

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: - (1976)

Heft: 1715

Rubrik: Swiss events

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: 16.02.2026

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

SINCE WHEN HAS THE SWISS ARMY BEEN LIKE THIS!

A SOLDIER STARTS PROCEEDINGS AGAINST A BRIGADIER

The Swiss authorities are not sure whether to consider the case as a joke or as a legal precedent: an Air Force recruit has appealed to the Federal Council to demote the Military Auditor, Brigadier Ernst Lohner, and provisionally appoint a new one while his appeal to the Human Rights Commission in Strasburg is pending.

The young man was obviously prepared to go to great lengths to have a five-day detention awarded him by his commanding officer — and confirmed by the Military Auditor — quashed. With the backing of the “Basle Soldiers’ Committee”, he contends that Brigadier Lohner had violated the provisions of the Human Rights Convention by confirming the disciplinary measure that had been ordered against him. During a Press conference, the Soldiers’ Committee said that a similar case, in Holland, had already been presented to the Human Rights Commission.

In the present case, the soldier concerned hopes that his appeal to Strasburg will have a delaying effect on legal proceedings in Switzerland. The Soldiers’ Committee asked the Government to fill a legal gap, allegedly applying to Brigadier Lohner’s case, because there are no laws dealing with the case where the Military Auditor commits an offence covered by military regulations only.

The attitude shown by this recruit is likely to have concerned Army Corps Commander Gérard Lattion, Chief of Military Instruction, who in a recent speech to the Officers’ Society in Zürich said that the Swiss Army should resemble industry and rely for its success on hard work and quality.

Colonel Lattion said that military training was being neglected in Switzerland and remarked that only ten per cent of the Defence Budget was allocated to it against 27 per cent for the purchase of arms and equipment and 64 per cent for running expenses (salaries, maintenance, rations, etc.).

“There are no instances where an army without a good level of training and an indomitable will to win has been victorious”, he said. “But there are also examples to show that ultra-modern weapons do not necessarily entail victory”.

Colonel Lattion expressed concern

for the lack of military instructors at present. He said that their number should rise by three per cent every year to meet the Army’s requirements. As to the efficiency of training, he said that little could be expected of yearly Repetition Courses. It was at the Recruit Schools concerned with basic training that the onus of military instruction had to be placed.

The colonel said that the “Army was on the right track” and stressed that the political and institutional conditions prevailing in Switzerland precluded any sudden and radical change in the Army’s methods and viewpoint. Change had necessarily to be gradual in order to be smoothly integrated. He said that it was most important to bring military exercises “closer to reality”.

AND SOME MORE CONTROVERSY

In another development, one of Switzerland’s foremost military thinkers, Colonel Henchoz, has stirred up the controversy over the purchase of 72 “Tiger” ground-attack fighters made by Northrop, a purchase which has already been ratified by the Council of States. During a Press Conference in Lausanne, he claimed that the performance of this aircraft lay at the lower end of the range of performances of Warsaw Pact combat aircraft. He made no alternative proposals but it was apparent from his exposé that he favoured the far more costly and sophisticated F-16 American fighter, which was chosen last year by four NATO countries as the winner against a French plane of the “Contract of the Century”.

Military Department officials reacted angrily to the Colonel’s claim and convened a Press conference to reassert the arguments that had led to the choice of the “Tiger” in the first place — namely, its high manoeuvrability, high rate of ascent, low cost and efficient ground support performance. After about five years of hesitation, the Government finally decided not to buy the American “Corsair” two years ago. That fighter had, during the short-listing process, been preferred to the French Mirage as a replacement to the Air Force’s British Vampires and Venoms.

SWISS EVENTS

Cableway stranded in the Alps — again

Thirty-two people were stranded for over nine hours inside the cabin of the Felskinn cableway 200 metres above Saas Fee. The cabin had just passed the first pylon when strong winds blowing at 60 mph automatically caused the installations to stop.

Wind did not help

The strength of the wind prevented efforts to bring the cabin down and the occupants, most of them Swiss, German and French skiers and cableway employees, were left bobbing up and down 30 metres above the ground from 4.30 p.m. to well past 2 a.m. the next day.

As the cabin can carry a hundred people, conditions were not too cramped. No one gave way to panic. Quite the contrary, skiers began having a sing-song, cheered by the news heard on the cabin’s radio that rescuers were on the way.

One man was killed in an avalanche during the rescue operation. He was one of two local men approaching the pylon supporting the stationary cabin when a slab of snow got unstuck from the slope. This triggered an avalanche in which both men were carried away. Rescuers who were immediately on the spot managed to find one alive, but injured. When they discovered the second man, Mr. Franz Gisler, 23, he was already dead.

The same cableway had seen a near disaster in April of last year when the hauling cable snapped. This incident had moved the Federal Transport Authorities to enforce stricter safety regulations on cableways. 444.2 million people have used this mode of ascent in Switzerland from 1966 to 1974.

Figures such as these show how important cableways have become and how necessary it is to make them as safe as possible. Statistics indicate that they are slightly more dangerous than trains: for 100 million passengers using either means of transport, 29 are killed or injured in cableway accidents and 25.9 in railway accidents.

No 40 hour week—for the moment

The Government has asked Parliament to reject an Initiative by the "Swiss Progressist Organisations" calling for the general introduction of the 40-hour week.

In a Message to Parliament, it claimed that an enforced measure of this kind would hurt national prosperity and further diminish the competitiveness of Swiss products abroad. It further claimed that an abrupt introduction of the 40-hour week everywhere would reduce the average national working week by 13 per cent, tantamount to depriving Switzerland's economy of 300,000 workers. It agreed that, providing the National Product continued to increase at a fair rate, it would be conceivable to gradually reduce the working week.

Considering that the average working week was 90 to 96 hours in the 1820s, on the advent of the industrial revolution, Swiss workers are entitled to some satisfaction at their lot, even though the average week is still longer than in most other countries.

It is at present 44 hours in industry and 47 hours in housing. In the late fifties, the average week was 47.5 and 50 hours. It should be noted that overtime is virtually unknown in Swiss industry so that Swiss workers probably work fewer hours than their British counterparts.

SWISS PAPER "BORN" IN LONDON CELEBRATES!

One of Switzerland's leading dailies, *Der Bund* of Berne, has marked its 125th anniversary with a facsimile copy of its very first issue — and a reminder to its readers that the idea for the newspaper grew out of a meeting in London in 1847, writes Colin Farmer from Berne.

That year, recalls *Der Bund*, a young Swiss working in London invited a group of compatriots to his Regent Street home to discuss the launching of a national newspaper in Switzerland.

One of the group — a certain Andreas Rudolf von Planta — later returned to Berne to become a Swiss member of parliament and, with support from some other parliamentarians, helped to launch *Der Bund*.

UNEMPLOYMENT IS STILL INCREASING

There were 26,000 registered unemployed in Switzerland in mid-January. Although this figure represents hardly one per cent of the working population, or six times less in relative terms than in Britain, it was enough to give serious cause for concern to the authorities and private industry.

Compared with the 50-odd unemployed registered less than two years ago, the increase is truly dramatic. But these figures hide the great number of workers actually on short-time. Industry is actually running at only three-quarters capacity and managements consider that they are still keeping too many people on their payrolls.

The rate of unemployment is still increasing. It was rising by 20 per cent a year last November. Now this rate of increase is about 30 per cent. Total employment diminished by eight per cent in Switzerland last year and by 11 per

cent in industry alone. The Gross National Product has fallen by four per cent, a figure which reflects the decline of the average standard of living during the year.

Despite this, the Swiss franc is as strong as ever and had reached an equal parity with the German Mark by mid-January. Both currencies were being exchanged at the rate of 5.22 to the pound sterling.

In view of the employment situation, there was much talk of increasing public expenditure by launching various job-creating projects. But this could not, of course, be reconciled with the Government's determination to balance its budget and keep inflation down.

After launching two plans to boost the economy last year, the Federal Council has just announced a third plan providing for an extra 480 million francs of federal expenditure this year.

SIT-IN AT BULOVA WATCH FACTORY

A hundred and sixty workers at the Bulova watch factory in Neuchâtel staged a ten-day sit-in in the factory to counter management's decision to move all production to another Bulova factory in Biel.

The workers voted to return to work after management had promised to review the situation and postpone all plans to move production to Biel until the end of next year.

The 600 workers at the Biel factory had voted to ask their Neuchâtel colleagues to return to work, fearing for the danger to their jobs caused by the sit-in. But the union of watch industry workers backed the sit-in because management had, it claimed, acted unilaterally and in breach of a recent labour contract.

The demonstrators had also seized stocks of watches worth 20 million francs.

Bulova is an American company with 8,000 workers in 20 factories. Its turnover last year was about 230 million

dollars. Its operations in Switzerland have faced considerable difficulties with the recession and the high value of the Swiss franc which has made Swiss-made watches less competitive abroad. Bulova dismissed 250 workers last year.

SPEED LIMITS ARE MAINTAINED

The Government has decided to maintain for another year the experimental speed limits of 100 kmh on ordinary roads and 130 kmh on motorways imposed in 1974. These limits were originally to be lifted at the end of this year. They will be prolonged for another year and the people will eventually be called upon to decide whether they should become permanent.

SWISS FIRMS ARE THE SECOND MOST IMPORTANT FOREIGN EMPLOYERS IN FRANCE

A French Government survey showed that firms controlled entirely or partly by Swiss companies employed 116,000 people, thus making Swiss capital the second most important foreign employer in France. American firms came first, employing 315,000 people. Switzerland was followed by Belgium (81,000), Italy (77,000), Germany (74,000), Holland (72,000) and Britain (69,000).

Swiss consumption of cheese still rising

Switzerland's total cheese production for 1974/75 can be put at over 99,000 tonnes, i.e. 2.5% more than for the period 1973/74. Skim-milk cheese and semi-cream cheese, which are only produced in small quantities, showed an increase of 19.1% over the figures for 1972/73. Continuing the trend already noted, the output of soft cheese (+5.3%), as well as Appenzel (+5.4%) and Tilsit (+6.6%), is also rising, while the results for the types of cheese produced by the Swiss Cheese Union, Inc., located at Bern — which once again form the bulk of cheese production — have been somewhat more limited owing to export difficulties and problems with regard to quality. During the last period, 53,690 tonnes of Emmenthal (+2.4%), 18,826 tonnes of Gruyère (+0.4%) and 4,237 tonnes of Sbrinz (-0.3%) were produced.

This represents a total of 76,752

tonnes, compared with 75,364 tonnes the previous year (+1.8%). For 1974, dairy statistics show a new record for the overall consumption of cheese in Switzerland, amounting to 72,400 tonnes (approx. 70,000 in 1973).

Calculated on the basis of a practically unchanged resident population, this gives a mean consumption of 11 kg (24 lb) of cheese per head of the population compared with 10.7 kg the previous year. The part played by imported cheeses in this evolution was larger than that of home production, which fell to 71% of the total consumption. These decreases apply above all to Emmenthal whose share dropped from 12.9% to 11.6%, and Sbrinz (2.7 to 1.7%), while almost all other home produced cheeses have kept their positions.

Children's toboggan excursion

In Davos, the famed winter sports resort in the Grisons, a quaint old local custom has been revived in recent years. It is the children's toboggan excursion, an exciting event for the local boys and girls of the lower school grades. Every toboggan, fitted with a sort of chest-like soap-box body for the occasion and decorated with hoops of greens and home-made paper roses, is mounted by a happy young couple in national costume or just their colourful ski attire topped by a herdsman's blouse.

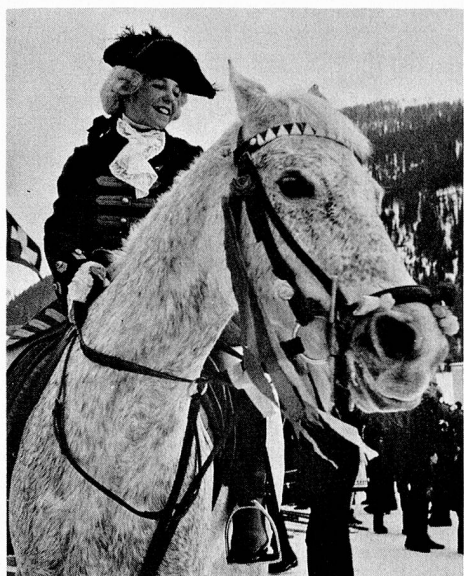
The toboggan is drawn by an older boy wearing a harness with jingling bells

like a real horse. The parade of some 50 such vehicles is led by one or two heralds on horse-back. There must be music, of course, and a popular dance band rides along, providing entertainment for the participants and onlookers.

Starting in the morning, the parade goes through the main streets of the resort and in the afternoon reaches its climax in Davos-Dorf where the children are offered their four o'clock chocolate with whipped cream and sandwiches, and make their first bashful or wild attempts at dancing.



This garlanded sledge is all part of the fun for the children.



The parade is led by one of the "heralds" on horseback.



Chocolate with whipped cream and sandwiches give the happy day an ideal ending — and how many children would refuse a feast like that?

The woman
who wears
an Omega
knows she owns
the ultimate
in watch design

Ω OMEGA

67-74 Saffron Hill,
London, EC1N 8RS



Serious charges against Nestlé

Nestlé, the Swiss food giant, has sued a group of people concerned with the welfare of the Third World for libel. The "Groupe de Travail Tiers Monde" had accused Nestlé of making vast profits on its sales of baby foods in developing countries. The Group had in particular accused the Swiss firm of indulging in unorthodox high pressure advertising practices to get mothers in Africa and Asia to buy their milk powder.

Charges by the Group were partly based on the "War on Want" report by the British journalist Mike Miller. This report was considered by Nestlé as highlighting real nutritional problems in the Third World despite its allegedly biased and unfair approach.

But the English version of the book contained no direct defamatory statement against Nestlé, which is the most important food products company operating in developing countries.

"We are not responsible for the misery and the illiteracy of developing countries", said Dr. Muller, head of Nestlé's dietetic research department during a Press conference following an adjournment of the trial which was opened at the end of last year in Berne.

"With our products, we are in a position to maintain thousands of children in good health. But it is not in our power to teach large sections of the population to read and write. Neither can we radically alter the standards of life of thousands of people. What we can do, both to inform and to advise mothers, we have been doing for decades", he added.

Tourist director is appointed editor

Tourist director Heinz Ramstein, 38, has been appointed editor-in-chief of the *Berner Tagblatt*, one of Switzerland's biggest-selling dailies.

Mr. Ramstein was a parliamentary and economics correspondent with the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* and later press and P.R. director with the Swiss Bank Corporation in Zurich, before becoming director of tourism at the Swiss alpine resort of Arosa in 1970.

CHANGES OF STRUCTURE IN SWISS INDUSTRY

Between 1966 and 1974, the number of workers employed in Swiss industry dropped 9%, falling from 882,000 to 805,000. During this period, the number of industrial firms defined as such under the terms of the law on labour fell by nearly 23%, dropping from 13,360 to 10,351; the average number of employees per firm, on the contrary, increased from 66 to 79.

The evolution of employment underwent some very large changes, depending on the economic sector. Thus, during the period under consideration, virtually only the chemical, synthetic products and beverages sectors showed any increase in the number of their employees.

In metallurgy and the machinery industry, the falling off in employment remained below the general average. On the other hand, the drop exceeded this average considerably in the textile, clothing, tobacco and timber industries in particular.

SWISS INVESTMENT ABROAD

Direct investments made by the Swiss economy abroad are approximately six times as large as those of foreign concerns in Switzerland. According to the latest estimates issued by the Union Bank of Switzerland concerning the amounts of foreign capital in Switzerland, Swiss direct investments abroad amounted to 50.7 billion francs in 1974, whereas

direct foreign investments in Switzerland barely exceeded 8.5 billion francs. The balance of direct investments therefore shows a sum of 42.2 billion francs in Switzerland's favour.

SWISS GLASSWORKS FOR IRAN

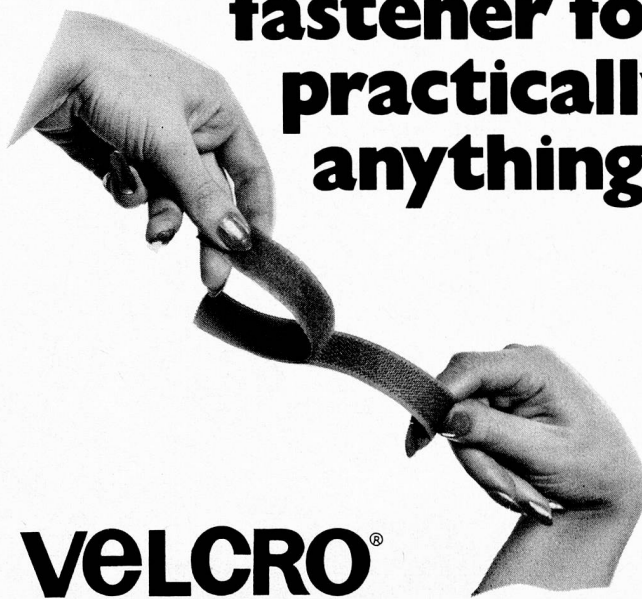
Two Swiss firms, Electrowatt Engineering Consultants Co. Ltd. and Vetropack Co. Ltd. at Bülach, have been commissioned by the Iranian "Industrial Credit Bank" to build a glass bottle factory at Hamada, about 150 miles from Teheran. This order, won in the face of keen international competition, comprises not only the actual construction of the factory, but also the training of the local management staff and technical personnel as well as long-term counselling in the field of glass technology.

SWISS ENGINEERING FOR SAUDI ARABIA

"Holderbank" Management and Consultants Co. Ltd. has once again been commissioned to carry out engineering work in Saudi Arabia, where it has been working since 1967. The project involves prospecting for raw materials, making a feasibility study as well as the complete planning and supervision of the construction of a new cement works in the east of Saudi Arabia.

The factory is scheduled to have an output of some 700,000 to 1,000,000 tonnes of cement a year and will be the joint responsibility of the Saudi Cement Company and the government in Bahrain.

**the practical
fastener for
practically
anything..**



VELCRO®

TOUCH & CLOSE FASTENER

Sole U.K. Manufacturer,
Selectus Limited, Biddulph, Stoke-on-Trent.
Telephone: Stoke-on-Trent 513316 (0782).

SWISS TIMING AT 1976 WINTER OLYMPICS

The organisers of the Innsbruck Games entrusted the timing of the 12th Winter Olympics to Swiss Timing. This operation involved a heavy deployment of staff and equipment. It is worth remembering that while the times of all events were officially recorded to the nearest 1/100th of a sec., they were in fact recorded to the nearest 1/1000th of a second.

At Innsbruck, 50 professional timekeepers, from the Swiss firms of Omega and Longines, fully trained in the techniques of electronics and aware of the finer points of all sports, shared the work at the various places of competition; the timing equipment required (not counting the indicator boards) weighed 12 tons and was worth in the neighbourhood of Sw.Fr. 4 million.

Even before the creation of Swiss

Timing, the two Swiss watch firms, Longines and Omega, were responsible between them for timing the 1964 Winter Olympics at Innsbruck. This earlier experience was certainly useful in 1976, although work methods have developed considerably since then. The systematic use of electronic processes, the need for rapid processing and broadcasting of certain data direct over the television have changed the conditions under which the timing of the 1976 Winter Olympics were carried out.

Swiss Timing and the firms of Omega and Longines have been preparing themselves for the task by timing a large number of sports events during the last few winters: World Cup Skiing Championships, World Championships or international events in the fields of bob, toboggan and speed skating.

SUCCESS FOR CIBA-GEIGY

The jury of the *Swiss Packaging Competition* 1975 awarded prizes to a series of 25 veterinary products manufactured by Ciba-Geigy. The jury pointed out in particular that the packagings of these products are easily legible even in poor lighting conditions (in a stable for instance) and their clear graphic conception enables them to be rapidly identified during use.

ZURICH

Financially-troubled newspapers in Britain and other Western European countries should themselves take the initiative over the question of government subsidies, says Mr. Peter Galliner, new director of the International Press Institute.

Mr. Galliner said the question of government subsidies for newspapers in economic difficulties was one of the top priorities currently occupying the IPI.

He told a Swiss Broadcasting Corporation interviewer: "I think newspapers themselves should take the initiative and come out with suggestions to their governments, so that they are not then surprised by any new legislation that might be introduced."

Mr. Galliner said the IPI's interest in government subsidies for newspapers did not mean it was paying less attention to the problem of press freedom.

"If there are no subsidies many papers may die — and that itself will endanger press freedom," he said.

The IPI groups publishers and editors in more than 60 countries.

200 SWISS COLOURS FOR FRENCH CARPET

The Gobelin Works in Paris recently finished a square carpet measuring over 42 m² (450 sq. ft.) with a design entitled "Colour Explosion". Six specialists worked for two years to weave the 2,661,980 tufts of wool, knotted by the "weft tying" technique with a linen thread according to Gobelin's own special process.

In order to reproduce faithfully the cartoons of the painter Agam, the creator of the design, no less than 200 different colours were required; these were achieved by the Gobelin Works with Ciba-Geigy dyes.

The Swiss chemical firm also supplied the permanent mothproofing product used to impregnate this carpet, which was originally intended for the antechamber of the private apartments of the previous French President in the Elysée.

GREAT ST. BERNARD TUNNEL

In spite of certain unfavourable factors (stagnation of tourism, high rate of the Swiss franc), traffic through the Great St. Bernard Italian-Swiss road tunnel in 1975 reached the record figure of 530,760 vehicles compared with 468,463 in 1974; the increase in traffic thus amounted to 13.3%.

During its first complete year of service, the number of vehicles passing through totalled 306,991. Last year, commercial traffic represented 10.29% of the total. Swiss and Italian motorists were the biggest users of the Great St. Bernard Tunnel, followed by those of Germany, France, the Benelux and Great Britain.

SWISS FAIRS GAINING IN IMPORTANCE

International fairs and exhibitions staged in Switzerland are gaining increasing importance and prestige, claims a report just issued by the Swiss Office for the Development of Trade.

The reason, says the Lausanne-based Office, can be attributed to Switzerland's ideal location in the heart of Europe and its "long-standing tradition of liberalism and openness to international trade."

"This has given Switzerland the privileged reputation of a test market for the whole of Europe, with regard to both consumer products and investment goods."

FAIRS AND EXHIBITIONS IN SWITZERLAND DURING THE FIRST QUARTER OF 1976

Situated in the heart of Europe, at the intersection of the most varied cultures, Switzerland is connected to the whole world by a large number of different means of communication. This ideal position, plus its long-standing tradition of liberalism and openness to international trade, has given Switzerland the privileged reputation of a "test market" for the whole of Europe, with regard to both consumer products and investment goods.

It is not surprising therefore that Swiss fairs have gained increasingly in importance and prestige, both on the European and world levels. Among events of international interest announced for the first three months of 1976, let us mention the following:

- 25th February — 4th March — Basle: IFM 76 — International Fair for Mechanical Handling.
- 28th February — 7th March — Lausanne: International Exhibition for Vacationing.
- 7th — 8th March — Zürich: International Shoe Sample Exhibition.
- 11th — 21st March — Geneva: International Motor Show — PASSENGER CARS.
- 13th — 21st March — Zürich: Swiss Boat Show.
- 14th — 17th March — Lausanne: SERATEX — Week for Purchase of Textiles.
- 25th March — 4th April — Basle: Art and Antiques Fair of Switzerland.
- 23rd — 27th March — Basle: DIDACTA/EURODIDAC — European Educational Materials Exhibition.
- 27th March — 4th April — Lausanne: Furniture Exhibition with competition for "Swiss Creators".
- 28th — 31st March — Zürich: Swiss Buyers Week for Winter Sporting Goods.