

**Zeitschrift:** Helvetia : magazine of the Swiss Society of New Zealand  
**Herausgeber:** Swiss Society of New Zealand  
**Band:** 17 (1952)  
**Heft:** [4]

**Artikel:** Switzerland's short-wave voice of democracy  
**Autor:** [s.n.]  
**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-942570>

### **Nutzungsbedingungen**

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. [Siehe Rechtliche Hinweise.](#)

### **Conditions d'utilisation**

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. [Voir Informations légales.](#)

### **Terms of use**

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. [See Legal notice.](#)

**Download PDF:** 02.04.2025

**ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>**

And, finally, the railways own the fastest train in Switzerland. It has an average speed of 94 miles per hour, and on a test run it reached a speed of 112 miles per hour.

#### Important Deliveries of a Swiss Firm

The Swiss Electrical Industry has an excellent reputation in foreign countries for its products. One firm recently received orders placed by Morocco for three three-phase transformers of 45,000 kW. each; by Finland for a rotatory generator; by Brazil for four Diesel generators and by Ceylon for three Diesel generators.

#### Compulsory Collective Contracts in Switzerland

In 1951 the Swiss Cabinet declared 16 collective contracts between employers' and employees' associations compulsory. In 1950, 15 contracts had been declared compulsory. The Cantonal Governments did the same with 15 contracts in 1951, and with 33 in the previous year. The workers' contracts include approximately 43,000 white collar workers and 136,000 other workers. The institution for collective contracts between employers' and employees' associations has never been very significant in Switzerland, because of the intensive development of employers' and employees' organisations, and also because of the principle of freedom in the formation of contracts, on which the Swiss Social Policy is based.

### SWITZERLAND'S SHORT-WAVE VOICE OF DEMOCRACY

Switzerland, whose neutrality is historically recognised, perhaps because of that very fact, is attracting an increasing number of listeners to the work being done by a handful of Swiss in a business building in the old, arcaded Neuen-gasse in Berne, capital of the Swiss Confederation.

This group comprises the short-wave service of the Swiss radio system. Unlike the British Broadcasting Corporation and the Voice of America, Switzerland's busy Kurzwelldienst is neither Government-owned or Government-sponsored. No directive reaches it from the green-domed Parliament Building just across town. Yet Swiss short-wave is today one of the most important of the voices of democracy—in some ways more important than those emanating from the United States or Great Britain. For Switzerland publicly proclaims that she has no political axe to grind, that she seeks neither war nor gain and that, because of fear that her neutrality might be impinged upon, has even refused up to now to consider joining the United Nations.

The impartial observer is always respected, and the growing success of Swiss short-wave radio in its self-appointed task of "telling the story of Switzerland to the world" is proof enough that Switzerland's traditional dislike of the melodramatic approach can pay off.

For Switzerland's voice, if quietly pitched is strong and penetrating. Nowadays, SBC broadcast to the majority of the world's peoples 24 hours a day in seven languages. In addition, the regular medium-wave Swiss broadcasts are picked up through Europe as well as in the British Isles.

Characteristically, the voice of Switzerland started out not in any sense as a propaganda venture but solely to be of assistance to Swiss living abroad. During World War II when Swiss abroad including Swiss official personnel were cut off from their homeland, the fledgling short-wave service in Berne decided to set up a radio link. Broadcasts of news and music were beamed at any part of the globe where Swiss were known to be living.

On lonely Pacific islands, Swiss consuls or business men could turn on their radio and hear the voice of home in French, German or Italian, for all three are Switzerland's official tongues.

As it became apparent that others as well as native-born Swiss were listening to SBC's short-wave service, the members of the Berne staff became aware of their increasingly important task, and the service was increased to its present intensity to become an accepted neutral voice among all the discordant voices of the world.

The story told of the globe's radio-listeners remains simple; that Switzerland is one of Europe's oldest democracies, that voting is free and without intimidation, that there is neither religious nor racial persecution, that Switzerland has shared in most non-political international agencies aimed at helping mankind, that Switzerland works hard for a living, takes no foreign aid, maintains one of the world's two hardest currencies, lives in the shadow of a permanent export drive, is the homeland of one of the world's most precise crafts, that of making watches.

But the radio technicians in the Neuen-gasse do more than that; interspersed are Swiss songs and dances, reports of Swiss events in the fields of sport, art and human progress, descriptions of some of the great scenic vistas comprised within the nation's narrow boundaries.

To Birmingham and Bangkok, to Sacramento and Saskatchewan, to Trieste and Turkey go anecdotes of the great Parsenn run for skiers at Davos; of the lofty Matterhorn; of the tiny Italianate villages of the Ticino and the watch-making communities of the long Jura range.

The only connection the Swiss Government has with radio is that the Department of Post, Telephone and Telegraph undertakes to collect the licence fees and turn them over to the Swiss Broadcasting Corporation. At that point governmental interference ends. Theoretically anyone else could set up a similar system, in competition and it is not legally impossible, if they wish for the Swiss to have the original Government concession changed and to embrace sponsored radio on the American pattern.

Swiss broadcasting on a national scale dates back to 1931 when the Swiss Broadcasting Company was founded. Seven separate organisations combined to form the company; Radio Geneva, Radio Lausanne, Radio Zurich, Radio Basle, Radio Berne, The Eastern Swiss Radio Society in St. Gall and the Co-operative Society for Radio Broadcasting at Bellinzona in the Italian-speaking canton of Ticino.

These various associations were representative of given regions and, in forming the Swiss Broadcasting Corporation, they all brought their own operating rules into conformity with the Corporation's agreement with the Government which had granted it its original licence to operate.

The result is that Swiss radio for home listeners now broadcasts regularly every day, in all three official languages as well as, less frequently, in the little-known tongue, Romantsch, which is spoken in the Grisons. A separate transmitter serves each language group; for the French the transmitter at Sottens, for the German-speaking group that of Beromunster and for the Ticinesi the transmitter of Monte Ceneri on the southern slopes of the Alps. Because Monte Ceneri is separated from the rest of the nation by the great Alpine massif, it is sometimes said that it can be picked up more easily in Africa than in Berne.

Broadcasting itself is done by six studios located in Geneva, Lausanne, Berne, Zurich, Basle and Lugano. Because the transmitters are powerful, these local broadcasts are widely heard beyond Switzerland's frontiers.

Swiss radio has few taboos, but those which exist, carefully established in the original government concession, are enlightening for non-Swiss to contemplate. They are but two: Swiss radio may not carry either religious or political propaganda. That is to say, Swiss radio may remain a forum for learning, a means of hearing good music, a channel for receiving light entertainment or unslanted news broadcasts. But no politician can advocate over Swiss airwaves his political panacea.

Though radio in Switzerland is not an agency of the government, it is regarded as a national responsibility. Its true masters are the people

themselves who pay twenty Swiss francs (about thirty-five shillings) per year for the privilege of maintaining it.

### AUSLANDSCHWEIZERTAG, 1952

We are informed by the N.H.G. Bern, that the annual Conference of Swiss living abroad will take place at Burgenstock from Friday, August 29th, to Sunday, August 31st. The programme includes an address by the Federal President, Mr. Kobelt; discussions regarding several interesting subjects of Swiss in foreign countries; Excursion to Rutli and around the lake of Lucerne.

Any compatriot visiting Switzerland this year should attend these important celebrations. For details communicate direct with Auslandschweizerwerk, Wallgasse 2 Bern.

### APPRECIATION

Mr. and Mrs. P. Cattin and families wish to express their most sincere thanks to all the members of the S.B.S., who so kindly paid regular visits to Mrs. Cattin while she was a patient at the Mater Hospital, also for the beautiful flowers which gave her no end of pleasure. She is progressing favourably now and is able to get about again.

Paul Cattin.

### LIST OF NEW MEMBERS

Mr. Max Buchmann, 47 Edenvale Road, Mt. Eden, Auckland.

Mr. Hans K. Burgin, c/o Mrs. Bell, Green Mt., East Tamaki.

Mr. Arthur Buhler, c/o Post Office, Rotorua.

Mr. Simmy Hartmann, 29 Krull Street, Wellington.

Mr. Paul J. Huber, c/o Mr. Bently, 5 Wynyard St., Auckland.

Mr. Heinz P. Ittensohn, c/o Powderham Petrol Station, 71 Powderham St., New Plymouth.

Mr. Anton Kaeppli, Box 13, Waitoa.

Mr. Josef Keiser, c/o Mr. Lachland, 34 Water-view Rd., Auckland.

Mr. J. Schelbert, Box 20, Normanby, Taranaki.

Mr. Hans Tresch, Nibble Nook, Ltd., Tauranga.

Mr. Karl Waldvogel, c/o Central Hotel, Ngaruahia.

### MEMBERSHIP FEE

Although subscriptions have come in regularly, there are still about 50 per cent. outstanding. Some compatriots have even overlooked to remit their 1950-51 fees and we wish to remind all our friends to kindly pay the small fee due, either to their district collection agents or to the Secretary direct.