

News from Switzerland

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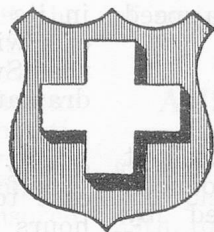
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NEWS FROM SWITZERLAND

Swissair

The Swissair has established a new record by a recent flight on the New York-Gander-Geneva route, the time taken being 11 hours and 12 minutes.

Foreigners in Switzerland

According to statistics published there are 283,400 foreigners living in Switzerland.

Swiss Artist Decorated by the Pope

A Swiss artist, Robert Schiess, who served for 22 years in the famed Swiss Guard of the Vatican, has been decorated by the Pope with the Knight of the Order of St. Silvester.

During his term of service with the Pontifical Guard, Schiess decorated the Swiss Guard's Chapel and theatre.

Television

By 113 votes to 4, the Swiss National Council has decided on a three years' experimental plan for television.

The experimental station will be constructed at Zurich, at an estimated cost of Frs. 4,000,000 (£325,000).

The cost will be met by public loans, and contributions from various sources, including the Swiss Confederation.

Swiss National Savings

According to a recent publication, there are 5,330,449 savings books or deposits in banks amounting to a total of 9 milliards of francs. The great number of booklets alone already show that the greatest portion of these savings belong to the people. This fact has been confirmed recently by an inquiry conducted by the Cantonal Bank of Zurich, who wanted to know the profession and age of some 20,000 depositors. A quarter of the booklets belong to children, apprentices or students. The annual workers follow next with 16

per cent., and after them come the housewives with 18 per cent. and office employees with 16 per cent. The classification of the booklets according to their value resulted in 24 per cent. belonging to the manual workers and housewives, 21 per cent. to office employees and 6 per cent. to minors.

Income of the Swiss Confederation in 1951

Switzerland's customs revenue for the financial year 1951 amounted to a record number of 493 million francs, 15 million more than the previous year. Sales taxes totalled 382 million francs. Altogether, Switzerland's 1951 income was 1484 million francs, slightly less than the income of 1668 million francs registered for the previous year.

The Swiss Federal Railways Have Ordered New Cars

The Executive Board of the Swiss Federal Railways, which recently met in Berne, examined a report by the Federal Commission for Traffic Co-ordination. It then approved the construction of 200 open railroad cars at a cost of 4.7 million francs, by two Swiss firms.

Some Interesting Facts About the Swiss Federal Railways

This railway owns the most powerful locomotive in the world. It is 114 feet long, has 16 motors with a capacity of 12,000 horse-power, and can go as fast as 69 miles per hour.

The longest railroad tunnel in the world belongs to the Swiss Federal Railways—the Simplon Tunnel, which has a length of 13 miles. Its first track was constructed between 1896 and 1906, and the second from 1912 until 1921.

The world's largest four-track railway bridge is over the river Aar in Berne. It is approximately five-eighths of a mile long and about 45 feet broad.

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.