One hundred years ago...

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help of Machine Fabrik Oerlikon (MFO), now part of Brown Boveri. In the middle fifties, there were some three hundred Swiss technicians and their families living in Bangalore.

A mile away from Hindustan Machine Tools factory stands a modern watch-making plant employing ten thousand. Although this company is part of HMT, it was built with Japanese assistance, judging from the photographs in the Reception Hall. One of these photographs shows former prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru being offered the first watch produced by the factory, which was also the first Indian-made watch, back in 1961.

India evidently offers a tremendous watch-market. Despite the poverty of its masses, the majority seem able to afford a watch – in the cities anyway. We have seen poor people walking bare-footed wearing gleaming imitation-gold watches. Although Switzerland still has a footing in the Indian watch-market, most watches worn by Indians are probably home-manufactured, Japanese or Hong-Kong produced "Swiss" watches. Cheap watches in India, rarely selling at less than £5, still appear to be more expensive than "cheap" watches in Switzerland and Britain.

The traveller can discover other evidence of Swiss presence, or former presence, in India if he is attentive. There were many Swiss in Textiles. Firms like Volkart Brothers had extensive interests before independence. The business conditions changed after 1947. Political circumstances and the new requirements regarding the ownership of capital and the seating of Indian directors discouraged many Swiss businessmen from pursuing their activities in India.

P.M.B.

ONE HUNDRED YEARS AGO . . . FROM SAANEN IN THE CANTON OF BERNE TO NIPISSING

A LITTLE KNOWN EPISODE OF SWISS EMIGRATION TO CANADA

Some two hundred miles north of Toronto on the road to Burk's Falls, just outside Magnetawan, is old farm field, shoulder-high in hay. Tucked back in a corner of the field, barely visible from the road, is an old post archway. It is closed with pagewire fencing. Inside the fence, wild fern has all but totally obscured a pioneer graveyard, a memorial to Swiss settlers who helped to open up the country south of Lake Nipissing. Most of the inscriptions on the gravestones are still readable. The names they bear leave no doubt as to the Bernese origin of those buried here: Raaflaub, Matti, Hauswirth, Haldi and Reinhard. Pioneers' Cemetery with its Western style archway is the last place of rest of these immigrants who came mostly from the Saanen area. How did it happen?

Largely responsible for this emigration was Baroness Elise von Koerber, a gentle lady of European origin living in Canada. With the backing of the Canadian authorities. she conducted a campaign from 1873 to 1878 in Europe, and particularly in Switzerland, to foster the emigration of farmers to the sparsely settled Nipissing region. Madame von Koerber distributed leaflets, held press conferences and organised information meetings for prospective emigrants.

An exploratory expedition headed by the distinguished world traveller and professor of mineralogy Jacques Kaderli of Berne (1827–1874), toured the Nipissing region in October 1873 on behalf of Madame von Koerber and the Canadian authorities. In his report 'Compte-Rendu de mon expédition sur les côtes sud-est du Lac Nipissing, au Nord de la province Ontario en Canada, octobre et novembre 1873', Kaderli gave useful information about soil, climate, harvesting prospects and also mentioned by name some of the few European farmers already there. Other members of the exploratory mission were Jakob Brunschweiler of St. Gall, Edouard Schmid of Basel and Edouard von Zuben of Alpnach, Canton of Obwald. Von Zuben was apparently the only one of this group to eventually settle in the Nipissing area.

Swiss authorities viewed Madame von Koerber's activities sympathetically, but refused to lend her any official support, since regulations prevented them from showing preference for any specific emigration destination. Even an offer by the Canadian Government to defray all the expenses of sending to Nipissing a neutral observer, chosen by the Swiss authorities, was turned down.

Nevertheless, Baroness von Koerber pursued her campaign in Switzerland. She presided over numerous public meetings in Berne, Liestal and finally in Saanen, where she must have been quite persuasive, since some farmers from the Saanen area soon disposed of their goods and left for the Nipissing/Magnetawan area. The "Amstblatt des Kantons Bern" (Official Gazette of the Canton of Berne) listed in its issue of March 20, 1875, the petition of five families from Saanen and nearby Gsteig, who wished to emigrate to Nipissing.

Some of the early Swiss settlers received Crown Lands near Hungry Lake (now Carmen Lake, Chapman Township) and later – because of the poor, rocky land first granted to them – moved to nearby Magnetawan, Nipissing and Croft Townships.

Between 1873 and 1890 approximately one hundred Swiss came directly from their native country to settle in the area just southeast of Lake Nipissing. By opening up the land, often under severe conditions, they contributed largely to the development of the Nipissing region.

On December 31, 1882, some of the settlers decided to establish a protestant church in Magnetawan. The co-signers of the declaration prepared to this effect were mostly Swiss. In addition to those already mentioned, the early church registers list many Swiss names such as Aellen, Boo, Bossert, Brand, Courvoisier, Eidam, Gerber, Gutjahr, Grünig, Kernen, Knoepfli, Meier, Noll, Salzmann, Uelliger and Würsten.

Ties with the motherland remained strong. The only subscriber in Nipissing of a Saanen weekly caused much joy by regularly circulating his newspaper among the immigrants.

Today, many descendants of the Swiss pioneers still live in the area opened up by their ancestors one hundred years ago; they are successful farmers or businessmen.

The Government of Ontario is also interested in the history of the settlers who came from Switzerland. It plans to erect in the near future a historical plaque to honour the early Swiss immigrants and their contribution to the development of the Nipissing region.

(Fragments – Swiss Volksbank)

Berne celebrated its "Onion Market" on 26th November

In memory of the reconstruction work following the Great Fire of 14th May, 1405, in Berne – at which neighbouring Fribourg farmers gave the Bernese powerful support – Berne held a traditional "Zibelemärit" (Onion Market) on the fourth Monday in November – a huge market at which no fewer than some 350 market stalls crowd the Bundesplatz and its adjoining streets and squares. All kinds of useful and beautiful goods were on sale, but pride of place was given to the onions. Onions were the main agricultural product brought to market by the farmers of the region in former times, and thus it came about that the vegetable gave the name to the main Berne popular festival. More than 40 tons of onions are sold and bought on one day during Zibelemärit. And in the restaurants of the city centre the odour of onions is predominant, because anyone who has any claim to knowing Berne is out on Zibelemärit enjoying onion tart, onion soup or Zwiebelmus (onion mash and potato). But Zibelemärit is above all a festival of good humour and fun, with a fair and booths on the Schützenmatte, confetti battles in the Spitalgasse, the first roast chestnuts, and sometimes the first snow.

"Inter-Rail" Now Obtainable All The Year Round

As from 1974, "Inter-Rail" the European railway ticket for young people will be obtainable all the year round. Anyone under 21 years of age is entitled to this ticket which costs Fr. 305 for 2nd class travel and is valid for a month. Young people living in Switzerland can get tickets at half price for travel with SFR and all important private railway companies in Switzerland and can travel free of charge in 18 European countries.