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Autor: M.M.
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FINE PORCELAIN FROM LANGENTHAL

Every Swiss who hears the name of Langenthal mentioned, immediately thinks of porcelain. Indeed, this is what has made it famous the world over. The *Porzellanfabrik Langenthal* was founded in 1906 and is the only Swiss manufacturing concern producing porcelain. It enjoys international reputation.

Asia is the cradle of porcelain. In Chinese tombs dating back 3,000 years, one has found pottery, the forerunner of porcelain, and the Chinese probably already manufactured porcelain 2,000 years ago. In 851, Suleiman, a Persian merchant who travelled with caravans, wrote that the Chinese possessed a kind of clay with which they made drinking vessels as fine and transparent as glass.

The first discoveries of porcelain were made in the ruins of Samarra near Baghdad in 883. It was made with kaolin, a fine white clay produced by decomposition of feldspar (mineral). This is indispensable in the production of porcelain.

It would go too far to talk about the great part porcelain played in Chinese culture and civilisation in the various dynasties. For centuries, the principal place of manufacture of porcelain was in King-tê Tschen, 400 miles from Canton. It was Marco Polo who, in 1296, told the Western World about it. In the 14th and 15th centuries, the first pieces arrived from China, and from Constantinople they were transported to Venice and the rest of Europe. Vasco da Gama's discovery of the sea route to India encouraged export of porcelain, and it became fashionable in European countries. Fortunes were paid for rare pieces, and many tried to find the secret. It was not until 1676 that a theologian of Milan succeeded in producing porcelain, but unfortunately, he carried his secret to the grave.

In 1709, Johann Friedrich Boettger, "*faiseur d'or*" at the Court of August the Strong at Meissen, discovered the formula for white porcelain. And a year later, the first manufacturing plant of porcelain in Europe was opened at Meissen. The first porcelain painter was Johann Gregor Hoerolt. Although the secret was guarded jealously, it leaked out in Vienna, and in 1747, the porcelain factory at Nymphenburg was opened, followed by that at Vincennes in 1740 and the one at Sèvres in 1753, both in France.

Other porcelain factories were established in the 18th century in the following order: Vienna, Capo-di-Monte, Chelsea, St. Petersburg,

Hochst, Frankenthal, Buen Retiro, Berlin, Schooren (Zürich), Copenhagen and Nyon (Vaud). Both old Zürich and old Nyon porcelain are very precious now, and after Switzerland had had to import porcelain for a long time, the Langenthal manufacturing concern was founded and has become one of the great producers in the world.

The manufacturing of Langenthal ware may be put into three categories, table and household porcelain, hotel and catering ware, and finally porcelain used in industry, such as high-tension isolators.

Many of the international airlines use Langenthal crockery, and it may be found in hotels a very long way from Langenthal, Canton Berne! But it is the table and household porcelain

which is best known, and some of the hand-painted dinner or coffee sets are exquisite. When the Federal Council entertain prominent visitors at the De Wattenwyl House in Berne, a most beautiful Langenthal dinner set is used.

We are very fortunate that we are now able to purchase Langenthal porcelain in England and at most favourable prices. No doubt Swiss firms will be pleased to have attractive crockery for their canteens and their board dining rooms. And hand-painted and other coffee cups make excellent presents to Swiss as well as British friends: Cups with Swiss national costumes or views of Swiss towns 'or country scenes' or even with historical uniforms.

M.M.



No wonder these kids look happy — they are arriving in Switzerland for a holiday organised by PRO JUVENTUTE. On behalf of the Foundation for Young Swiss Abroad and of Pro Juventute the Holiday Organization for Swiss Children Living Abroad will be organizing a holiday scheme again for next summer. Those eligible are children of Swiss nationality and children of foreign nationality whose mother is a Swiss national by descent. The age limit is 7—15 years. The kids will stay either in Swiss families, in our camps (from 13 years on) or in children's homes (7—10 year olds). Further information can be obtained from Swiss Embassies and Consulates, to whom completed registration forms have to be returned by March 1979. No child will be prevented from participation in the holiday scheme for financial reasons. Depending on the income of the parents we can bear the costs partially or entirely.