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THE WEATHER

Last year was the worst for hail damage since 1950. The hail insurance company received 17,000 claims and paid out fifteen million francs, nearly half of which went to the French-speaking part of the country. Whilst October was very dry, November was exceptionally wet, though North of the Alps it was the mildest November ever remembered.

December was cold, with little rainfall, though not nearly as severe as 1962. January brought much sunshine to high-lying places and a lot of fog to the Midlands. Generally, it was dry with little snow, though plenty of sunshine. South of the Alps and in North-Eastern Switzerland there was more than average rainfall.

February brought less sun than average, except to the South-West. There was a bad earthquake near Sarnen in Obwalden, which caused a great deal of damage. The last ten days of the month were warm and sunny, followed by bad "Föhn". There was heavy drawing on water reservoirs owing to little rainfall. Generally, it was a mild winter with little damage.

March was short of sunshine, and the second half brought the much-needed rain and snow. April was generally normal, with rain and sunshine roughly balanced.

May was very warm, with temperatures well above normal, the highest since 1945 in the lower regions and North of the Alps. June, too, brought much sunshine. As it was excellent growing-weather, the cattle could move to the "Vorsass" in the Bernese Oberland as early as 4th June, the earliest since 1948. June brought no cold spells as is usual for the time of year.

July arrived with excellent summer weather, much sun, little rain and high temperatures. Basle registered the highest temperature with 35.9°C on 21st July. The daily average on 18th July was the highest recorded since records began in 1755. The Basle tramway management put 500 l. of tea at the disposal of its staff. High temperatures were registered in many other places; even "Swiss Siberia", La Brevine, reached 30° in the shade. It was the sunniest July for over half a century.

But with the sun came a drought, water levels sank alarmingly. Bathing had to be suspended in many parts, specially in the Cantons of Vaud and Neuchâtel. The Jura was worst off. The level of Lac des Brenets sank by four metres. To parts of the region, water had to be taken by lorry. The fruit and vegetable growers were badly hit by the drought, specially in the Valais. Even so five million kilogrammes of apricots were harvested, a quarter of the total consumption within Switzerland. There was danger of forest fires in many parts.

As a contrast, it should be stated that water supplies in many parts of Switzerland were by no means threatened. The daily consumption in Zurich, for instance, was 582 l. per inhabitant. The average in 1963 amounted to 368 l. The highest total ever consumed in one day was on 5th July 1957, when it reached 622 l. per person. But the maximum capacity of the Zurich water supplies is 675 l., which meant that the town could help out several other communes which were short.

There were very bad thunderstorms and considerable hail-fall in many parts of the country. Another earthquake was registered in the Valais. Around the 10th July, snow suddenly fell, and in many parts cattle had to be brought down from the high pastures. The St. Gotthard and other passes had snow in August. Some 300 migrant birds were surprised by snowfall on their flight South and took shelter in the Säntis railway station on the

Schwaegalp. They were captured with nets, packed into cardboard boxes and taken to lower parts where they were set free and could continue their journey South.

In August, rain came at last, and the grass began to look greener again. Whether there will be enough rainfall to improve the prospects of autumn fodder, is still uncertain. [A.T.S.]

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE INTERNATIONAL MUSIC FESTIVAL IN LUCERNE

From 15th August to 6th September, Lucerne, the tourist metropolis of central Switzerland, will be filled with the sounds of its twenty-sixth annual Music Festival. The Swiss Festival Orchestra will play the first four symphony concerts, as well as the two choral performances, Haydn's "Creation" and Carl Orff's "Carmina Burana". At the end of August, other important orchestral ensembles will take its place. Chamber music concerts, solo recitals, Mozart serenades at the Lion Monument, organ recitals, a concert of sacred music, and performances of Pirandello's play, "Henry the Fourth", will round off the unique programme. The first week in September will bring a splendid conclusion to the Festival, with the Vienna Philharmonic providing the symphonic music on 1st, 4th and 6th of September under the direction of Herbert von Karajan, Zubin Mehta and Karl Böhm. Other highlights will be two chamber music concerts by the English Chamber Orchestra under the baton of Benjamin Britten, and appearances by the Festival Strings Lucerne (Musica Nova) on 2nd and 3rd September. Among the outstanding soloists at the Festival will be Pierre Fournier, Peter Pears, Byron Janis and Lisa della Casa. [S.N.T.O.]

ALPINE FESTIVITIES IN AARAU

The "Eidgenössische Schwing-und Aelplerfest" took place in Aarau on 15th and 16th August, the last one having been held in Zug three years ago. Favoured by magnificent summer weather, the festival ran a most successful course. On seven sawdust patches, the alpine-style wrestling, the "Schwingen", took place, and the winner was Karl Meli from Winterthur who repeated his success of 1961 as "Schwingerkönig" and proudly led home his prize, a bullock.

Groups of yodellers, Alphorn blowers and flag throwers contributed much to the success of the festival. [A.T.S.]

BRITISH CARS RISE IN SWISS MARKET

British cars have climbed up to second place in the Swiss market — the most competitive in Europe — according to import figures for the first half of the year. France occupied this place in 1963. West Germany, however, which comes first, still has a long lead not only in cars but also in utility vehicles, including lorries.

The car import figures are (with those for the first half of last year in parenthesis): west Germany, 33,791 (35,460); United Kingdom, 19,274 (12,373); France, 15,558 (15,917); Italy, 8,854 (8,318).

Figures for utility vehicles are: west Germany, 6,123 (6,459); United Kingdom, 687 (715); France, 649 (714).

The total number of motor vehicles imported into Switzerland in the first six months of this year was 94,847, valued at 570,800,000 Swiss francs (almost £49m.), representing an increase of 6,163 vehicles.

(*The Times*, 7th August 1964.)