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# HELVETIA

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AUCKLAND.

## NEWS FROM SWITZERLAND

### The Swiss Building Industry in 1952

In 1952, 12,000 new buildings were constructed in Switzerland, as compared with 13,500 in 1951. The total number of new dwelling units, mostly one to three rooms apartments with kitchen, was 22,800. Most of the construction was done without public subsidies.

### The Role of Insurance in Switzerland

Total outlays of the Swiss population for insurance purposes reached the amount of 2,403 million francs in 1951. This sum represents about 12 per cent. of the national income, estimated at 20 billion francs. In other words, the average Swiss spends each year the income of one and a half months or 44 days on insurance.

### Steady Development of the Telephone System.

Operating statistics for the Swiss telephone system again show an advance in 1952, where 737 million calls were registered, as compared with 704 million in 1951. At the close of last year, there were about 660,000 wire connections with over one million telephones.

### New International Organisation in Geneva.

An International Academy of Ceramics will be established soon in Geneva. Fifty members, representing the different governments, will co-operate in the plan. The functions of the Academy will be to hold exhibitions of ceramics, especially porcelain, to encourage the ceramic arts, organise lectures and contests, and improve contact between groups of experts in the different foreign countries. The new Academy plans to hold an International Congress in Geneva every five years.

### Switzerland's Imports of Automobiles

In the first quarter of 1953, Switzerland imported 10,600 automobiles compared with 7,800 one year ago. This is a new record. Germany is Switzerland's principal supplier of automobiles; she supplied almost one-half of the total num-

ber imported. Next in importance is France with 1,500 cars, followed by Great Britain, Italy and the United States.

### Business Conditions in the Swiss Construction Industry

On the whole, business conditions in the Swiss construction industry continue to be very favourable. Actually the volume of construction seems to be even higher than in 1952. This improvement is largely due to residential building. At the same time, the shortage of living quarters which existed after World War II has now been definitely ended. The principal question that still remains unsolved is that of rents.

### Air Transport in Switzerland

Air freight traffic has greatly increased since the end of the war. Swissair, Switzerland's national airlines, has thus been able to raise its cargo volume from 280,000 ton-kilometers in 1946 to 3,423,000 ton-kilometers in 1952. Still, freight traffic accounted for only 13 per cent. of Swissair's total transports. As Swissair has only one freight plane, it has some difficulty to develop this branch of her business, and foreign freight lines have taken advantage of this situation. Air transport to and from Switzerland is commercially very interesting, not only because Switzerland is a centre of international trade, but also because a large part of her exports are well suited for air transport.

Swissair has now decided to increase her air freight capacity. The possibility of buying another freight plane is being studied, and in the meantime a DC4 is being used for freight purposes. As soon as the three new DC6B long distance passenger planes which have been recently ordered go into operation, Swissair will be in a better position to develop existing possibilities in the freight traffic field. The three DC6B planes will be ready for flight by the end of 1953.

### A New Building for Basle's Industries Fair

The cornerstone of the large new Exhibition Building of the Swiss Industries Fair was recently laid in Basle. Representatives from the Basle Government and the legislature, the architects and the personnel of the fair were present at the ceremony. The new buildings will be finished by the opening date of the next Industries Fair, May 8, 1954.

### Switzerland's Embroidery Industry

The Swiss embroidery industry has been working at full capacity during the past few months. Its products are particularly favoured by the present trend of international fashions. Switzerland's exports of embroideries reached an amount of 22.6 million francs during the first quarter of 1953. Significant changes have taken place in the destination of those exports. European countries now account for about 50 per cent. of Switzerland's embroidery exports while in previous times only 25 per cent. was sold in Europe.

### SWISS WINES — KIRSCH AN OLD SPECIALITY OF SWITZERLAND

There is no Swiss wine—there are only Swiss wines. There are wines from Zurich, Schaffhausen, St. Gall, Thurgau, Aargau and the Grisons. These are Rhine wines—white and fruity, keeping their quality well; red wines that differ with each vineyard, here light and clear, there dark, possessing a bouquet and improving with age like the Burgundies from which some of them have come.

In Ticino, a fertile canton, the climate is particularly suited to the growing of certain foreign vines. One from Bordeaux has just been introduced there, the Merlot with its high alcoholic content, which is marvellously robust and will probably be the Ticino wine of the future—although the native Nostrano, unfortunately so delicate, has great charm. And now for the aristocrats of our vineyards which reign along the Rhone valley—the Fendant, like honey on fire; Johannisberg, virile and full-bodied yet with something discretely mellow which brings out its opulent flavour; Amigne, Hermitage, Malvoisie with their liqueur-like tendencies. They are wines of the sun and the rocks; they sparkle, they are aflame. Among their magnificent golds, a red flares up—Dole, very distinctive in spite of its amber reflections which make it akin to the district.

No similarities for the wine-grower of Neuchatel; what contrast could be more marked than a red Cortaillod, completely Burgundian in its best years, and a white Neuchatel, inclining towards Rhine wine, firm, full-bodied, aristocratic—incomparable when served with snails or sal-

mon trout. The tang of the soil, with its infinite variations, is found all along the vineyards of Vaud which dominate Lake Lemman, from Aigle to Nyon where two great names—Dezaley and Cote—are to be found. Wines full of hidden poetry, of undiscovered wisdom which, once discovered, can never be forgotten. Will you venture as far as Geneva? Of course. The least spirituous of our wines is the most spiritual: dry, bitter, but delightfully fresh and of an incomparable candour, it gradually reveals a very characteristic flavour.

If there is no Swiss wine, but only Swiss wines as different one from the other as the Swiss cantons, there is on the other hand only one Swiss kirsch—whether it comes from the orchards of Zoug or Aargau, from those of the canton of Vaud or from the Basle Country. This cherry water really contains, alive and exhilarating, the very essence of the fruit; a fruit which is to Switzerland what the mirabelle plum is to Lorraine. Exciting cocktails can be made of it and confectioners are indebted to it for the essential flavour of their most delicious fillings. It also makes it possible to understand why a country to which nature has given kirsch owed it to itself and to the world, by its industry, to make a respectable contribution to the pleasures of the table.

The cultivation of cherries occupies a prominent place in Switzerland's extensive fruit-growing industry. It is not to be wondered at, therefore, that in Switzerland one traditional method—many generations old—of making use of the country's excellent fruit is the production of kirsch from that, undoubtedly most noble of fruits, the cherry.

Switzerland occupies a leading position in the production of kirsch, both as to quantity and as to quality. Swiss kirsch is the most popular of the choice spirits. Connoisseurs highly appreciate its bouquet, its fruity and well-rounded flavour, extremely agreeable to the palate.

Thanks to the vast experience gained in the course of the centuries, a Swiss kirsch of outstanding quality is now distilled. Positively famous—and not only in Switzerland, but all over the world—is the kirsch from the "cradle region" of Switzerland (Schwyz and Zug), the Basle region, Aargau and Valais. The achievement of this superb quality calls for the exercise of meticulous care in the vatting of the cherries, and for this reason only sound, well ripened and carefully selected cherries are used in the production of Swiss kirsch. These cherries are placed in fermenting vats or barrels (the "mash"), where they undergo a slow process of fermentation taking several months. Then the first distillation of the resultant "wash" begins. In this process, to which the closest attention is paid, resides the secret of producing a kirsch of faultless