade granted 1.7 billion francs' worth of loans in 1973 compared with 2.2 billion in 1972. At the end of 1973 therefore, consumer loans represented only 1.6% of the Swiss national revenue of 2.3% of private consumption. In other words, consumer loans play practically no role in Swiss political economy.

NOVELTY IN THE TRANSPORT OF LIQUIDS

A new drum for transporting and stocking liquids, in particular distilled products or fruit juices, has been produced by a firm at Muri (Aargau, Switzerland), specialising in the manufacturing of plastic packages. It is an unbreakable container in low pressure polyethylene, which — being perfectly stable — can be palletised and stored in piles; it can be printed on by means of stencils or provided with labels. For the transport of liquids, the new drum is provided with a sealed lid, which is replaced for emptying by a different lid with a tap; being only 12mm in external diameter, the tap can fit into the narrow-necked bottles in general use today. Thanks to a new technique, a solution has been found to the problem of emptying the tilted container, an



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operation that is usually quite difficult to carry out, owing to the fact that when the drum is almost empty, the pressure can only be compensated through the tap, which slows up the flow. That is why this drum has been fitted with a special valve compensating the pressure, fixed in the handle of the container. This method makes it possible therefore to fill bottles very easily and quickly with liquids stored in tanks.

WINTER SPORTS NEWS

Piz Lagalb — a ski-ing region fighting prejudices

The ski-ing region between Pontresina and Poschiavo on the Bernina Pass is still considered, quite wrongly, to have difficult slopes. The Paradiso Bianco, south of the Piz Lagalb, has been developed especially for the average and the less-competent skier. The recently-completed midway cable car station of Costas (8,200 ft) now opens up the possibility of ski-ing even in unfavourable weather conditions, and also means that the season can be extended until early July. Incidentally, the lowest-priced daily ticket in the Upper Engadine costs only Fr. 18, is valid for any one chairlift and three ski-lifts, and can be purchased in Paradiso Bianco. For all seven lifts the price is Fr. 25. The recently-introduced daily ticket for the Diavolezza and Lagalb cable cars and the Bügllet ski-lift costs Fr. 27 (children Fr. 18). Another new attraction this winter is a delta-wing flying school, where students can obtain a licence recognised by the Swiss Delta-Wing Federation. The winter health resort of Pontresina is also operating for the first time a school for cross-country ski-ing and ski-hiking. There's a 30-mile cross-country course and a 28-mile ski-hiking trail, with some sections lit up at night. From 6th to 27th April, Pontresina is offering ski-hiking and cross-country weeks costing from Fr. 220 (bed and breakfast included) to Fr. 458, and Diavolezza-Lagalb ski-ing weeks from Fr. 330 (bed and breakfast included) to Fr. 568.

Wining and Dining on the Jungfrauoch

After two years' construction work, there's a new glacier restaurant high up on the 11,133 ft. Jungfrauoch. The upper part of this "restaurant above the clouds" is self-service, can seat 150 people and can be reached directly from the cable car station. Its walls are hung with pictures devoted to the theme of aviation. The lower part of the restaurant can seat a further 140 people. The windows, facing south, offer visitors a unique panoramic view of mountains and glaciers. Nearing completion are viewing galleries at the cable car stations of Eismeer (10,040 ft) and Eigerwand (9,400 ft).

Spring Ski-ing in Switzerland

More and more people are trying to get away from the crowded ski slopes in their quest for a really peaceful contact with nature. On a high-altitude ski-tour in Switzerland's powdery and spring snow, for example. A number of Swiss mountaineering schools are organising ski-tour weeks right up until June. The all-in price — around Fr. 500. This usually includes accommodation in a hotel or mountain hut, half-board and the services of a guide. For example, the Gotthard Alpine School at Andermatt the Blinnenhorn and the Simplon Pass to Saas Fee. The Davos Mountaineering School is offering a very full programme of tours in Graubünden, Valais and in the Sântis region. The basic course for alpine ski-touring at Safiental-Piz Tomül (23–29.4) or in the Julier region (9–15.3) includes instruction in avalanche situations, knot-tying, general rope use, orientation and emergency bivouacking. Engelberg is known for its glacier-ski-ing down the Kleintitlis (from one to five people, by arrangement). Fiesch in the Goms region is offering until summer a selection of easy ski-tours for all classes of skiers, young and old. For absolute beginners, for example, there are one-week arrangements on the Simplon Pass (20–26.4 and 4–10.5) and in the Jungfrau region (27.4–3.5). A Ski-tour of the summits around Fiesch (18–24.5) will also appeal to more experienced skiers. Grindelwald's Mountaineering School is organising for the first time a weekend tour on the Sustenhorn (31.5–1.6), and is again offering its popular tours for average skiers in the Finsteraarhorn region and on the Bernese Oberland's highest peaks in April and May. The Mountaineering School at Silvretta-Klosters runs a variety of one-week tours — for old and young skiers in the Livignot (23.2–1.3) the "sun terrace" between the Valtellina, the Bernina Pass and Ofen Pass; for real lovers of solitude, in the Münstertal and the National Park (30.5–5.4); and for experienced skiers, in the Rheinwald (13–19.4). La Fouly in Canton Valais specialises in the Haute Route between Zermatt and Chamonix — unfortunately already too well-known — in April and May. And the Pontresina Mountaineering School is running ski-tour courses in the Diavolezza, Lagalb and Bernina Pass region (9–15.3 and 6–12.4).

Ranier Maria Rilke — 1975 Summer Celebrations

Siders (Canton Valais) this year celebrates the 100th anniversary of the birth of the poet Rainer Maria Rilke, who was buried in Raron. A programme of cultural events will be held from June until September, including open-air performances, concerts and a commemoration exhibition at the château de Villa. During the whole of 1975 Siders is offering visitors a one-week stay from Fr. 210, including bed-and-breakfast accommodation and excursions.

NEWS FROM THE COLONY

SWITZERLAND IN BRITAIN'S CULTURAL LIFE

19th February to 31st March — Tate Gallery, Mill Bank, London SW1 — *Henry Fuseli* (Johann Heinrich Füsseli) an exhibition of paintings and drawings, in conjunction with the Pro Helvetia Foundation, the Kunsthalle, Hambourg, and the Petit Palais, Paris.

Each Thursday, from 27th February to 27th March — Tate Gallery, 6.15 p.m. — Introductory lecture on *Henry Fuseli* by Laurence Bradbury.

Wednesday, 5th March — Queen Elizabeth Hall, SE1, 7.45 p.m. — *Anne Gallet* (harpsichord) is one of the soloists at a concert given by the Geraint Jones Orchestra (Bach).

Saturday, 8th March — Purcell Room, SE1, 7.30 p.m. — Harpsichord Recital by *Anne Gallet* (G. Pichi, B. Storace, J. Fischer, Bach, Couperin, Rameau).

Monday, 10th March — Queen Elizabeth Hall, SE1, 7.45 p.m. — *Tamas Vasary* (piano) and Sylvia Rosenberg (violin) play works by Beethoven, Bartok and Brahms.

Tuesday, 11th March — Wigmore Hall W1, 7.30 p.m. — *Alfred Knüsel* (cello) and Russell Lomas (piano) play works by Boccherini, Bloch. A. Hovhaness and Beethoven.

Wednesday, 19th March — Queen Elizabeth Hall, SE1, 7.45 p.m. — *Heinz Holliger* (oboe) plays the Oboe Concerto by Strauss with the Bournemouth Sinfonietta under Kenneth Montgomery.

Wednesday, 19th March — Cockpit Theatre, Gateford Street, London NW8, (box office: Tel: 402-5081), 7.30 p.m. — The Dreamtiger ensemble, conducted by Douglas Young, plays contemporary Swiss music by *Klaus Huber*, *Eric Gaudibert*, *Martin Derungs*, *Ulrich Gasser*, *Heinz Marti*, *Jean Derbès*.

Thursday, 20th March — Cockpit Theatre, London NW8, 7.30 p.m. — The Dreamtiger ensemble plays contemporary Swiss music by *Frank Martin*, *Arthur Honegger*, *Jacques Guyonnet*, *Eric Gaudibert*, *Roland Moser*, *Klaus Huber*.

Wednesday, 26th March — Wigmore Hall W1, 7.30 p.m. — Piano Recital by *Kristina Steinegger* (Bach, Busoni, Mozart, Beethoven, Bartok, Chopin).

Friday, 4th April — Sheffield City Hall, 7.30 p.m. — Saturday, 5th April — Town Hall, Leeds, 7.30 p.m. — Sunday,