

Gliding and flying look to the future in Switzerland

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Another important factor of Swiss national economy, the tourist trade, which was very seriously affected by war conditions, has registered a most encouraging increase in foreign visitors in recent months, and this for the first time for many years.

In 1945, Swiss agriculture suffered greatly from late spring frosts and summer droughts. Crop yields are estimated to have been reduced 5% in comparison with those of the previous year. Had not imports increased at the end of last year, Switzerland's food supply situation would have been most precarious this spring. However, it proved possible to raise restrictions on several vital commodities during the last quarter of 1945.

The satisfactory degree of industrial activity, combined with the heavy demand for man-power in farming circles, has a most favourable effect on the labour market. Unemployment is reduced to a minimum in several branches of trade and industry, and in others there is even a serious shortage of labour.

The steady rise in cost of living registered ever since the early months of the war has at last been arrested. Although the official price index rose a few points during the first nine months of 1945, after September it started falling during the last quarter of the year. The downward trend is not very marked as yet, but it does show that Switzerland is at a turning-point in the general trend of the price structure as a whole. The end of the war should prepare the way for a general fall in prices. As compared with the pre-war, the increase in cost of living in Switzerland is now about 50%. Wages are still being adapted to this state of affairs. Labour syndicates have, in many cases, demanded not only the payment of higher cost of living allocations, but also a basic rise in wage rates. This demand, of course, raises many extremely delicate problems, because a basic increase of this kind would definitely raise the wage level in the whole country, which in turn is a dangerous proceeding for an exporter country.

In the course of 1945, a very marked increase in collective or syndical agreements regulating various trades and crafts as a whole was noted. Some contracts already in force have been prolonged and new ones concluded. The chemical and textile industries as well as the metal industries are now affected by these agreements between employers and employed.

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GLIDING AND FLYING LOOK TO THE FUTURE IN SWITZERLAND.

During the war period flying in Switzerland was entirely restricted to gliding and areas for training in this sport were confined to certain well defined regions. Barring extraordinary exceptions, gliders were forbidden to rise more than 4,921 feet above the altitude of the starting point. Flights during the night and through clouds were prohibited altogether.

Despite these restrictions gliding in Switzerland has made remarkable progress during the past six years. In 1938 the total flying time by gliders amounted only to 2,100 hours, but in 1944 the total covered more than 3,260 hours. In the same period registered gliders increased from 197 to 322.

In addition to intensive theoretical and practical training in this sport war regulations brought about the discovery of high alpine gliding. Atmospheric conditions of the alpine zones have proved themselves surprisingly favourable for motorless flying.

The Upper Engadine, with the airport Samaden-St. Moritz, became the real centre of alpine gliding. There, flights above the Bernina glacier realm lasting for hours could be enjoyed. Now, with the restrictions lifted, altitudes up to 14,700 feet are easily attained in this area. Other alpine regions, such as Davos-Parsenn, the Bernese, Valaisan and Vaudois Alps, also the Swiss Midland, are excellent for gliding.

In addition to the gliding schools at Berne-Belpmoos, Grenchen (Solcuro) and on the Birrfeld, canton of Aargau, which have the concession of the Swiss Federal Air Department, opportunities for motorless flying are also afforded by many glider groups of the Swiss Aero-Club. However, there exists at present a scarcity of permanent airports for gliders, a situation which can be remedied at relatively small cost.

Here it must be mentioned that excellent gliders are being built in Switzerland, in series among which the makes of Spalinger, Hug (Spir) and Moswey may be especially mentioned. Prospects for export are bright.

Prior to the war Switzerland had 80 planes in the service of civil aviation, and about 600 persons owned flying licenses. Resumption of flying in motor-propelled vehicles and of air-tourism which includes the popular flights over the Alps, depends on Switzerland's motor fuel supplies, but may be expected in 1946.

In this instance, too, the construction of suitable flying fields is needed. The many military airports and stop-overs which were built in famous mountain regions during the war can now, in peacetime, be pressed into the service of international air-tourism. All these matters are of vital importance to the successful development of Swiss civil aviation with and without motor.

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SWISS ELECTRICITY OUTPUT, CONSUMPTION AND EXPORTATION.

The output of electricity in Switzerland increased from 6,000,000,000 kilowatt-hours in 1940 to more than 10,000,000,000 kilowatt hours in 1944 and will amount to about 11,000,000,000 kilowatt hours in 1945.

Official estimates show consumption of about 32 percent of the electric power by industry, 21 percent by households and trade, 10 percent by railroads, and 7 percent by electric boilers; about 19 percent is exported and 11 percent is lost in transmission or is stored for later use.

Exports in 1933-44 totalled 1,151,000,000 kilowatt-hours, compared with 1,563,000,000 in 1938-39. (Foreign Commerce Weekly.)

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OLYMPIC GAMES 1948 IN LONDON AND ST. MORITZ.

According to the Canadian Olympic Committee, the President of the International Olympic Committee J. Sigfrid Edstrom has advised them that the Olympic Games 1948 will take place in London, and the Olympic Winter Sports in St. Moritz, Switzerland. The last Olympic Games took place in Berlin in 1936.

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ST. MORITZ REOPENS MILE BOBSLED RUN.

G.I.'s Absorb Thrills with one mishap.

The famous St. Moritz mile-long bobsled run opened today for the first time in six years with American soldiers on furlough crowding to test their skill down the break-neck icy course.

"That was swell", exclaimed Corporal Louis Carr, of Williamsport, Pa., after he caught his breath from piloting the first all-American bobsled down the run.

Carr's brake, Technical Sergeant George B. Mensil, of Dallas, Tex., who forced the starter, Emilio De Loro, former Swiss bobsled champion, to raise his hands in a gesture of despair as Mensil obeyed instructions to "pull hard on the brakes" during the descent.