

The Swiss ocean-going fleet

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all goes well, the flights are to begin in June, that is at the starting time of the real mass exodus of British motorists towards the European Continent.

Art lover's stroll through Winterthur

While strolling through the Markt-gasse (Market Street) at Winterthur, a street where no cars are permitted, the open colonnade of the "Rathaus" (not to be confused with the monumental "Stadthaus" or city hall, built outside of the Old City by the famous architect Gottfried Semper) catches our eye. The excellently renovated group of buildings with a neo-classical front and a charming shopping arcade along the main floor has found space in beautifully panelled rooms for a collection of paintings endowed by a citizen of Winterthur. It comprises about 70 pictures, mainly by Dutch and German masters of the 17th to the 19th century. In the hall on the upper floor we discover an important collection of watches and clocks. It shows the development of the watchmaker's art, ranging from Gothic iron clocks to elegant wall clocks and watches of the 18th century. — The Art Museum ("Kunsthalle") is on the second floor of the former "Waaghaus" (weighing house) on the same Market Street. A striking building because of its late Gothic windows and bright red colour, it was built in the 16th century and originally served as the town's commercial and social centre. Today it contains a puppet theatre, a public reading room and the exhibition hall of the "Kunsthalle" (Art Museum). At present there is a display of pictures by the Zurich artist Karl Hosch. — However, we must not leave Winterthur without jotting down the three main sights for our next visit to the city: the impressive gallery of the Oskar Reinhart Foundation with collections of German and Swiss paintings; the lovely museum of local history at the "Lindengut" with historic interior decorations and other historic antiquities and, a little outside the city, the most famous collection of Oskar Reinhart at "Rom-erholz" with masterpieces of European painting of the great periods.

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THE SWISS OCEAN-GOING FLEET

Articles about the Swiss Navy seem to come back recurrently in the columns of this paper. Readers will, we hope, forgive us for printing this article received by courtesy of OSEC (Office Suisse d'Expansion Commerciale) because it is uncommonly rich in detail, and will forever rebut those who still think that the Swiss Navy is a myth!

Although situated in the heart of Europe over 300 miles from the nearest sea, Switzerland is still one of the shipping nations. We are not referring here to her shipping on the country's many lakes, or even to her river navigation on the Rhine, which started over 60 years ago, but to her ocean-going shipping. Compared with the big maritime powers, the Swiss ocean-going fleet is naturally minute; compared to the smallness of the country however, its size appears in a different light. In April 1941, in order to overcome the increasing difficulties which the country was coming up against in its efforts to obtain necessary supplies, the Federal Council decided to purchase and fit out a certain number of ships which together with the vessels belonging to Swiss ship-owners, were used to ensure the country's replenishment of vital supplies. In spite of many difficulties, this small fleet succeeded in bringing indispensable foodstuffs from overseas, in exchange for Swiss export products. At the end of the war, the ships belonging to the Confederation were sold to Swiss ship-owners. Numbering eight vessels at the time of its creation, today the fleet possesses 32 vessels sailing the seas all over the world; it has thus almost quadrupled in size in the last 30 years.

The right of countries deprived of their own seaboard to sail the seas under their own flag was recognised at the International Transport Conference in Barcelona in 1921. Swiss legislation submits navigation under the Swiss flag to the supervision of the Federal Political Department, which exercises it through the Swiss Office for Maritime Shipping in Basle, the only port for the registration of ships. Only vessels belonging to a company which can prove its capital to be purely Swiss in origin, which has its registered office in Switzerland and an effective management in the country are permitted to fly the Swiss flag. Consequently a Swiss ship-owner owning a ship jointly with a foreign ship-owner cannot sail it under the Swiss flag and has to register it in another country. The shipping company Suisse-Atlantique Co. Ltd. in Lausanne, for example, owns 4 ships sailing under the Liberian flag, in addition to 8 vessels registered in Basle.

Ship-owners are free to do what they like with their ships and may do charter work for foreigners; in time of war, however, their vessels would have to be played at the Confederation's disposal. Furthermore, the Confederation makes its contribution to the development of the national fleet by granting ship-owners loans in the form of maritime mortgages, sometimes amounting to as much as 75%, or by guaranteeing the loans granted by banks for the modernisation of fleets (construction and purchase of new vessels).

With 32 modern ships—their average age being about 12 years—with a total displacement of 300,000 dwt, Switzerland's ocean-going fleet comes 40th among the world's fleets. The biggest ship is the "Romandie", a 32,750-ton cargo-boat, while the smallest, the "Léman" is a coastal vessel of 440 tons, reserved exclusively for the shipment of wine in the Mediterranean. In addition to another ship of the same type and two refrigerator ships, the Swiss fleet comprises 28 cargo-boats, able to carry a limited number of passengers (12 at the most); half the 24 ocean-going vessels, whose tonnage varies between 3,000 and 32,750 dwt, run on regular services, while the other half act as tramp ships, that is to say they do not make regular trips but take cargo such as cereals, ores, etc., when and where it offers and to any port. The recent growth of Switzerland's private merchant fleet means that countries all over the world with direct access to the sea have had an opportunity of seeing the Swiss flag flying in one or other of their ports, whether in Canada, with a ship loading cereals, in Japan, delivering a cargo of phosphates from North Africa, or in Europe, unloading timber from the Philippines.

The Swiss, in spite of their reputation as a mountain people, also have the sea in their blood; in fact, over half the 920 men forming the crews of the 32 ships are Swiss. 120 other Swiss seamen are employed on foreign ships or ships belonging to Swiss ship-owners but not sailing under the Swiss flag. Like the fleet itself, the development of crews of Swiss nationality has progressed satisfactorily. In fact, to start with, crews were composed almost exclusively of foreigners, for the most part Germans and Italians, even though many Swiss had already served on foreign ships before the first World War. Today Swiss sailors occupy the most varied posts: on the upper-deck, in the engine-room, radio and supplies. Of the 32 ships, 12 are commanded by Swiss captains, while 15 deck officers

out of a total of 70 are also Swiss nationals.

As Switzerland has no naval school of her own, young Swiss sailors wishing to become officers or captains have to attend foreign establishments and pass an examination recognised by the Shipping Office. By virtue of a decree for the encouragement of the vocational training of Swiss captains and seamen, the Confederation pays subsidies to candidates, generally amounting to one-third of the expenses involved in these comparatively expensive studies; in some cases, this financial help may even amount to two-thirds of the cost. In addition, certain ship-owners grant loans to specially qualified members of their crews wishing to perfect their training. In this way, Switzerland is sure of having Swiss crews on whom it can rely under all circumstances.

Although she imports over 6 million tons of petroleum products annually, Switzerland has no tankers of her own. This deficiency is a result of the structure of the petroleum market, since the big foreign companies which supply the Swiss market are organisations handling all operations right through from the initial prospecting to the final refining. Under these circumstances, the Swiss importer, forming an integral part of the chain, has no part to play in the field of transport.

The future of Swiss shipping is to a large extent bound up with the development of both national and world trade, since Swiss ship-owners also work for foreign principals. With Switzerland's trade steadily growing and world trade expanding considerably, the Swiss merchant navy's prospects are exceedingly promising.

(OSEC)

SWISS TECHNICAL NOVELTIES

A Swiss firm in Zurich recently launched a new hand-operated mechanical-hydraulic press which can be used for all sorts of pressing or truing. It replaces not only the light hand-presses used for bending, riveting, marking, etc., but also the more powerful presses for truing, stamping, punching, cutting, trimming and drifting. It is particularly well suited therefore to assembly works where light precision work frequently alternates with heavier work, but where space is insufficient for installing two different presses which in addition could not both be used full time. The press is driven mechanically by a cross-head, pinion and rack, for pressures up to 1.5 tons and by a two-speed hydraulic hand-pump with automatic gear change, for pressures up to 15 tons. It can be fitted with a special accessory for truing shafts, bolts, tubes, profiles and welded parts; this device plays a two-fold role: checking the loss of true, by means of a built in comparator, and truing—two operations that are carried out alternately, immediately after each other. The total travel of the press, amounting to 380 mm, comprises the mechanical run of the cylinder (220 mm) and the hydraulic stroke of the piston (160 mm). With a span of 280 mm, the press can take parts up to 550 mm in diameter; the height of the space between the cylinder guide and the table, which measures 450 mm, can be increased to 650 and even 800 mm by means of a lower table that can be set at two different heights.

Visitors to the 6th Building Machinery Fair, which was recently held in Basle, were able to see an automatic road-kerb building machine presented

by a firm at Renens (Vaud, Switzerland). This new machine, launched on the market after several years of intensive study and tests, is designed for on the spot manufacture of road kerbs in vibrated reinforced concrete. An ingenious casting system enables it to be used for any type of kerb, of different radius and shape. In addition it is possible to make kerbs for medium-radius curves as well as small curves with small profiles. When using this road-kerb making machine, it is not necessary to have a level surface, for it runs in irons which guide it. In order to avoid slowing up the working of the machine, the trenches prepared in advance must be filled with concrete just before it passes. The concrete placed in the loading hopper is taken by a screw and pushed into the mould, where a special device makes it vibrate. If the mould is changed, the kerb-making machine can also be used for making gutters. Although it is difficult to work out its actual output, which depends on the profile, the cross-section and the supply of concrete, it can nevertheless be estimated that this machine, with the assistance of two labourers, will lay from 500 to 875 yards of kerb a day. (OSEC)

CHEMISTS CAMPAIGN FOR PUBLIC HEALTH

The Association of Swiss Chemists has worked out a programme to improve the health of the public. It has staged a national competition in favour of the environment with a 10,000 franc prize. Each participant is invited to write an essay no longer than a page on the subjects of health, water, air, traffic, food, nature, fauna, noise, accommodation and effluents. The motto of this competition is: "For a healthier and more beautiful life".

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