

News from Switzerland

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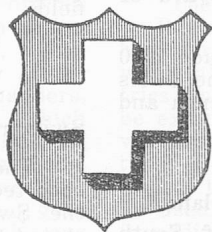
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FEBRUARY, 1952.

AUCKLAND.

NEWS FROM SWITZERLAND

Musical Conductor, Ernest Ansermet, Praised in the United States.

The Director of the Radio Orchestra, "Swiss Romande," Ernest Ansermet, has for a long time enjoyed a very good reputation in the United States. Considered to be among the best orchestra conductors of our time, he was able to prove his qualities conducting the Symphony Orchestra of Boston, in an interpretation of modern works. The musical critics of the New York papers, renowned for their severe judgments, have praised the skill of Ansermet. The "New York Times" critic has expressed regret that the famous Swiss conductor goes so seldom to New York; he has interpreted there the works of Beethoven, Ravel and Strawinsky, and has also conducted the Symphony Orchestra of Boston for five weeks.

Brazil a Good Customer for Switzerland.

On the occasion of a recent meeting of the Swiss-Brazilian Chamber of Commerce the growing importance of Brazil as a customer for Swiss products was pointed out. While in 1937 Swiss imports from Brazil had mounted to 11 million francs and exports to that country to 15 million francs, the corresponding figures for 1951 were 86 million for imports and 203 million for exports.

The two major figures in Swiss exports to Brazil were 80 million francs' worth of machines and 40 million francs' worth of watches.

Switzerland bought above all coffee from Brazil, last year, 8000 tons worth 40 million francs.

Customs Revenue Reached More than 500 Million Francs.

Swiss Customs revenue in 1951 amounted to 607 million francs, which is 20 million more than in the previous year. Customs revenue continues to make up a considerable portion of the country's total income.

The Chocolate Exports Have Increased.

Swiss chocolate is enjoying an excellent reputation throughout the world. It is not considered as a luxury product only, but also as a foodstuff of high nutritive value. In 1951 Swiss chocolate exports rose considerably above the figures of the previous year, amounting to 18 million francs as compared to 10 million in 1950.

Before the 22nd International Automobile Show.

On March 20th, the 22nd International Automobile Show will be opened in Geneva. This exhibition will offer the most conclusive picture of the present state of the world's motor vehicle industry. Its very international character will be demonstrated by the presence of products from 12 nations exhibited in 400 stalls.

There will be 73 different makes of cars, 132 makes of motor-cycles, 57 makes of other types of vehicles and the products of 128 manufacturers of spare parts and accessories.

A Cyclotron for Yugoslavia.

The Yugoslav Institute for Atomic Research announces that Yugoslavia recently received radio-active isotopes and that the cyclotron which is being used in this work was made in Switzerland.

The U.S. Orders Swiss Electric Power Equipment for Alaska.

The United States Government has placed an order with the Swiss Machine Factory of Oerlikon, near Zurich, for two generators for 15,000 KW each. They are to be used in the power station of Eklutna, in Alaska, which is under construction at present.

Swiss Alpinists Prepare to Conquer Mount Everest.

A Swiss expedition is planning to conquer Mount Everest in the Himalayas. The expedition, which will consist of 12 members, will leave Switzerland on March 15th, and will return again in July. Great hope is placed in a new type of oxygen container, which was constructed by Dr. Berthoud, of Geneva, and weighs only a little over three pounds, that is, ten times less than the containers used so far. With this new apparatus oxygen can be inhaled without the help of a mask.

Switzerland's Foreign Trade.

The figures for 1951 regarding Switzerland's foreign trade were just made public. They show in an impressive way the high degree of activity which prevailed in this country's economy last year. Swiss imports almost reached the 6000 million mark—5915.5 million francs—and a volume of more than 10 million tons. Swiss exports amounted to a total of 643,000 tons worth 4690.9 million francs.

Imports in 1950 were 4.5 billion francs and exports 3.9 billion.

A New Swiss Freighter.

The motor-vessel *Helvetia*, ordered by a shipping company of Lugano, was launched at the shipyard of Monfalcone, near Trieste.

The 7500-ton ship is equipped with a Swiss-made 5000 h.p. diesel motor. The *Helvetia* will sail under the Swiss flag and will start its regular service between Genoa and Africa next spring.

A South African Loan to be Floated in Switzerland.

The Minister of Finance of the Union of South Africa has paid a brief visit to Switzerland, accompanied by a group of experts, in order to conclude the negotiations opened with three leading Swiss banks a short time ago with the purpose of raising a loan in Switzerland. The three banking establishments have agreed to offer the South African Government a 4 per cent. loan of 60 million Swiss francs and to issue it shortly on par for public subscription. The loan is to fall due in 18 years at the latest.

The funds will be used exclusively for productive purposes connected with the development of the South African economy. They will at once stimulate Swiss industry and contribute to the further expansion of trade between South Africa and Switzerland.

The Swiss Watchmaking Industry Ranks First in the Swiss Exports.

For the first time in the history of Swiss economy the export figures shown by one single branch of industry have surpassed the 1000 million franc mark. In 1951 the Swiss watchmaking industry exported a total of 1010 million francs' worth of its products. This figure makes up 22 per cent. of all Swiss exports for that year.

Exports of Swiss Cheese.

Swiss cheese continues to enjoy great popularity abroad. In the past year exports of Swiss cheese amounted to 19,000 tons, which is almost the same quantity as in pre-war years. The value of those cheese exports is about 100 million francs, of which two-thirds is derived from cheese loaves and one-third from cream cheese in boxes. The leading buyers of Swiss cheese are France, Italy and the United States.

The Monetary Market in 1951.

The situation on the Swiss monetary market in 1951 clearly reflects the lively economic activity which has marked the past year. Owing to the increased volume of payments, the amount of currency in circulation was constantly above the 1950 level and by the end of December had reached a total of 4900 million francs.

The currency reserves and the gold stocks of the Swiss National Bank together amounted to 6.500 million francs by the middle of December. The capital market showed an increased demand for long- and short-termed loans, which was particularly apparent in the large number of new emissions. Between January and November 1242 million francs were raised in Switzerland in the form of loans.

Technics and Ski.

Switzerland has long been trying to place technical science at the service of tourism. A recent report concerning 68 winter resorts, reveals that in Switzerland,

at present, there are six aerial cableways, 16 chair-lifts, 63 ski-lifts, 11 "funicular" trains and 22 other cog-wheel trains which take tourists directly to the ski fields. Twelve projects for new services of this kind are at present under construction.

Switzerland Strives Against the Threats of Inflation.

The Swiss Minister of Finance, Minister Weber, reported at the recent Swiss Parliamentary debate that the Swiss economy had so far escaped inflation. He stated that certain inflationary dangers still exist, but that according to a statement by the Director of the Federal Department of Finance, there is less danger of an inflation now than there was in the previous year.

The Income of the Swiss Railroads in 1951.

An increase in income of seventy million francs was reported by Swiss railroads this year over the previous one. The national railroads transported more than 200 million passengers and almost 22 million tons of goods, their income amounting to 659 million francs.

The Motorisation of the Swiss Agriculture.

Agriculture in Switzerland is becoming more mechanised. There are now three times as many agricultural machines as there were in 1939. At present, approximately 50,000 tractors and reaping machines are in use. These numbers become still more significant if one considers the fact that Switzerland is a very small country and that its productive surface is only a little more than six million acres.

Swiss Machines for America.

The American airplane factory Pratt Whitney has ordered 700,000 dollars worth of machine tools from overseas. The factory placed orders for precision machines in Switzerland and will receive a precision drill from a factory in Zurich and a special lathe from a factory in Schaffhausen.

A New Bus, 56 Feet Long in Zurich.

The Zurich City authorities are testing a new type of transportation because of the rapid growth of the city of Zurich and its traffic. The new type of transportation is a so-called "joined bus," which can also be used as a trolley bus. The bus is 56 feet long, weighs 28 tons, and can carry 184 persons. The joined bus was constructed by a Swiss firm.

The Swiss People Are Spending Their Money For What?

The Swiss Federal Department of Industry, Trade and Work has again published statistics about the average living salaries and spendings of workers' and employees' families. The statistical work was done in 1950 and the results showed a relatively high standard of living and satisfactory social conditions in Switzerland. The average yearly income of those families is a little over 10,000 francs. The largest part of their expenses, about one-third, is used for food, then in order follow rent, clothes, insurance, education, heat, and so on.

English Officers in Central Training Course for Alpine Winter Instruction of the Swiss Army.

On February 15th, one hundred and fifty officers from all army units started the training course in alpine winter instruction at Andermatt. In this course, which is completed in summer by a course for summer alpine instruction, suitable officers are selected to be commanders, instructors or detachment leaders. This course, which lasts two weeks, is also attended by six English officers, who take the opportunity to study our alpine methods. In exchange, Swiss officers attend instruction courses and training camps in the English Army and thus gain valuable experience and knowledge from which our national defence will benefit. After termination of the central course, the English officers will take part, in pairs, during another week in the annual alpine repetition course of the Army Units.

The Number of Workers in Swiss Manufacturing Industries.

Switzerland is a highly-industrialised country, although most people don't think of it that way. They believe that Switzerland is only a land of mountains and lakes. There are numerous industries in Switzerland at the moment, which use the most modern methods known to technical research. The number of factory workers has increased more than half since pre-war times; while in 1937 360,000 workers were employed in 8300 establishments, not less than 546,000 men worked in 11,500 concerns in 1951. The significance of these figures is stressed by the fact that Switzerland has only 4½ million inhabitants.

Prosperity in the Swiss Embroidery Industry.

1951 has been a year of prosperity for the Swiss embroidery industry. There are now 860 embroidering machines in Switzerland working full time, some of them overtime, to catch up with orders. The hand embroidery industry is also prospering. Today, embroidery in clothing, handkerchiefs and linens is in fashion again. In 1951, Switzerland has exported embroideries worth approximately 93 million francs.

Cement Manufacturers Keep Their Prices Low.

Switzerland has used a great deal of cement in 1951, even more than in 1950, which was a record year for the cement business. It is significant thus, that Swiss cement manufacturers raised their prices by 5 per cent. only for the second half of the year while coal prices, e.g., increased 35 per cent., salaries went up, and even the paper bags used for the packing of cement became more expensive. The result is that one ton of Swiss cement now costs ten francs less than a ton bought in a neighbouring country.

The 50th Anniversary of the Swiss Federal Railways.

The Swiss Federal Railways are this year celebrating their fiftieth anniversary. Here are a few figures which will help to explain the extent of this national railway system. The total length of the Federal railway network is approximately 2000 miles. Another 2000 miles are operated by private companies. Only some 60 miles of the nationally-owned lines are still used for steam transportation. Because of the geography of the country, the network includes over 3000 railway bridges and 240 tunnels, the longest of which is the Simplon Tunnel with a total length of 12 miles.

New Types of Watches to be Exhibited at the Industries Fair in Basle.

The watch exhibit shown at the Swiss Industries Fair in Basle has become quite famous in recent years and has attracted increasing numbers of representatives from wholesale and retail establishments who visit the Industries Fair. This year several new items of interest will be exhibited. Not less than four new types of jewelled watches will be shown. Moreover, there will be new types of automatic watches with various patented devices. One of the new models, especially built for engineers, can be used not only as a watch, but also as a slide-rule; in addition to the usual logarithmic scales, it has scales for cubic values and tangents.

Business Turnover in Retail Sales.

1951 retail sales in this country were 6 per cent. higher than in the previous year. This rise in turnover was distributed almost equally among the different branches of business.

ST. GALL . . . A VOCATIONAL TRAINING CENTRE

The School of Textiles and Fashion of the Museum of Arts and Crafts, St-Gail, by Dr. P. Quensel, director.

At the present moment, the artist who wishes to design for the textile industry must satisfy requirements as numerous as they are varied and must possess technical and artistic abilities of a high order. The rapidity of the changes taking place in the field of fashion and in the economic situation demands on his part exceptional powers of adaptation and renewal. It is not surprising therefore that vocational training and development in this field defy all schematic formalism and cannot form part of any programme of instruction intended for the general public.

Under these circumstances, the vocational school fulfils its function when it is capable of giving young men and women special technical knowledge as well as general artistic training, in such a way that in practice the effective collaboration of all those concerned makes possible the creation of textile products which will bear the most critical examination.

Among the Swiss institutes for vocational training in the field of textiles, the St. Gall School of Textiles and Fashion is the ideal vocational and further training school for future textile artists and those who are already working in this field. They find here the guidance and technical facilities that they need in order to perfect their training in certain respects; here, if they work hard, they can acquire the necessary grounding for success in their profession, as designers for the embroidery and fabric printing industries, as hand embroideresses and embroideresses on "Lorraine" machines for the decoration of outer- and underwear, as cutters, dress designers and forewomen in establishments making ready-to-wear and made to measure clothing.

It is 65 years since the St. Gall school started in its red brick building in Vadian Street. "The pleasure of seeing the school and the Museum at last housed together in large well-built and well-appointed premises, ready to go forward together towards their future development, was evident among all sections of the population. In the course of the celebrations organised on this occasion,