

News from Switzerland

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NEWS FROM SWITZERLAND ★ ★ ★

AN EFFICIENT STAFF

In the Swiss Federal Railways, there are 50 railway officials for every 100,000 train kilometers. This very high degree of efficiency is bettered only by the Dutch railway companies (38 officials).

From the point of view of wages, Swiss Federal Railway officials come third (13,800 Swiss francs per official) after the United States and Canada. Fourth come the Swedish Railways with 13,300 Swiss francs. (OSEC)

SWITZERLAND AND AID TO OTHER COUNTRIES

In 1953, the part played by Switzerland in technical co-operation in favour of countries in the process of development totalled an expenditure of some 12 million Swiss francs, under the terms of the 60 million francs loan voted in 1961. So far, 48 million francs of this loan has been used for aid to 74 countries, 34 of them in Africa, 21 in Asia, 12 in Latin America and 7 in Europe.

The expenditure of private organisations, for the same purpose, has averaged about 20 million francs a year, to which should be added the contributions of Swiss towns and cantons. (OSEC)

THERE REALLY IS A SWISS NAVY!

It is quite surprising that a small country without direct access to the sea should possess a fleet of its own. And yet today 32 modern ships flying the Swiss flag are registered with the Swiss Shipping Office. Their total gross tonnage amounts to 165,595 and they are owned by 13 Swiss companies with headquarters in Switzerland. Twelve of these ships are tramp steamers while the others operate on regular runs.

The Swiss high seas fleet was created during the second World War to ensure national supplies. At the beginning of the war, Switzerland chartered Greek ships. Subsequently the Confederation purchased four ships and Swiss firms seven. Four ships were lost during the war. Since there were very few sailors of Swiss nationality at the time, the crews had to be recruited from foreign nationals and were often heterogeneous in the extreme. To complicate matters still further, only nationals of neutral or at least non-belligerent nations were eligible. Then began the "helvetisation" of the crews which is still continuing today, not for any nationalistic reasons but simply because a growing number of Swiss boys are answering the call of the sea.

Obviously the possession of such a fleet does not make Switzerland one of the leading maritime powers. And yet, another paradox, it is a Swiss firm, Sulzer Ltd., which, in 1963, headed the 36 big firms making diesel engines for ocean-going ships. Last year, in fact, 121 ships were fitted out with Sulzer engines.