

Home news

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HOME NEWS

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FEDERAL.

SWISS AIR PORTS.

In every civilised country there is a law which compels airplanes arriving from a foreign country to land at a customs air port in order to fulfil the necessary duty and passport formalities. Only after having done this is the pilot free to land in other parts of the country.

Switzerland possesses seven customs air ports and twenty-four air ports for internal traffic. In comparison with other countries Switzerland, with an area of sixteen thousand square miles, much of which is impracticable for landing, has relatively the largest number of air equipped for air touring.

The custom air ports are in three categories. Those permanently attended by customs officials are in the first category and are at Bâle-Birsfelden, Geneva-Cointrin and Zurich-Dübendorf. It will be noted that in the case of large cities, the name bracketed to it indicates the suburb in which the air port is situated. It is from these three that the main international lines radiate to other European centres.

Any pilot wishing to start from an air port in the second category has to give notice so that a customs official may be present. Berne-Belpmoos, Lausanne-Blecherette and St. Gall-Altenrhein are in this section. The only air port in the third category is Eplatures, serving the towns of La-Chaux-de-Fonds and Le Locle, which has no officials continually on duty.

The first air port to be used for civil services was Lausanne where a civil air training school was established during the war.

The first modern air port for civil aviation was at Bâle-Birsfelden, created in 1924. Bâle is the main entrance to Switzerland from North and North West Europe, both by air and rail. A night postal air service to Frankfurt a/M was inaugurated in 1934.

Geneva-Cointrin was the starting point of the first regular international line and the port is being reconstructed on the lines of the Zurich and Bâle stations.

The conditions at Zurich were at first rather unsatisfactory as both military and civil aeroplanes had to use the same ground. But Zurich now possesses a huge civil air port, fully equipped with buildings constructed according to modern architectural practice.

The air port of Berne is noted for its lovely surroundings and it is the starting place for the famous Alpine air cruises.

FINANCIAL POSITION ON THE FEDERAL RAILWAYS.

Although the financial position of the Swiss Federal Railways and associated transport undertakings has been mentioned frequently in these columns as giving rise to serious criticism and genuine anxiety, it is significant that in 1934 the surplus of earnings over expenditure amounted to fr. 96,715,000, a higher figure than in either of the two preceding years. This improved state of affairs is due entirely to the determined effort that has been made to reduce expenditure, which has come down from all but fr. 260 millions in 1932 to under fr. 236 millions last year. This reduction has much more than counterbalanced the continued fall in receipts amounting to just about fr. 10 millions in the same period.

So that although the surplus is still insufficient to meet the interest due upon the capital debt, it shows a healthy improvement, which can be accelerated sufficiently to meet the interest charges — upon which this land of tourists has so greatly to depend — become more favourable to visitors from abroad. A few comparative figures for the last three years are as follows: —

	1932	1933	1934	
Passengers carried	(millions)	116.9	114.9	113.7

Goods carried

	(millions tons)	15.3	14.8	15.1
Receipts (million fr.)		342.9	336.6	332.9
Expenditure (million fr.)		259.7	247.1	235.9

It is satisfactory to note that the goods tonnage is beginning to show an upward tendency and even the rate of fall in passengers seems inclined to slow up, but the total fall in receipts is still serious.

R.G.

MINISTER STUCKI.

Great efforts are made in Commercial and Industrial circles in Switzerland to retain the services of Minister Stucki, who has proved to be such a successful negotiator. As will be remembered, Minister Stucki has expressed a wish to be relieved of his post at the end of the current year.

UNEMPLOYMENT IN SWITZERLAND.

At the end of June, 59,678 unemployed were registered or 6,000 less than at the end of May. This figure still exceeds last year's figure by 12,700.

REICHSMARKS IN SWITZERLAND.

A decree from the Swiss Ministry of Economy makes it a severe offence as from 22nd July to deal in German reichsmarks in Switzerland.

It was found that German tourists in Switzerland were able to buy Rm.100 at the rate of exchange of Sw.Frs.104, the parity being Frs. 123.45. German transport firms, it is revealed, did the same.

The difference between the low rate of exchange and the parity ran into many million francs owing to these speculative purchases of reichsmarks in Switzerland.

In view of the fact that such purchases endanger the Swiss-German clearing agreement, the Swiss Ministry of Economy decided to prohibit dealings in reichsmarks throughout Switzerland.

MYSTERY PLAY AT EINSIEDELN.

The famous Mystery Play of the Spanish classic Calderon, "The great World's Theatre," is performed every Wednesday and Saturday evening in front of the magnificent Baroque Church of the Einsiedeln Abbey. The Play begins with the Creation and ends with the Last Judgment. In the beginning God creates, from chaos, the human souls, who appear before him to obtain the rôles they must play in life, representing a king, a peasant, a beggar, a rich man, Wisdom, Beauty, etc. For a short while their joys and passions fill their lives with action, till Death approaches and they are brought before the throne of Judgment. Hundreds of performers act in this Play, which leaves a deep impression in the minds of the audience. The Play is staged by Dr. Oscar Eberle, who has also adapted the Spanish text in a good modern translation.

"WILLIAM TELL" PERFORMANCES IN INTERLAKEN.

Schiller's drama of the liberation of Switzerland from the Austrian yoke in 1291, "Wilhelm Tell," is the most popular of various similar works on the subject, and almost each phrase of this piece rests in the memory of the Swiss as a proverbial saying. Ever since the 16th century pieces treating this subject have been played at Altdorf, which is historical — and for the Swiss almost sacred ground. Taking the steamboat at Lucerne, the tourist can make a tour of the lake, passing the historic Rutli, where the patriotic pact was originally concluded by representatives of the ancient four cantons, and Tell's Chapel, which was founded in commemoration of his heroism.

At Interlaken about 300 persons participate in the performances, which are given every Sunday at both places. At Interlaken the performances are in the open-air, a whole village serving as the stage, across which two dozen hunters race past the covered stand on their horses. The stand can seat 2,000 persons. In both towns the regular Sunday performances are given from July to September.

CLIMBERS KILLED IN ALPS BY FALLING STONES.

Snow is melting rapidly on the higher Alpine peaks, with the consequence that the danger of falling stones is now great.

On Sunday two Genevese alpinists were seriously injured by falling stones in the Mont Blanc range, and on Monday two other Swiss

climbers were killed. One, Herr Fricker, of Basle, was struck on the head while descending from the Breithorn above Lauterbrunnen; the other, M. A. Pellau, of Canton Valais, was knocked down on the mountains above Champex. A Swiss tourist fell over a precipice while gathering wild flowers on the Alpetli in the Bernese Oberland, and a young student of Basle, Herr H. Müller, fell down a rock wall above Zermatt and fractured his skull.

SWISS GOLD INFLOW.

The Swiss National Bank return for the week ended 15th July shows that gold holdings increased by Sw.Frs.31,300,000 (approximately £2,086,600) to Sw.Frs.1,252,200,000 (£83,480,000), which is the highest gold influx recorded in 1935. Gold exchanges slightly dropped by Sw.Frs. 700,000 to Sw.Frs.10,500,000.

On 15th July notes in circulation and other sight obligations were covered by 80.59 per cent. of gold stocks, and gold exchanges compared with 77.14 per cent. a week ago.

SWISS PRIEST MURDERED.

A Swiss Missionary, M. Anton Joerg, who was stationed at Mongudatuin in Northern Manchukuo was kidnapped and murdered by bandits.

M. Joerg was 33 and had been in the East since 1929. Last winter his work brought him to the northern frontier of Manchukuo. There he found thousands of White Russians who had fled from the Soviet provinces of Eastern Siberia, encamped along the southern bank of the Amur River. He made two journeys to the refugees during the winter and was preparing to visit them again when he was attacked by the bandits.

He had several encounters with outlaws, escaping successfully each time, sometimes after being robbed and maltreated, and other times amid a shower of bullets.

During the recent hard times in northern Manchukuo he did much to relieve the distress of the suffering farmers and won the esteem of the Government and the people.

A "SILENCE WEEK" AT ZURICH.

The experiment of a "silence week" for traffic tried at Zurich during the first week of July was a complete success. The police report states that the suppression of sound-signals in the centre of the town showed such signals to be unnecessary, and that a general prohibition might well be attempted.

The most disciplined road-users were the motorists and the next the cyclists, except users of delivery cycles. The category most difficult to educate was the pedestrians, and more particularly women. The results of this "silence week" were much appreciated by business people.

As compared with the preceding week, accidents numbered 61 against 101, and those in which persons were injured 25 against 38. The week is to be extended to a year, and attention is to be turned to two other sources of noise — carpet-beating and the wireless.

JUBILEE OF LIFE-BOAT ASSOCIATIONS OF LAKE GENEVA.

Fifty years ago the towns situated on the shores of Lake Geneva formed Lifeboat Associations, as fishermen and holiday-makers are in great danger when a storm breaks on this large lake in winter. On July 20-21 an international Jubilee fête will be held at Ouchy — Lausanne, on which occasion a great fireworks display, rowing and swimming competitions and a pageant will be organised.

LEOPOLD ROBERT MEMORIAL EXHIBITION IN CHAUX-DE-FONDS.

Leopold Robert, the Swiss painter, was a great artist, some of whose classical pictures are the pride of the Museum of Neuchâtel. To commemorate the hundredth anniversary of his death, an exhibition has been organised, which contains a great number of his masterpieces. This exhibition will be held from July 20th, till September 22nd in his native town La Chaux-de-Fonds.

MONKEYS RUN RIOT IN GENEVA.

The escapades of a troop of monkeys, fugitives from the local zoo, have kept the city of Geneva in a state of amusement for the past twenty-four hours.

The monkeys arrived at the zoo, which has been recently opened, only last week and were housed on a mass of rocks surrounded by a moat filled with water. Workmen repairing the moat yesterday left it dry during the lunch interval

and returned to find that the thirty denizens of the rocks had seized the opportunity of exploring the international city.

A number of the monkeys were seated on the roof of a neighbouring building from which any number of succulent bananas could not tempt them. The reason for this was clear when an irate householder discovered that his kitchen had been raided. The least appealing of the exploits of this particular group was when one of them captured a rare water fowl from the zoo and solemnly plucked it alive.

LOCAL.

BASLE.

For the second time within three weeks the offices of the French Consulate in Basle were visited by burglars. The first time an amount of 500 frs. was taken and the second time nearly 2,000 frs. disappeared.

On going to Press we hear that the Petrol Tanks at the Swiss Federal Railways station goods Depot in Basle caught fire. Heavy explosions occurred, the entire Fire Brigade of the town and surrounding villages have been summoned. Two people were seriously injured.

The accounts of the Municipal Tramway Co., for the first 6 months show a deficit of 230,967 frs.

ZURICH.

M. Emile Hardmeier from Uster, a member of Parliament (National Council) since 1917 is not seeking re-election. (The parliamentary elections are taking place in autumn of this year.)

Two detectives of the cantonal Police were shot at, when they questioned a cyclist whom they suspected. They made use of their revolvers in self defence, and the man was killed. Investigations have proved that the man, named Otto Bickel had a very bad criminal record.

The death is reported from Zurich of Dr. E. Cesane, a well-known advocate, at the age of 81.

GENEVA.

From Geneva comes the news of the death of M. Louis Chauvet, a former President of the Municipal Council.

BERNE.

The "Niesen" Railway has celebrated its 25th anniversary, the first train leaving for the "Niesen-Kulm" on the 15th of July 1910.

LUCERNE.

A monument erected to the memory of Isabelle Kaiser, the well-known writer was inaugurated at Beckenried. The monument was executed by the sculptor Hans von Matt.

THURGAU.

National-Councillor Ullmann and States-Councillor Böhi, will not contest their seats at the next Parliamentary elections. Dr. Ullmann entered Parliament in 1911 and M. Albert Böhi is a member since 1910.

AARGAU.

Max Koenig, late manager of the firm Frikart, A.G., Ironmongers in Zofingen, has been condemned to three years imprisonment for fraudulent bankruptcy.

NEUCHÂTEL.

Dr. E. Morel, for fifty years (1883-1933) Professor of Theology at the University of Neuchâtel, has died at the age of 77. Professor Morel was a *doctor honoris causa* of the Universities of Glasgow and Padua.

ST. GALLEN.

M. Jakob Herzog, who was a teacher at the "Städtische Knabenschule" in St. Gall for 49 years, has celebrated his 90th birthday anniversary.

NEW ALPINE ROAD.

A new road is approaching completion in Switzerland which will form an important and long-desired link between the Engadine and Canton Ticino.

At present there is no road along the north western shore of the Lake of Lugano, and travellers to St. Moritz must proceed to the southern end of the lake and cross through Italy round the hills bordering the Lake of Como before they can turn north eastwards along its western shore to Cadenabbia, Menaggio, and Chiavenna, and so to the Maloja Pass.

The new road will obviate this detour. It runs north eastwards from Lugano along the lake to Porlezza in Italy at the lakehead, and thence on to Menaggio, where it reaches the old route. This Italian section has been in existence for many years, but it has hitherto stopped some way short of the Swiss frontier. On the Swiss side proposals for cutting a road along the lake shore have been advanced since 1869, but owing partly to their difficulty, and more especially to their effect on the natural beauty of the district, they have not been executed.

A road along the lakeside would have ruined its picturesque character: it would have marred the famous Rock of Gandria, and destroyed the whole charm of the village of Gandria, at present unapproachable except by water or the footpath which climbs over the Rock. The village clings to the steep hillside with its feet in the lake.

The new road, therefore, has been cut high up on the cliffs, so as to pass above the Rock and the village. The people of Gandria regret the number of steps which they will have to climb to reach the road, but they must realise that to cut a road through the arched alleyways of their village would rob it of all attraction for visitors.

The existing road, which runs to the summit of Monte Bre from the village of Castagnola, now a suburb of Lugano, has been widened and straightened to a point where it makes a hairpin bend some 300 feet above the lake. Here the completely new section begins. It soon enters a curving tunnel and issues on to the side of a deep cleft in the mountain side. The road crosses this on a viaduct carried on stone arches, and enters a second tunnel lit at intervals by side shafts, through which are glimpses of the lake below and the mountains on the far side.

Further on the road runs along an almost precipitous stretch of cliff, protected at places by covered galleries against falls of rock, and cuts through a third tunnel above the Rock of Gandria. Passing above the red roofs of the village it begins a gentle descent towards the Italian frontier. A paved footpath, a metre wide, occasionally juts out beyond the road over the cliffs.

The way runs through vineyards, olives, and cypresses. The cliffs are covered with luxuriant vegetation, the product of the Italian sun and the frequent showers; lizards run about the stones, and the workmen are sometimes startled by discovering snakes of imposing length — always considered deadly — sleeping under paving stones. Over the lake buzzards fly, mewing and swooping to pick up refuse from the surface. They are highly regarded in these parts as scavengers, keeping the lake cleaned of carrion.

Gandria is the last Swiss village, and the Italian frontier is reached at another tunnel which pierces a huge rock bastion dividing the two countries. On the other side, the traveller is in the district known to readers of Fogazzaro's novels as "Il Piccolo Mond Antico." The lovely little towns of Orta and San Mamette, standing among cypresses and oleanders at the lakeside, lead through the Val Solda to the lakehead at Porlezza, and so over the hills to the Lake of Como at Menaggio.

It is hoped to open the new road for traffic in October, and by arrangement with the Italian Government, Swiss mail coaches will then maintain a daily direct service between Lugano and St. Moritz, passing through Italian territory. The run is expected to take four hours. Private cars and tourists coaches hope to do the journey in three hours.

The road will be a boon to all those who want to make a quick exchange between the snows of St. Moritz and the more languid delights of Lugano, and will also make a notable addition to the scenic highways of Europe. It is comparable both in construction and beauty with Axenstrasse round Lake Lucerne, but will be unique in Switzerland as an Alpine road passing through Italian lake scenery.

O.

COMMODITY MARKETS.

The Swiss Bank Corporation has issued a second edition of its useful booklet dealing with the organisation and working of the principal commodity markets. The text, which has been revised and enlarged, has been compiled in consultation with authorities in the various branches of trade which are described. Copies of the booklet may be obtained on application to the Swiss Bank Corporation, 99, Gresham Street, E.C.2.

HERE AND THERE IN THE ALPS.

Miniature Sketches.

Of the three little mountain states Uri, Schwyz and Unterwalden which pronounced their declaration of independence in the "Ewiger Bund," or perpetual pact, on August 1st, 1291, Schwyz has ever since remained the heart of Switzerland. It has given the Confederation its name (Schweiz) and its coat-of-arms, with a change only having been made in the shape and placing of the cross. It is said that the original flag of Schwyz was entirely red, and the little white cross which now appears in the upper right hand corner was a distinction bestowed upon the Schwyzers after a campaign at Besançon. The federal flag displays its cross in larger form directly in the center of the red field, and this same arrangement, but with colours reversed, was, as a compliment to Switzerland, adopted by the International Red Cross Society, which came into being at Geneva on August 22nd, 1864, with Jean Henri Dunant, a philanthropic citizen of Geneva as its founder.

That Schwyz, the tiny cantonal capital, and the districts of Steinen, Seewen, Auf Iberg, Brunnen and the Muotta valley, which made up the state in the beginning, were much more populated in their early days, is indicated by the historic records showing, for instance, that 1,500 men of Schwyz participated in the Besançon campaign, also by the fact that of the three pioneer cantons Schwyz assumed leadership.

A delightful patrician atmosphere prevails to-day yet in the little town of Schwyz, which is impressively located at the base and on the slopes of the twin peaks of the Mythen. Here one encounters a "Herrengasse," a freie Reichsgasse, and along these and other less pretentiously named thoroughfares stand fine old patrician residences. High walls, towers and gables are some of their visible marks of distinction, and through handsome wrought-iron gates one gets glimpses of the attractive gardens in which they stand.

As Schwyz was the victim of a big conflagration in 1642, all these residences were built afterwards. Among these mansions are included the Reding houses, homes of branches of one of the most illustrious families of Schwyz, whose name appears 45 times in the annals of the state's chief magistrates. Thus, in a beautiful framework of trees in the Schmidgasse, which leads to nearby Brunnen, on the lake of Lucerne, beckons the Reding von Biberegg residence, with the family's escutcheon above the hospitably open entrance gate. Higher up in the town rises like a fortress the Ital Reding domain.

The spacious, sloping Rathaus Square is, however, the beauty spot of Schwyz. Here, as its name suggests, stands the medieval City Hall, whose two main façades are strikingly adorned with frescoes from Swiss history. Portraits of 53 magistrates, from 1544 on, are displayed in the large council-chamber. A fountain, crowned by a standard bearer, rises on the square and on the north side of the quadrangle invites the lofty church of St. Martin. Behind this edifice are two interesting chapels, "Heiligkreuz" and "Kerchel," the latter reminiscent of the days when the liberty-loving, independent Schwyzers had been temporarily excommunicated by the Pope, and had been forbidden to celebrate divine services "on" Schwyz ground.

A three-stoned tower behind the Rathaus, known as the "Archiv," houses some of the most sacred Swiss documents, including the priceless original deed of confederation between Schwyz, Uri and Unterwalden. It is written in Latin and bears the date of August 1st, 1291. At Schwyz it becomes clearly apparent to a visitor that these pioneer Swiss were by no means an ignorant people of herdsmen, as some of their haughty oppressors chose to describe them, but men of culture, courage and unusual foresight.



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