

# Catastrophe in the Ticino

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baech, an enquiry was made some time ago trying to find out if the woman wanted the vote — the answer was in the affirmative, which was a surprise to many who consider the Upper Valais as somewhat reactionary.

On the occasion of the 150th anniversary of the Canton's entry into the Confederation, a partial amnesty is being granted to all prisoners. The "Walliser Bote" is 125 years old, the oldest of all the papers in the Valais, followed by the "Le Confédéré" of 105 years.

The town of **Brig** was 750 years old last summer, and special festivities took place. A month later, another Matthaeus Schiner was born, the latest descendant of the famous statesman and Cardinal who lived five centuries ago. At **Chamoson**, a home for old people is being built at the initiative of private people, but the Canton has granted a subsidy. The citizens of **Fully** had to go to the poll again; some irregularities had been discovered after the elections in the previous year. The decision was made by the Federal Tribunal.

**Leuk** celebrated its 1,450th anniversary in December, and at **Leytron**, the old elm (500-700 years of age) was cut down in October, believed to be the oldest tree in Switzerland. At **Raron**, a group has been founded under the patronage of Federal Councillor Tschudi with the aim of conserving the castle. **St. Maurice**, too, can look back on 1,450 years, its Abbey was founded by King Sigismund of the Burgundians, though a church had been there since about 360 A.D. when the Bishop of Octodurum had it built at the grave of St. Mauritius.

**Sion** is to have a new stadium, and a large milk collection centre was opened in November. The Cantonal Parliament has agreed to make a contribution toward road construction in the **Zermatt** Valley. Zermatt has its problems regarding the finances of the annual international Gornegrat Ski Derby.

## GENEVA

The budget for 1966 of the Canton of Geneva estimates a loss of  $\frac{1}{2}$  million francs, revenue expected of 411 mio. The new Council of State consists of two Socialists (André Chavanne and Willy Donze), two Independent/Christian/Socialists (André Ruffieux and Jean Babel), two Radicals (Henri Schmitt and Gilbert Duboule) and one Liberal (François Peyrot). Messrs. Chavanne, Ruffieux and Peyrot have been re-elected. In the Cantonal Parliament, there are now 17 Indep./Chr./Socialists (-4), 22 Radicals (-5), 15 Liberals (-5), 20 Socialists (+2), 16 Workers' Party (+2), 10 "Vigilants" (new). The Liberal Louis Berguer was elected President in succession to the first woman President of a Cantonal Parliament Madame Emma Kammacher.

In 1965, 6,400 dwellings were built in the Canton of Geneva, as against 4,500 in 1964. Over the next few years, plans for public works are to cost over 116 million francs. Geneva students protested in November against lack of suitable rooms and amenities; they will be pleased to learn that the authorities are considering the matter. The newly created Schmidheiny Foundation will support scientific work and finance research activities of the various faculties.

"Geneva, Crossroads of the Nations" is the title of the latest in the "Swiss Cities and Landscapes" picture-book series published by *Éditions Générales* in Geneva. This is certainly true, and the Cointrin Airport is being enlarged again; this time it is a new building for the technical

services. Nearly a million and a half used the Airport in 1965. The Foundation in charge of buildings for international organisations has allocated the 45 million francs received from the Federal Parliament to two new buildings, one for EFTA, the other for conference halls and a Press Centre. In December, celebrations took place when the United Nations Organisation reached its twentieth anniversary. New buildings have also been opened by the *Société des Ports Francs et Entrepôts de Genève S.A.*

*Radio Genève* celebrated its fortieth anniversary, and the "Messenger Social" its Golden Jubilee. The wine harvest, at 12,011,000 litres, showed an increase of 20% over the previous year.

The Commune Council of the town of Geneva decided to build blocks of flats with subterranean garages in Servette at the cost of 17.7 million francs. In October, the Rotary Club was forty years old, and the same week, the *Beau Séjour Hospital* was opened. The *Temple de la Fustérie* celebrated its 250th anniversary, and at the same time, Hungarian Weeks were held in Geneva. In November, the new organ of the Cathedral was inaugurated, and the Henry Dunant Institute was founded following the decision taken by the three main Red Cross institutions on the occasion of the centenary of the Red Cross. In December, the Hotel Beau Rivage was auctioned for over 14 million francs.

In February, "Motorola Semiconductor Products Inc." opened the European Centre for Customer Service. Early in March, the first international congress devoted to the science of manufacturing matter was opened, and Polish Gastronomic Weeks were held in Geneva.

(Based on news received by courtesy of Agence Télégraphique Suisse.)

## CATASTROPHE IN THE TICINO

In 1963, the Maggia Power Works Company began to build a power plant (pump reservoir) at Robiei (Basodino). The inside gallery which extends from the Bedretto Valley to Robiei, is 11 km. long. On account of wintery conditions, the site is at present closed, but in view of the impending return of the workmen, the management arranged, in Mid-February, for three experts to go into the tunnel in order to open the ventilation shafts, as bad air had been discovered. When they did not return, alarm was sounded, but the rescue party found them dead. At the same time, a working party at the Bedretto Valley end of the gallery were killed either by poisonous fumes which had developed or because of a vacuum caused by the air being pumped out of the tunnel.

Rescue operations by the *Festungswacht* Company 18 of Airolo resulted in the recovery of the seventeen bodies.

The funeral services took place in Locarno and at Airolo on 18th February. The authorities have expressed sympathy to the families of the victims, both Italians and Swiss. Money has been donated in many places to assist the bereaved relatives.

On 22nd February, the workmen on the highest sites in the Bavona Valley were recalled on account of heavy snowfall. They came down to Robiei where they were surprised by an avalanche. Fortunately, the five men could be rescued from under the deep snow by a team of sixty with a dog.

A third accident happened the same day at Robiei when two building huts were destroyed by fire.

[A.T.S.]