

News from Switzerland

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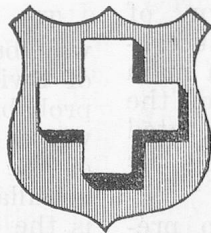
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AUCKLAND.

NOTICE FROM THE CONSULATE

Mr. P-H. Aubaret, Consul-General of Switzerland, will be absent from New Zealand for several months, during which time Mr. Walter Sollberger, who has recently been promoted to the rank of Vice-Consul, will be in charge of the Consulate.

NEWS FROM SWITZERLAND

Switzerland's Participation at International Fairs

For the first time, Switzerland has participated in the International Agricultural Fair at Verona, where she exhibited sixty-five head of prize cattle. The Italian Prime Minister, Antonio Segni, as well as the Minister of Agriculture, Emilio Colombo, visited the Swiss Pavilion, which had been organised by the Swiss Office for Development of Trade.

Switzerland was also represented at the Royal Spring Fair at Utrecht. Queen Juliana of the Netherlands inaugurated this Fair and paid a visit to the Swiss Pavilion, where she was received by the Swiss Minister and by a Director of the Swiss Office for Development of Trade. Swiss official participation made it possible to offer a glimpse of the activities of the chemical and metallurgical industries, of the St. Gall embroidery industry, and of watchmaking and of wine-growing. The fact that Switzerland is the country of tourism par excellence was also recalled.

Zurich's Main - Station Restaurant — Largest on the Continent

Zurich's Main-Station Restaurant, locally known as "Bahnhofbuffet", is said to be the largest eating place on the Continent. Crack Swiss hotelman Primus Bon has run it for 32 years and made it, despite its mammoth size, a gourmet's paradise of distinction. Each of the many dining-rooms, tea-shops and cafes has its own atmosphere which is enhanced by permanent exhibits

of works by well-known Swiss painters and sculptors. Rudolf Candrian, a member of a distinguished Swiss hotelier family, is now succeeding Mr. Bon as "railway station inkeeper" and will endeavour to live up to the traditions of Swiss hospitality. All major Swiss railway stations feature "buffets" which are not only high-class restaurants, but also islands of peace and recreation amidst hustling and bustling surroundings.

A Swiss Creation

The Swiss ribbon manufacturers—most of whom are established in Basle—have just launched quite a new article on the market. This novelty consists of silk ribbons embroidered with charming flower motifs, which can stand being boiled in the wash. Experiments made with white popeline fabrics, ornamented with ribbons, have given most satisfactory results, so that it is anticipated that this Swiss creation will meet with great interest abroad.

Americans Like Swiss Cheese

The United States are good customers of the Swiss cheese-making industry, for, in 1955, imports of Swiss cheeses totalled more than one-fifth of all cheese imports into the United States. The chief purchases are in respect of the hard cheeses, of the Emmental type, and of Swiss processed cheeses in cartons. This last-mentioned category represents nine-tenths of American imports of carton cheeses.

Switzerland's second-largest city, with almost 200,000 inhabitants, is preparing for a number of festivities to celebrate its 2000th anniversary. From the middle of August, 1957, until the autumn this unique historical event will be commemorated by a colourful programme of activities, in which the neighbouring Rhine communities, Augst and Kaiser-augst, will also participate. In the vicinity of these two villages lies the nucleus of the modern Rhine city of Basle, which has risen in the course of the

centuries to be one of Europe's most important railway junctions, and the Roman town of Augusta Rauracorum, founded in the first century B.C., whose imposing ruins are still a main attraction today. Basel itself grew out of the Celtic settlement of Robur and was incorporated to the ancient Augusta Rauracorum by the Roman Emperor Valentinian I.

In spite of its history dating back to pre-Christian pre-Roman times, and its preservation of the medieval character evident in today's old town rich in monuments, Basel is an extremely progressive city known for her interest in art and modern architecture. In this connection it should be mentioned that, in the jubilee year, four new hotels (among them the ultra-modern "International" with more than 100 rooms, all with baths) will open their doors in time for next year's Swiss Industries Fair (April 27th to May 7th, 1957). The reopening of the completely renovated and enlarged Hotel Victoria-National has been scheduled for the autumn of 1957. These modern constructions will add a total of 500 beds to Basel's hotel accommodation.

Switzerland and the so-called Under-developed Countries

The Swiss Government has just passed a decree concerning the bi-lateral technical aid which Switzerland will furnish to countries whose economy is still insufficiently developed. Already last year, the Federal Council took upon itself the obligation to participate in the United Nations' programme of technical aid, and to take measures in favour of those countries which are now in a state of development, this in the form of direct collaboration. The new Federal decree provides for the granting of scholarships, which will enable foreign specialists to complete their studies in Switzerland, and for the sending of Swiss experts to these countries. The annual budget provided for this international collaboration amounts to 300,000 francs.

Saving is a Tradition in Switzerland

Savings have always played a great part in Swiss economy and some recently published statistics inform us that the number of savings books in this country amounts to nearly six millions. This figure is worth mentioning, as Switzerland's population only amounts to five million inhabitants. The savings in question might be termed "small savings," as nine-tenths of all these deposits amount to less than 5,000 francs. The total sum of the capital formed by these savings surpasses eighteen thousand million francs, and this in spite of the fact that the mean rate of interest is only 2.5 per cent.

A Swiss Curiosity

The railway bridge of the Furka-Oberalp Railway, built in one of the most mountainous regions of Switzerland, constitutes a curiosity which is probably unique of its kind in the world. Every winter the traffic has to be interrupted because of the snow. In order to preserve the railway installations during the bad weather, not only is the electric cable taken down, but the bridge, which is thirty-three metres in length, is also taken to pieces, with its rails and rackwork. Put away carefully, the bridge awaits the new season before being once more put into service.

Switzerland's Economic Situation

Mr. Holenstein, the Head of the Federal Department of Public Economy, spoke recently at a session of the Committee of Ministers of the O.E.E.C., which was being held in Paris. In his statement, he drew a picture of Switzerland's economic situation. He stressed the fact that this country is endeavouring to practise an economic policy which aims, at one and the same time, at averting the dangers of a crisis and at preventing undesirable increases in prices and wages. He observed that, at the present time, Swiss economy was flourishing, although the rhythm of the development of production had slowed down somewhat during the last few months. As a matter of fact, the Federal authorities are striving to avoid any excessive expansion, within the framework of the liberal economic principles applied in Switzerland. The Government attaches particular importance to the financial stability of the country. For instance, the budgetary surpluses realised by the Confederation are not used for the amortisation of the Public Debt, but are sterilised in order to put a brake on the intensification of building activities and of investments. At the present time, these sterilised funds exceed the sum of 200,000,000 dollars, and, in Mr. Holenstein's opinion, this "freezing" has proved effective.

In so far as Swiss imports and her recourse to foreign labour are concerned, Switzerland is determined to continue the application of a liberal policy. The liberalisation of imports, carried out in conformity with the stipulations of the O.E.E.C., now exceeds 90 per cent. Last August, Switzerland was employing 320,000 foreign workers, out of a total strength of approximately 2.5 million persons engaged in economic activities. Furthermore, the Federal Government encourages the exportation of capital in order to disencumber the Swiss market. Mr. Holenstein considers that the various measures taken by the Swiss Government have proved justified, but that efforts towards stabilisation must continue to be pursued.

Switzerland's Highest Telepher is Being Built near Zermatt

A telepher is now being constructed in the region of Zermatt, which will be the highest in Switzerland. The first section of this telepher, which will join on to the Stockhorn at an altitude of 3,400 metres, is already being worked, whilst the construction of the second section is being pursued, in spite of temperatures which are below thirty degrees. This construction job is situated at a higher altitude than any other in Europe.

The Time-table Robot

Zurich, Switzerland: A new automatic time-table in the main railway station here can be consulted for information on any destination within Switzerland. All you have to do is to look the place up in the alphabetic list, drop a 20-centimes coin into a key-numbered slot, and pick up a sheet from the official train schedule, popping out of the machine complete with useful particulars on train connections between Zurich and the place in question, restaurants and hotels there as well as a special "bon voyage" surprise—a crossword puzzle. The Swiss Federal Railways intend to put up more time-table robots in other important railway stations throughout Switzerland.

A bet led to the discovery of St. Moritz as a winter sport paradise exactly 90 years ago. It induced a group of Englishmen to follow the somewhat crazy sounding proposal of hotelman Johannes Badrutt to hibernate at St. Moritz. The Englishmen lost their bet, since, contrary to their own predictions, they not only found the glaring winter sun bearable, but simply wonderful. Tanned and beaming with health, they returned to the palefaces of the lowlands—walking advertisements of what has since become the world-renowned fount of youth of the Swiss Alpine winter.

A Cordial Welcome to Mice

Berne, Switzerland.—Visitors to Switzerland almost unanimously declare that the sense of tidiness and spotlessness must be a Swiss national virtue. They like to point out as an example the trim and tidy electric trains of the Swiss Federal Railways, which are paragons of well-scrubbed Swiss living rooms on wheels. A news-hunting journalist has just coaxed the SFR into giving away the secret that among the railways' scrubbing force are whole armies of nice little mice. These mice, it was emphasized, are kept clear of the trains and railway stations, but are

generally on duty in the tunnels which are rather numerous in this alpine country. They are described as "ordinary house mice with a Napoleonic complex," preferring the big "holes" to the small ones in their former (human) homesteads. Entire families are being brought up in the clamour of howling express trains, and some even build their nests right underneath the rail sleepers. As soon as the train has whisked by, they dash forth into action: they eat everything edible thrown out of the windows by train passengers, and once in a while they even devour part of their own litter, which is their idea of birth-control. It is admitted by SFR officials that these nice little mice "save us a good deal of trouble and money" by keeping Swiss tunnels as spotlessly clean as it is the custom with well-bred Swiss housewives (and mousewives).

Vocational Training in Switzerland

The shortage of labour, from which Switzerland is suffering at the present time, is primarily in respect of skilled workers. Although it has proved possible to remedy this, at any rate partially, by having recourse to foreign manpower, pains are being taken also to facilitate technical training in our own country. Great efforts have been made to inform parents and teachers on this subject by means of documentation regarding the various trades. An interesting experiment has also been tried out in the Canton of Valais, where pre-apprenticeship courses have been organised. During several weeks, the young people work in a special kind of boarding-school, where they are shown a number of different trades. During this time, a careful study is made of their characters and their capabilities, thus making it possible, later on, to direct them towards the trade for which they have the greatest aptitude. This example deserves to be imitated, for it happens, only too often, that young people choose a trade about which they know nothing, or very little, and for which they are not suited.

Productivity and Salaries in Switzerland

It is estimated that the productivity of Swiss economy has increased regularly by 1.5 per cent. per annum since the war. Obviously, it is difficult to establish in what way this increase is repartitioned, as Swiss business undertakings have been obliged to devote large sums to investments intended for the modernisation of their plants. Nevertheless, it has been established that wages and salaries have also followed the movement, as the substantial wage of the workers has increased each year by 1.9 per cent., on an average, and the salary of employees has

also risen annually by 1.1 per cent. If one takes into account the increase in cost of living, then the Swiss wage-earner today gets 30 per cent. more than he did in 1939. The growth of Swiss imports during the course of the last few years, and the marked increase in the turnover figures in the Swiss retail trade, are evident proof of a greater purchasing power on the part of the population and of a standard of living which is rising steadily.

Swiss Editions Abroad

In 1955, Swiss exports of books and of periodicals attained the total value of more than 34 million francs. Thus, Switzerland has now become one of the most important exporters of books in the world, after Great Britain, the United States, France and Western Germany. Switzerland's immediate neighbours are, quite naturally, her best customers. France and Western Germany alone buy two-thirds of the books in the world, after Great Britain, the United States, they come third and purchase about one-tenth of the books and periodicals exported by this country.

The Way to the Heights

Berne, Switzerland: There are today in Switzerland no fewer than 340 transport concerns, not including the mountain railways and the Alpine postal services, which further passengers along the "way to the heights." A total of 170 ski-lifts heads the list, followed by 118 suspension cableways which vary from the "open box" type in which the shepherd travels up the Alps, to the cabin-type with accommodation for 40 people which flies straight to the heart of some famous touring and skiing district. In summer there are thirty chair-lifts at the disposal of hikers and plain sight-seers. A further fourteen can be used as ski-lifts in winter and as chair-lifts in summer. In addition, Switzerland possesses four sledge-cableways as well as four lifts and means of transport working on other systems. Eleven new ski-lifts, three chair-lifts and ten suspension cableways are either in full working order already or will be for the opening of the 1957 season.

Swiss Steam Engines Have Served Their Time

Berne, Switzerland: Switzerland, the land of the "white coal," has shown the way towards the electrification of her public transport. In the near future, the few remaining stretches of the Swiss Federal Railway network still run by steam—altogether they only amount to a few

miles in thinly populated districts—will be converted to electrical traction. Thus a last reserve of about 200 steam engines, of which nearly all have been in service for over forty years and which were used especially when there was a breakdown in the electrical power supply, have now been condemned to the scrap heap. It is intended to replace them by some modern Diesel engines which, should the need arise, could likewise be used independent of electric power and which are furthermore so efficient that forty of them can easily take over the work of the 200 ex-service Puffing Billies.

Chefs and Culinary Art—A Swiss Export Article

Zurich, Switzerland: Swiss cooks and their culinary art are in great demand all over the world. No less than nine of the twelve flight kitchens of the American "United Airlines" Company's network are under Swiss management. The Swissair kitchen in New York is yet one more corner stone of the good reputation enjoyed by Swiss cooking in the world of air traffic; recently their chefs won two first prizes at the Forty-first National Hotel Exhibition in New York. What might well be considered as a record performance both as far as quantity and quality are concerned has become an everyday affair for the Swissair kitchen in Zurich—the daily production of tastefully prepared meals for "export," i.e. for passengers of both Swiss and various foreign air companies, has now reached a total well beyond 2000.

The Culinary Corner: "Fondue Vaudoise"

Vevey, Switzerland: According to pocket travel books and reports from enthusiastic tourists it looks as if "fondue," the tasty cheese dish which is a favourite with French-Swiss families, is becoming more and more the national dish for the whole of the country. Here is the authentic recipe of a housewife from Canton Vaud for the customary preparation of "Fondue vaudoise": Take a clove of garlic and then rub the inside of the "Caquelon"—as the earthen Fondue bowl is called—then add and gently warm four glassfuls of dry white wine, 1.5 to 2 pounds of grated Gruyere cheese and then mix in two tablespoonfuls of flour. Then let it cook over a medium-sized flame, stirring continuously, until the liquid thickens. Spice according to taste with salt, pepper and perhaps nutmeg and then serve together with a liquor glass full of Kirsch (Swiss cherry-brandy). The "Fondue" is dished up, complete with a little spirit stove, which is the signal for everyone to set to with forks and bits of bread and to clean up the "Caquelon." Guests from abroad who visit Vevey and other charming little places on the shores of majestic

Lac Lemman (Lake of Geneva) will find that the start of many a friendship is made over a "Fondue" meal in one of the many "pintes" as the locals call their picturesque little inns.

Ten million five hundred thousand people visited the last Swiss National Exhibition, which took place in Zurich in 1939. In view of the greater mobility of the younger generation which, generally speaking, has become much fonder of travel, some 15 to 20 million visitors are expected to attend the next Swiss National Exhibition, which is being held in Lausanne in 1964.

The best-educated schoolchildren in the whole of Europe are to be found in the Swiss canton of Vaud. Whilst the number of hours devoted to compulsory school-education for the whole of Europe averages from 8000 to 9000 hours, the youngsters of Canton Vaud have far surpassed the figure of 10,000. The number of lessons given is rather less for other parts of Switzerland, as well as for Scandinavia, Great Britain and Germany.

A cinema with accommodation for 450 people is to be built in the near future in the huge main hall of the main railway station of Zurich, which, in the early days of the steam engine, was considered to be the largest on the Continent. A continuous film programme, showing for the most part newsreels and travelogue, will be shown from 10 a.m. up to midnight.

In Switzerland there are about 600 cinemas with a total of 200,000 seats. It is estimated that 100,000 people visit the cinema each day, which gives a sum total of 700,000 per week and over 35,000,000 for the whole year. The sale of tickets realises 70,000,000 Swiss francs a year. Every year the cinema owners pay the Treasury 9,000,000 Swiss francs in patent fees and taxes.

It is now possible to make the trip up the Rhine from the North Sea to Switzerland with all the comfort of an ocean voyage by travelling in the modern Swiss motor-ship "Basilea," which is the Italian name for Basle, its home port. The ship is powered by three 450 h.p. motors and can carry 55 passengers, accommodated in 27 double cabins and one single cabin. Further comforts on board include elegantly furnished social rooms and several promenade decks.

Switzerland and the GATT

Switzerland recently submitted an application for admission to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, known under the name of

GATT. This candidacy is a conditional one, as Switzerland wishes to reserve to herself the right to maintain the special regulations which govern the importation of agricultural produce and of cereals, in order to ensure the normal provisioning of the country. In spite of these restrictions, the Eleventh Session of GATT gave favourable consideration to Switzerland's application which was accepted. However, Switzerland's accession in the capacity of an associated member, has not yet taken place. This will only take place later on, on the basis of bilateral tariff negotiations between Switzerland and the contracting parties of the GATT. Switzerland's provisional accession to the GATT has been envisaged, nevertheless, in order that she may be able to take part in the work of GATT, without having to wait for her definite adherence.

The Forty-first Swiss Industries Fair—"Focal Point of Interest"

Basle, Switzerland: The Swiss Rhine city of Basle will be accommodating the Swiss Industries Fair for the forty-first time from April 27 to May 7, 1957. In 1956 a record number of 750,000 visitors from 86 different countries was recorded as well as 30,000 foreign buyers. In more than twenty departments, which vary from displays of watches and machinery to the elegant pavilions "Creation" and "Madame-Monsieur," which show the latest Swiss fashions, there will be exhibited once more an excellent thematic and artistic cross-section of the productions of a small country poor in raw materials but rich through specialising in the production of high-quality goods. The official poster and the advertising material for the Forty-first Swiss Industries Fair consist of gay variations on a prize-winning design by the internationally famous Swiss commercial artist, Herbert Leupin, who has added the motto "The Focal Point of Interest" to the emblem of the Basle Fair, Mercury's winged cap adorned with a Swiss cross.

NEWS OF THE COLONY

Swiss in Wellington to Hold Picnic

Twice already the Swiss in Wellington have tried to have a picnic party, and both times the weather was unfavourable and the project had to be postponed.

On February 10th, this picnic will be held—rain or no rain—and everybody is cordially invited to take part. We will meet at 10 o'clock at the Cenotaph, Lambton Quay.