

One Year after the Catastrophe at Duerrenaesch

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celsus, who had also taught in Basle, and with it an unforgettable name in the history of medicine. He referred to the new tasks facing the Swiss universities and revised examination requirements for medical graduates.

[A.T.S.]

FEDERAL NEWS

The **53rd Interparliamentary Conference** was held in Copenhagen from 20th to 28th August. Six hundred parliamentarians from over sixty countries met. Switzerland was represented by a dozen M.P.s under the leadership of the Head of the Swiss Interparliamentary Group, National Councillor W. Bringolf (Socialist) of Schaffhausen.

The Federal Council in answer to an Appeal by the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees, has decided to accept a further group of **handicapped refugees** and their families — a total of eighty people. The Confederation will bear the cost for the first three years.

On 21st August, the **new British Ambassador** to Switzerland, Monsieur Robert Spencer Isaacson, presented his credentials to the President of the Confederation and to Federal Councillor F. T. Wahlen.

Italy has eased the **restrictions** affecting the import of Swiss cheese.

On 27th August, the President of the Confederation invited the **Parliamentary Press** to an informal meeting at Kehrsatz.

A group of 43 **Arabs** from Ra's-al-Khaimah on the Persian Gulf were declared undesirable and, after internment, were repatriated via Italy and the Balkan countries.

The Federal Council energetically rejected **certain allegations** in Swiss and foreign publications, notably the "Economist", London, that arms were exported to Arab countries, with an anti-semitic bias on the part of the federal authorities. The activities of an Egyptian resident in Zurich and his firm were criticised, and the whole business was connected with the resignation of Minister E. Serra, Chief of Protocol of the Federal Political Department.

The Federal Council, as well as Minister Serra, have refuted the allegations and pointed out that the activities of Mr. Kamil were carefully watched and found legal, though there were no ways of checking on his business deals outside Switzerland. All export of arms from Switzerland is carefully controlled and is never permitted to belligerent countries or countries in danger of being drawn into war, and the embargo on the export of arms to the Near East has been in force since 1955.

The new **Agreement on Social Insurance** with Italy became valid on 1st September. It covers old age, dependants and invalidity, as well as vocational diseases and family allowances.

At the **International Fair** at Izmir (Smyrna) there was a "Swiss Day" on which the Swiss Ambassador in Ankara, Monsieur René Keller, and the Director of the Swiss Office for the Development of Trade (OSEC), Mr. A. J. Staehelin (both one-time residents in London), gave a reception to some three hundred people.

Early in September, 35 out of the 56 **diplomatic representatives** of Switzerland met for their Annual Conference in Berne. Following the meeting, the diplomats, accompanied by five Federal Councillors, went on the traditional outing to Obwalden, the home of the President of the Confederation.

*(News received by courtesy of the
Agence Télégraphique Suisse.)*

ONE YEAR AFTER THE CATASTROPHE AT DUERRENAESCH

On 4th September it was a year since the air disaster at Duerrenaesch in which the Commune of Humlikon lost practically the whole of its working population — 43 farmers and farmers' wives — and became a village of orphans. The anniversary was marked by the ringing of church bells in the morning and a church service.

The Zurich Municipal President, Dr. E. Landolt, reported to a press conference earlier on that thanks to a great deal of voluntary and generous help from all parts of the country, but also due to a tremendous effort on the part of the remaining families, the farming life in the village has gone on. The danger remains that some of the orphaned estates may have to be liquidated on account of lack of labour, the children being too young to take over and the grandparents or other helpers not capable of carrying on long enough. This is where the special fund has been used to pay wages for additional help and rent for agricultural machinery. Two fully automatic washing machines were provided, and a kindergarten has been installed partly with the help of a London firm which donated a wooden building on the occasion of the British Fortnight in Zurich last year. The fund, incidentally amounts to one and a half million francs and is intended to provide training and education of the orphans. The aim of all assistance is to keep up the village community and to help the orphans to a happy farming future.

After the disaster an inquiry was held into the cause of it, and the findings have now been made public. There was a press conference at the end of August at Duebendorf and an exhibition of all the bits of machinery collected after the aircraft had been blown to smithereens. It was amazing to see the wheels 3 and 4 which played such an important part completely reconstructed from the fragments often found miles away from the scene of the crash.

The report covers 156 pages and reveals that the disaster was due to a fire which started during or shortly after take-off. The fire was caused through overheating of the brakes which in turn made the two back wheels on the left side burst and consequently damaged the hydraulic and fuel ducts. The overheating of the brakes happened while the aircraft was rolling along the runway and back before take-off, a manoeuvre during which the existing fog was cleared through the jet action. Such instructions are not listed in the flight handbook of the "Caravelle", but were still in the 1961 training handbook of Swissair. The report made it clear that the crew was familiar with the aircraft which was in flightworthy condition on take-off, but that visibility was below the necessary minimum. The crew cannot have had any indication of what had happened during the "rolling manoeuvre". The fire caused damage, too, to the steering apparatus, which impeded the flight. On crashing, the aircraft exploded. It is not known whether crew or passengers were ever aware of the damage because it is believed that towards the end things happened too rapidly even for alarm to be given over the wireless.

The enquiry commission consisted of representatives of many different bodies, including "Etablissement Aéronautique de Toulouse du Ministère des Armes", and various federal, military and scientific establishments. It was not up to them to decide on the question of guilt or negligence. This question will be dealt with by the legal authorities.

(Based on news received by A.T.S.)