

News from Switzerland

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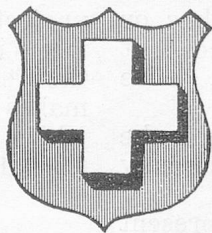
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NEWS FROM SWITZERLAND

An Important Delivery of the Swiss Industry

Swiss industry has recently delivered oil pipes for an American oil company, which make up a length of 200 km. This is a very noteworthy contribution, on the part of the Swiss industry, in the equipment of a foreign concern.

The Launching of a Swiss Ship

Another new Swiss high seas ship was launched from a wharf at Flensburg in Germany recently. It is the *Allobrogia*, a large 10,000-ton motor vessel, which is being built for the "Transports Maritime Suisse outre-mer Ltd." in Geneva. The ship is equipped with a Sulzer diesel engine of 4200 h.p. and can reach a speed of 14 knots. Swiss industry participated quite considerably in the supply of various parts, particularly in the engineering line, for this vessel. The *Allobrogia* will be one of the most modern merchant vessels afloat and is a welcome contribution to the Swiss high seas merchant fleet. She will start operations on the 15th of June.

The Agricultural Population in Switzerland

In the course of a lecture, the director of the federal statistical department recently announced interesting figures which show the movement of the Swiss population in recent times. Between 1850 and 1950 the population in the Swiss cities grew from 6 per cent. of the total to 37 per cent. A hundred years ago more than two-thirds of the Swiss population lived in communes of less than 2000 inhabitants; today they are less than a third. But even so there are only 42 communes in Switzerland today with more than 10,000 inhabitants, that is to say, communes which can be considered as towns in their own right. On the other hand, the five large cities—Zurich, Basle, Berne, Geneva, and Lausanne—together account for nearly a million inhabitants, or about a fifth of the total population. As in other

countries, the agricultural population is becoming constantly smaller. In the past hundred years it has dropped from 37 per cent. to 20 per cent.

In Switzerland Everybody will soon have his Telephone

Telephone traffic made a noticeable increase last year; a total of 704 million calls were registered compared with 657 million in 1950; 58 per cent. of the calls were local, 41 per cent. trunk calls, and the remaining 1 per cent. international calls. There are now 952,000 telephone connections in Switzerland, that is to say, 56,000 more than in the previous year. Quite obviously it will not be long now until everybody in this country has his own telephone.

Tax on Alcoholic and Non-alcoholic Drinks

A tax on drinks, both alcoholic and non-alcoholic, was approved by the Swiss National Council, the lower House. The tax is to help pay for rearmament.

The price of beer in Switzerland, at present about 7½d. per half-pint, has been increased from February 1 by one penny a glass or bottle, irrespective of size. The increase is meant to help public-houses cover their rise in overhead expenses since the price was last raised in 1941.

A New Technical Invention

A young physicist in Lausanne has built an apparatus for steel-tape recordings, which works completely independently and which has a very handy size.

Though this instrument is only 30 cm long, 15 cm wide and 10 cm high, it makes possible all sound recordings and their reproduction by loudspeaker without the need to plug into an electric current. As the apparatus works under all conditions and in all temperatures, it can be used for a great variety of purposes. It weighs only 5 kg.

Despite the small size of the apparatus, the quality of the recordings is excellent, and its batteries are good for 20-30 hours' use.

Because of its many advantages, the apparatus can be profitably employed in many different branches, for reportage work in radio, films or the Press, for field work and even in offices. It would be particularly useful for the army, police and science.

The price of the apparatus, which will soon be mass produced, will be within the reach of many among those interested.

Two Swiss expeditions which are at present at work, the Mount Everest expedition and the one into the interior of the Sahara, are fitted out with this apparatus.

Switzerland and the European Payments Union

The agreement on the European Payments Union must be renewed in less than three months, as it terminates on June 30. The weakness of this organisation is demonstrated by the previous crisis in Germany, and also, the present crisis in Great Britain and France. Because of this, Switzerland has asked for two main reforms in the programme of the European Payments Union. First, the transfer of gold from countries in debt to the Union should be increased and accelerated. And, secondly, Switzerland believes that the Committee of Directors of the OECE should not rely upon intervention after a crisis has broken out in a country and after other countries are affected by it. They should, in the future, act when a country is first threatened by trouble.

A Useful Swiss Invention

A new direction-finding Automat was installed recently in the main railroad station in Zurich. Travellers who are unfamiliar with the city and who wish information about a definite street or house number insert a ten-centime coin into the machine and receive a small detailed map of the desired section. This Automat was constructed by an engineer in Basel, who has studied for years the question of direction-finding in large cities. The apparatus includes a large city-plan which is divided into one hundred areas. Each area has a button which when pressed will eject a printed form written in several languages with instructions about transportation in that particular section. This machine is the first of its kind in Europe and it has aroused interest in other large Swiss cities and in foreign countries.

The Swiss Apparatus of Television on its Way to New York

A new apparatus which will project coloured television on a movie screen has recently been sent from Zurich to New York. The projector is called an Eidophore, and it will be manufactured

by American firms for distribution on the American market, while Switzerland will make the projectors to be used in Europe. The Eidophore is an invention of the late Professor Fischer of the Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich. It makes possible the clear projection of black and white and coloured pictures on surfaces larger than 100 square meters.

THE SWISS SEEN BY A SWISS

(Continued from last issue)

"Oh, you Speak English?"

When the British made the touristic discovery of Switzerland in the last century, they soon found out that successful holidaying was largely dependent on being understood by the natives. But how on earth was it possible to cope with three languages at once, especially as they all sounded so totally different from what stood in the dictionaries? Much to the visitors' relief the Swiss believed in the fact that the customer is always right, and so English became the current language in our holiday resorts.

Beginnings were difficult. Many may remember their first go at pronunciation, which invariably resulted in wondering why **tomb** was pronounced like **boom**, and why **cough** was not pronounced like **ough**. But somehow our forefathers seem to have overcome those set-backs, and more and more people took interest in that "mad" language, which, if not strictly logical, was at least useful.

The belief abroad that the average Swiss speaks English fluently grew slowly and steadily into a myth, and was only strengthened when the following news was spread in London circles. Two English tourists, who were caught in a thunderstorm somewhere in the Bernese Alps, sought refuge in a nearby chalet. In the doorway stood what they thought was a mountaineer, who, much to their surprise, welcomed them in perfect English. They spent the evening conversing on all sorts of subjects, and when the two left the following morning, they muttered under their breath: "Well, I'm blown!" It is only fair to add that this mountaineer was, in fact, a well-known Federal Councillor, who had met with the same misfortune as the two Englishmen, and had exchanged his wet clothes for an alpine outfit.

Nowadays, English is taught all over the country, from the colleges right down to grammar-school, and the attendance of evening-classes is ever-increasing. For those who do not like the idea of going back to classrooms, there is always "English by Radio," a B.B.C. programme gaining daily in popularity. May I, at this stage, express my thanks and admiration for our own "Kurzwellensender Schwarzenburg," whose transmissions are appreciated the world over, as much for its homely touch as for its unprejudiced news.

(To be continued.)