

Romano Hänni

1987

**Calendar for the year 1987 or:
Recollections on November 1, 1986**

1987

Size: 21×10,5 cm (20 pages)

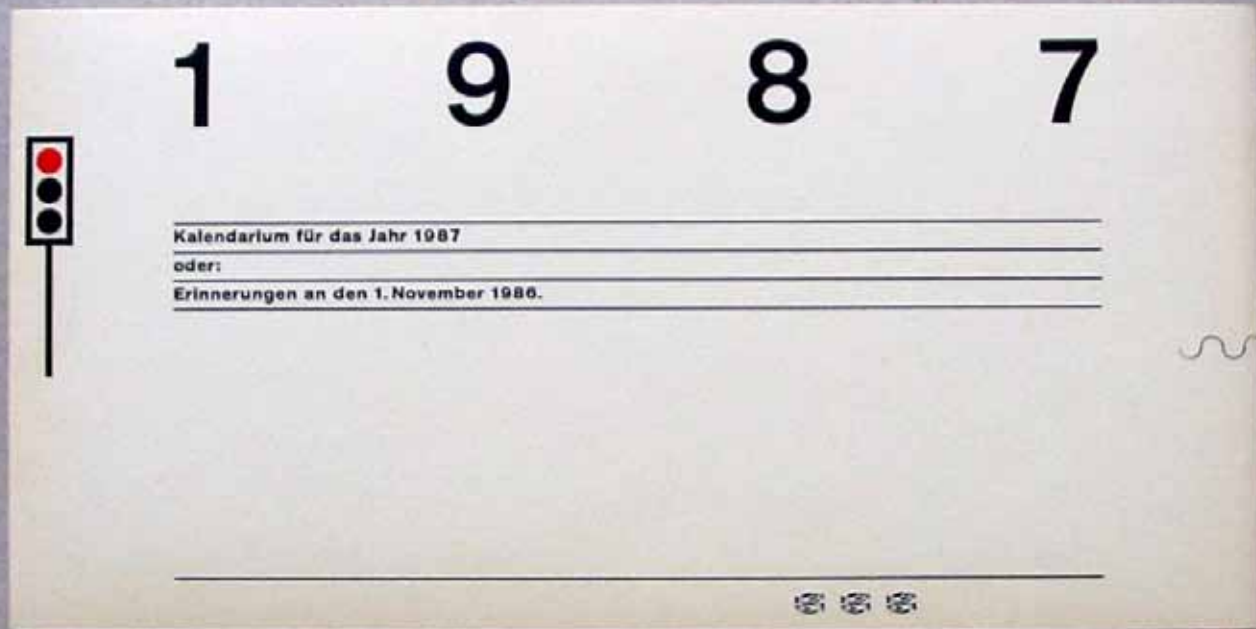
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1987

On November 1, 1986 in *Schweizerhalle* near the city of Basel, there was a major chemical spill in the river Rhine, the greatest environmental catastrophe in the area – six months after the reactor catastrophe in Chernobyl in April 1986. Up to this point the residents of Basel, where there is so much chemical industry, were unaware they were sitting on top of a powder keg. The typographic illustrations and the text are a selection of twelve important incidents that occurred during the night of the catastrophe. Footnotes are used to indicate new or contradictory information.

After removing the dust jacket you may fold the pages out as one strip, reading the capitals on each page as NOVEMBER 1, 1986.



1987

Calendar for the year 1987

or:

Recollections on the 1st of November, 1986

1987

Erinnerungen

an den

1. November 1986.



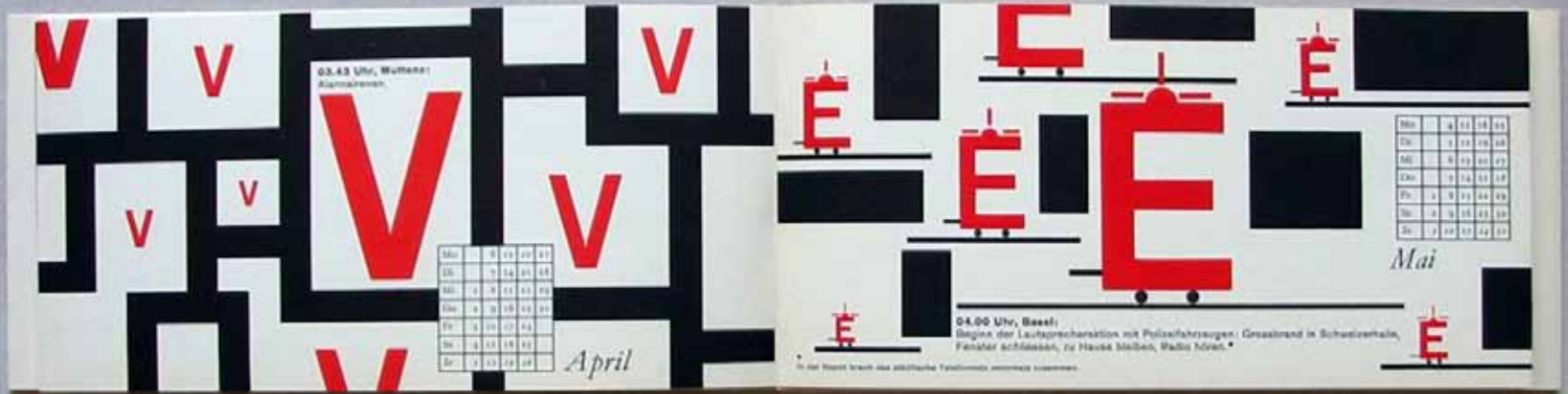
N (February)

One minute past two o'clock: The highway between Hagnau and Sissach was closed in both directions.

O (March)

Three-forty A.M.:

Local and national radio stations carried warnings.



V (April)

Three-forty-three A.M.: Alarm sirens sounded in the nearby residential area of Muttens.

E (Mai)

Four A.M., Basel: Police cars with loudspeakers began to broadcast the message: "There is a large fire in Schweizerhalle, close all windows, stay indoors, listen to the radio." *

* During the night the city's telephone system broke down several times.



M (June)

Four-fifty A.M., Basel: The city armory was mobilized and gas masks were made ready*.

* There were eighty thousand gas masks on hand (for about 200.000 people). However, during chemical accidents it is not immediately clear which filter is necessary.

B (July)

Five A.M., Basel: It was decided to stop all public transportation and to order people to stay indoors*.

* Trains coming towards Basel were stopped in Rheinfelden, Liestal, and Aesch and sent back. No trains left Basel.



E (August)

About five A.M., *Schweizerhalle*: The fire was brought under control*. The amount of smoke being produced increased**. The alarm spread to the towns of Birsfelden, Münchenstein, Binningen, Bottmingen, Allschwil, and Oberwil.

* Sandoz representatives described the blood-red waste water produced as a result of the firefighting as “harmless coloring matter”. It was not possible to catch this waste water; it flowed into the river Rhine. Over two hundred fireman fought the fire during the night, many of them without masks.

** *Six-o-five A.M., Basel*: It was reported that the fire in *Schweizerhalle* was extinguished, but that chemical vapors had been released.

R (September)

Five-thirty A.M.: Sirens sounded in the city of Basel and in nearby affected towns*.

* Sirens sounded the alarm only on the right side of the Rhine: Small Basel, Riehen, Bettingen, St. Chrischona, and Kleinhüningen. There were no new, remote-controlled sirens in Large Basel.

a few tons of artificial additives. Experts supposed that the stench was caused by Mercaptane. At the first press conference it was reported that products containing mercury* had been burnt in the fire** in building nine-five-six***. It was also “cleared up” that the “conspicuous red coloring” of the Rhine was caused by a commercial dye and was unobjectionable****.

* *November twenty-first:* One thousand three hundred fifty-one tons of chemicals had been stored in building nine-five-six. Not one-point-nine, rather two-point-six tons of mercury were contained in the stored pesticide. (According to written records that were distributed *after* the press conference on November twenty first.)

** In several buildings near the site of the fire were stored highly explosive materials. Only two hundred fifty meters away: Phosgene, an extremely toxic material used during the first World War as poison gas.

November eleventh: The German “Green” political party published excerpts of a report by prepared the company “Zürich Insurance”. Five years before, this insurance company had written a warning about precisely this kind of catastrophe. The Sandoz delegation swore under oath that they had never seen the paper. The former Chief of Safety for Sandoz, who could have answered questions, has been untraceable since the fire, and is apparently somewhere out of the country.

*** In nineteen sixty-eight, building nine-five-six was declared suitable only for the storage of machinery.

**** Shortly thereafter massive numbers of fish in the Rhine began to die.

November second: By evening thousands of fish, in particular Aesche, were dead.

November fifth: It was estimated by the Stuttgart Ministry for the Environment that along the Rhine between Basel and Karlsruhe lay approximately one hundred fifty thousand dead eels.

Die Physikkommission in Linz hat gut. Messergebnisse des Luftqualitäts-Messnetzes seiner Basis bekannt. Es besteht für die Bevölkerung keine Gefahr. »Da man aber nicht mit absoluter Sicherheit ausschließen kann, dass auch kleine Mengen bisher nicht erkannt Schadstoffe existieren sind, stehen die Untersuchungen weiter ...

beta	-	0	1.0	0.5	0.0
CI	0	0	0.0	0.0	0.0
MA	0	0	0.0	0.0	0.0
CI	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
PI	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
MA	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
CI	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

Dezember

8. November:
Der Winter-Kaffeehochmarkt wird eröffnet mit der Meinung der beiden Partnerinnen, dass beide, Bernd und seine Geschäftspartnerin Heide in die 1. Jahrgangsstufe gehen. In einem Klassenzimmer wird dieses Thema diskutiert. Bernd ist dabei ganz beherrschend. Seine Überzeugung ist, dass seine Erfahrung ausreicht, um auch mit der neuen Unterrichtsmethode zurechtzukommen.

10. November 1947:
 Heute ein sehr stiller Donnerstag, wie in der
 Vergangenheit in die Luft gezogen, entsprechend
 der kalten gewitterlosen kalten Jahreszeit.
 Heute ist ein starker Schneeeinbruch.

F. Nussimkott, Buchstabenkette:
Sinnvoll gelesenen Wortes sind die Buchstabenkette
ist aus Buchst.

14. November:
 Am Montagmorgen hat ein offizielles Briefing
 gegeben mit dem Inhalt, dass der Markt in
 Schwere schenke keine richtigen Anzeichen
 auf die Besserung geben hat.

26. November:
Das Kartellmonopol in Bayern wird gelöst, und die Eisenbahnen, die den Verkehr zwischen München und Regensburg betreiben, werden als Regensburger Eisenbahn-Gesellschaft (REAG) zusammengefasst.

Ten forty-three P.M.: The police department of Liestal made public the results of testing of the air in the Basel area. There was no danger to the general population. "However, because one cannot be entirely certain that small quantities of toxic substances have not been released, the testing continues ...".*

did not share the conviction of the Sandoz representatives that absolutely no health danger existed.

November sixth: The two hundred kilograms of mercury alone, that had been released into the air on the night of the fire, corresponded to half of the yearly Swiss permitted maximum for this toxic heavy metal.

November seventh, Schweizerhalle: Remaining waste water used to extinguish the fire was once again accidentally released into the Rhine.

November eighteenth: Doctors contradicted the official reports that the Schweizerhalle fire had no detrimental effects on the local population.

November twenty-sixth: The city chemist of Basel announced that Dioxin was found in the area of the Schweizerhalle fire.

Wir sind noch immer sehr betroffen von der Katastrophe die sich am 1. November 1986 in Schweizerhalle ereignet hat. Deshalb haben wir uns dazu entschlossen diesen Kalender diesem Tag zu widmen.*

Wir wünschen Ihnen trotzdem alles Gute für 1987 und grüssen Sie freundlich.

Romana Hänni und Martin Sommer

* Aus der Vielzahl von Informationen zur Katastrophe von Schweizerhalle haben wir versucht, die wesentlichen Daten dieses Tages beizubehalten. Fussnoten sind dort eingefügt, wo zu einem späteren Zeitpunkt widersprüchliche oder neue Informationen zutage kamen. Nachfolgend verzeichnete Texte sind nachfolgendes überlappende übernommen.
Basler AZ/Basler Zeitung (1) und Freigutten, Lützel Verlag, Basel (1) Februar 1988.

We are still very much affected by the catastrophe that happened on the first of November, nineteen eighty-six. Therefore we have decided to dedicate this calendar to the event. Nevertheless, with our greetings and best wishes for nineteen eighty-seven*.

* We have tried to select some important moments of the catastrophe from a mass of information about Schweizerhalle. Footnotes have been used to indicate new or contradictory information that was available at a later time.

The information used in this book came from the following sources: the daily newspapers Basler AZ and Basler Zeitung, the book *Das Ereignis* (the Incident), and the television reports on station DRS (the official Swiss television).

**«Leg den Winkelhaken nie aus der Hand,
der Setzkasten sei dein Vaterland.
Wenn du Durst hast, trink', es ist so Brauch,
hast du keinen, trinke auch.»**

aus: «Krieg», einem Roman von Fritz Rück, 1929.

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“Never put down the composing-stick;
the type drawer is your homeland.
If you are thirsty, drink, it is the custom,
and if you are not thirsty, drink as well.”
(From the novel *Krieg* (War) by Fritz Rück, 1929.)