

News from Switzerland

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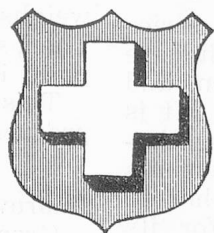
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NEWS FROM SWITZERLAND

Switzerland and the Freedom of Navigation on the Rhine

On the occasion of the international Rhine celebrations, which took place in Basle, M. Max Petitpierre, Federal Councillor, made a speech in which he insisted upon the necessity for Switzerland to possess absolute freedom of navigation on the Rhine.

"We have need," he said, "of this artery leading to the sea, constituted by the Rhine. It has become indispensable to our economy. According to the principle of free competition, the Rhine exercises, for our country, a preponderant influence on the formation of freight on all our import lines."

"At the present time," pursued M. Petitpierre, "a tendency shows itself to put an end to this free competition on the Rhine. We have raised objections against this project for a modification. Indeed, we fear that it might lead to an international directivism as a result of which not only Switzerland, but also economy in general, might suffer."

Switzerland had understood perfectly and had accepted certain restrictions which had been introduced in consequence of the war, but these restrictions—so M. Petitpierre stated—were only to have been of a provisional character. Moreover, formal promises had been made in regard to their suppression, which was to have taken place as soon as economic conditions made this possible. In spite of this, these restrictions have been maintained up to the present. Switzerland has therefore raised her voice in protest against these shackles to freedom, and she will not tire of insisting upon this freedom being restored.

Modern Transport of Cement

During the last few years, important progress has been realised in regard to methods for the transportation of cement. This progress is the result of the construction of large dams, for which a great quantity of cement was required, and thus its transport had to be rationalised.

For the current year, alone, Swiss cement plants have got to furnish 363,000 tons of cement for the building of dams.

One of these new methods consists in the transportation of cement, in vats, capable of containing 400 to 500 kilos each, instead of the sacks which had been used formerly. In the factory, eight of these vats are filled at the same time, automatically. They are mounted on to flat wagons, specially made for this purpose, at the rate of forty-eight vats per vehicle. From the station they are transported to the site of the construction job, by means of road vehicles, trains or telfers, where they can be emptied simply by turning them upside down. All the operations connected with loading and unloading are carried out without any dust being disseminated, and the factory is able to load a truck with 48 vats in a quarter of an hour.

At the present time, the construction job at the Grande Dixence in the Canton of Valais, receives 660 tons of cement daily, which are brought by the railways, on thirty-five flat trucks, as far as Sion.

Something new in the way of progress has also been achieved in this domain through the creation of silo-trucks for railways. Two containers, having a total capacity of 26.5 tons of cement, have been mounted on a two-axle wagon frame. When loaded these wagons attain a gross weight of forty tons and can be pulled at a rate of 100 km. per hour. These silo-trucks are emptied by means of compressed air. The contents of a truck, namely, 26 tons, can thus be unloaded within the space of from eight to fifteen minutes.

Large consumers of cement are expressing the desire, more and more, of receiving this commodity in bulk. Road haulage firms therefore, are also putting silo motor-trucks into operation. These vehicles are fitted up with compressors for the unloading of the cement, the necessary compressed air being furnished by the truck's engine. The container of a five-ton truck can be loaded in eight minutes.

Switzerland Consolidates her Credit on E.P.U.

The Swiss Government has concluded a series of agreements with the countries which are debtors of the European Payments Union, and it now asks the Chambers to ratify them. It is a well known fact that Switzerland is an important creditor of the E.P.U. The agreements which she has just signed have allowed her to consolidate this credit and to provide for its partial reimbursement. At the same time, these agreements form the necessary bases for covering future surpluses.

Switzerland possessed a primordial interest in the maintenance of the Union, but this would not have proved possible without the agreements which have taken place between the creditors and the debtors. Thus, Switzerland was able to renew her participation in this institution, for another year, without the Swiss authorities being obliged to open up new credits.

Development of the Swiss Hat-making Industry

Although the existing 20 concerns belonging to the Swiss hat-making industry are of a definitely artisanal character and only provide employment for no more than 1000 persons, this branch of trade, nevertheless, continues to develop. Its exports have tripled since 1950 and, in 1953, they attained almost 3,000,000 francs.

This Swiss industry only exports high quality hats and owes its success essentially to the finished work characterising its products. It finds its inspiration in Paris, whose models it adapts in such a way as to bring them within the reach of a more widespread range of customers. Owing to the difference in the seasons of the Northern and the Southern Hemispheres, it has been able to assure regular work for itself, all the year round. Sweden ranks first among the customers of the Swiss hat-making industry, followed by the United States of America and then by the Union of South Africa.

New Progress in the Founding Technique

A molding-machine for foundries, which has been perfected by a Swiss undertaking, was shown recently at a specialised exhibition in the United States, where it aroused great interest. The exhibit in question is a twin molding machine, created by the Kallnach Machine Manufactory and Foundry Works. It is already being used in the big Swiss foundries, as well as in several foreign countries, where it is proving to be a great success.

This machine, which is automatic, makes it possible for one operator to accomplish the work of two or three men, by producing the two parts of a sand mold, at the same time. In order to

make this operation possible, the machine, which weighs hundreds of kilos, turns over completely. Then, steel pincers delicately pick up the mold and place it on the conveyor belt.

This new machine brings with it revolutionary progress into the founding technique.

Improving the Quality of Swiss Milk

Great efforts are being made at the present time to improve still further the quality of the Swiss milk. In this connection it is interesting to learn that there exist various categories of milk, the two principal ones being the milk used for the manufacture of cheese and milk for human consumption. In Switzerland, where the quality of the cheese plays a primary part, endeavours have been chiefly directed up to the present towards the breeding of cattle whose milk would be best for the manufacture of the Emmenthal or Gruyere cheeses. As a result, the Swiss milk used for cheese is the very best known, and no other country has succeeded in surpassing its quality.

As for the milk intended for consumption, the situation is somewhat different. Nevertheless, studies recently undertaken in this respect show that, on the whole, Swiss milk possesses all the qualities required of a good milk for drinking purposes. The number of bacteria per centimetre cube is inferior to that to be found in most other countries. It is only the United States which has achieved better results in this particular domain.

ALEXANDRE VINET

Vinet's thought represents one of the purest traditions of the Swiss spiritual inheritance. Besides other traditions, it preserves a necessary balance. Hence the importance of this preservation. Excellent studies have been made of Vinet, not only in Lausanne, Bern, Basle, or Zurich, but in Paris, Amsterdam and other European capitals. Indeed, that the influence of his thought goes beyond the narrow frame of country and confessional milieu is evidenced by the fact that the chapel of one of the Oxford colleges contains a stained glass window dedicated to the memory of the Swiss philosopher.

Alexandre Vinet was born in 1797, at Ouchy, the harbour of Lausanne on Lake Geneva. He came from a family in which French and Piedmontese blood was mixed with that of ancestors of French Switzerland. His father had taught school before becoming a civil servant. He was a fine, learned man, who raised his children in an atmosphere of austere idealism. His mother, who was endowed with an exquisite sensibility, excelled in preserving joy and peace in her home. After studies at the College and Academy of