

The Swiss railways today

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Current research activities are aimed at complete control of speed, and later, perhaps even automatic routing and driving of trains.

Great changes are under foot on the accounting side where the second generation of computers has already been installed. The mechanisation of the ticket vending system is perhaps the first direct experience of the rail traveller with the modern accounting methods dictated by these computers.

The equipment of some 230 SFR stations with coin-operated ticket dispensers has started. Plans are ready for all remote stations, as well as other stations where booking offices can be closed early, to be provided with these dispensers manufactured by the SODECO Co. in Geneva. These machines accept all Swiss silver and nickel coins (except the 5 Cts. piece). Every time a coin drops, an indicator shows the balance to be inserted. Printing only starts after the correct amount has been paid. Up to that moment the order can be cancelled and the money is ejected. The machine incorporates the latest coin-checker and alarm system. Forty printing plates are available for single, return and special half-fare tickets.

Special money-changers accept 2 and 5 franc coins, and new machines for changing bank notes will soon be available.

Winter problems

Snow and ice present a special problem for the railways of the Alpine Regions.

In Switzerland, lines are freed of thick snow layers by powerful rotary snow ploughs. These are usually pushed by electric or diesel units and throw (through movable ducts) the snow well clear of the track. Points are kept clear of snow and ice by mobile flame throwers and steam jet units or by electric or propane gas installations. For example, Zurich Main Station has a complete propane gas installation consisting of three large supply tanks and a network of pipes. But in many cases (small stations and sidings) the old broom made of birch twigs is still a useful aid.

On the Gotthard line, the Loetschberg line, etc., special measures are needed against avalanches. The force of an avalanche is so great, that no artificial obstacle placed in its path by man can block its destructive thrust effectively. All efforts must therefore be concentrated on preventing the slide at the top or where this is not possible, by deflecting it. This is achieved with the help of protection wall barriers in masonry, barriers constructed of rail sections and sleepers or woven tree branches reinforced by wiremesh. Millions of trees are planted to retain the snow on the steep slopes high above the railway line.

Where avalanches are known to descend, special shelters are con-

structed. They consist of reinforced concrete galleries which allow the avalanches to pass over the railway line. Occasionally avalanches do, of course, descend in new places. Against this hazard and rock falls etc., frequent track inspection (Erstfeld-Biasca daily) is the only feasible precaution. During particularly dangerous weather conditions (*Foehn*), day and night guards are mounted at exposed sections.

(S.N.T.O.)

Developments in the El-Al trial

The association of Arab barristers have written an open letter to the head of the department of justice in the Canton of Zurich, Dr. Bachmann, complaining of the unfair treatment received the three Palestinian detainees. Their lawyers, the letter alleged, had been given a chance to study the bill of indictment and were only permitted to see their clients on rare occasions. They had observed usages of Zurich Cantonal Law, whereas the judicial authorities had abdicated their responsibilities as last instance of appeal for the accused.

This was in answer to an interview given by Dr. Bachmann to the review "Echo der Zeit", in which he had said that the counsel of the Palestinians had done everything to delay the course of the inquiry, and accused one of their lawyers, Dr. Treadwell, of getting hold of photocopies of the Klotten-affair dossier and passing them on to the Arab barristers.

The department of justice of Zurich subsequently ordered an inquiry into this suspected "leak". It had been mentioned for the first time by M. Henry, Secretary of the "Swiss Committee for the Support of Palestinians".

The preliminary enquiry by the attorney of the district of Bulach is now terminated. The department of justice of the Canton of Zurich has asked that the accused be formally charged by the Supreme Court. The three Arabs are charged with manslaughter and assault, hindering public traffic, the attempted use of explosives, violating of Swiss territorial sovereignty, causing damages to property and being in illegal possession of arms. The Israeli agent is accused of murder with passion and of acts committed without right on behalf of a foreign state. As regard the Arabs, the law foresees a minimum of five years' imprisonment. The Israeli risks a maximum of ten years.

We recall that the Arab terrorists, armed with machine-guns and explosives, had attacked an "El-Al" Boeing 707 on February 18th, thus provoking one of the most serious incidents of international bearing remembered in Zurich. One of the terrorists was killed by an Israeli security agent, who had jumped-off the plane. The pilot of the plane received a bullet in the stomach, and died a few weeks later.

(A.T.S.)

TOURIST NEWS IN BRIEF

Geneva's city hall courtyard with its unique spindle-shaped staircase is the stage of four performances by the "Collegium academicum". The charming short opera "La finta giardiniera", which Mozart wrote in 1775 when he was 19 years old, will be performed on August 22, 23 as well as 26 and 27.

In Ascona the Zurich Chamber Orchestra under the baton of Edmund de Stoutz gives concerts, with Yehudi Menuhin as soloist, in the courtyard of the "Collegio Papio". On September 4 the Prague Chamber orchestra will play in the same monastery's courtyard, with the pianist Christoph Eschenbach as soloist.

On the outskirts of Zurich there are about eight hundred comfortable hotel beds available at reasonable rates, also for people travelling alone. Within a radius of 10 to 18 kilometres (6 to 12 miles) there are hotels which may be recommended in the lovely townships of Adliswil (Motel), Bütten (Motel), Bülach, Dielsdorf, Dietikon, Dübendorf, Glattbrugg, Schlieren, Waldegg, Wallisellen and Zumikon, as well as in many charming villages on the shores of Lake Zurich where there are no parking problems.

An international packaging fair will be held from March 3 to 7, 1970 in the halls of the Swiss Samples Fair at Basle. It is called "Swisspack" for short. Apart from trade meetings a packaging street, shops of the future and a design center will demonstrate new possibilities showing the way toward future developments.

A true sporting spirit should prevail at the forthcoming popular march in the Bernese Jura on September 27 and 28, 1969. The route is 15 kilometres (about 10 miles) long and leads through a region rich in scenic beauty.

Air-Glaciers and Genair have started a regular air service between Sion and Geneva. (11:00 a.m. from Sion and 2:50 p.m. from Geneva, respectively, flying time 30 minutes). Rate: Fr. 60.- (U.S. \$14.-) per passenger and flight.

From November 4 to 7 Lucerne's International Courses for Tourism will be held for the twentieth time. A lecture by Dr. Werner Kämpfen, Director of the Swiss National Tourist Office, will start off the seminar.

Whoever is interested in caves, depths and subterranean sights, should visit the Beatus Caves near Interlaken. There the visitor, at 1 kilometre (5/8 of a mile) below the earth's surface, is independent of the weather. This also partly applies to a visit of the Gorge of the Aare River near Meiringen and the impressive Trümmelbach Falls.

(S.N.T.O.)