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HOME NEWS

The Federal Council will ask the next assembly of the National and States Councils to reject the *public initiative* which demands the reform of the Federal Administration and the Administration of the Federal Railways, on the ground that out of 51,032 signatures appended to the demand only 11,803 are valid, 39,229 signatures not having been affixed within the statutory time limit of six months, backdated from April 10th, 1922.

* * *

For the first six months of the present year the passenger traffic on the Swiss Federal Railways has attained 84 per cent. of the corresponding pre-war period 1914, and the goods traffic of 1922 is 19 per cent. below that of 1914.

The excess of expenditure over receipts from January 1st to June 30th of the current year totals roughly 56 million francs, and is mainly due to the coal stocks which had to be purchased at greatly inflated prices.

Electrification of part of the system and reduced traffic have lowered the consumption of coal from 50,000 to 35,000 tons monthly, retarding the exhaustion of the expensive stocks of coal until March next.

* * *

Swiss export figures for the first five months of the current year do not, after all, bear such a gloomy aspect as was predicted at the beginning of the year.

Compared with the figures of 1921, exports of condensed milk have augmented by 27,000 quintals (100 kilos), exports of cheese by 69,000 quintals, whilst export of chocolate has dropped from 47,113 to 19,777 quintals.

Textile exports have also considerably improved, especially cotton fabrics, of which 10,000 more quintals have been sent abroad, and silk ribbon exports jumped from 1,684 to 2,536 quintals.

The Federal subsidy granted to the watch industry seems to facilitate particularly export of bracelet watches, which have gone up from 521,638 to 758,460, whereas pocket watch exports have declined during the period under review by nearly 400,000.

Imports of raw materials show also an upward tendency, permitting of less pessimistic views regarding prospects for Swiss industries. Raw silk imports have mounted from 10,233 to 18,092 quintals, wool imports have risen 50 per cent., and iron imports have doubled compared with the totals of the first five months of last year.

The new Basle Rhine port at Klein Hünningen was opened on Thursday afternoon, the 3rd instant.

The firing of artillery salutes and the cheers of an immense crowd greeted the tug-boats "Schweiz," "Zürich," "Ticino" and "Wiese" as they steamed into the harbour.

* * *

The formal opening of the new building of the Swiss National Bank at Zürich took place on Monday last.

Situated in the Bahnhofstrasse (lake end), it has taken just over three years to erect and complete this monumental building, which is said to represent the last word in banking accommodation. The plans were furnished by Messrs. Pfister Bros., architects, of Zürich, who have also supervised every detail of the construction. With the exception of some of the metal structures, every other particle is of Swiss origin and produced by Swiss labour.

* * *

The second Swiss Congress of Catholic Missions was opened on Saturday last at Einsiedeln, when several thousand congressists, including representatives from Great Britain, France, Germany and Austria, attended the preliminary benedictory service which was conducted by four Bishops and one Archbishop.

One of the objects of the Congress is to stimulate a keener interest among Swiss people in foreign missions.

* * *

Dr. Thurmann, Professor of Law at the Fribourg University, has been nominated Chevalier of the Legion of Honour.

* * *

All the ten swimming events which were to decide the supremacy of German and Swiss national teams at Arosa on Sunday last were won by representatives of Germany.

Only in the water-polo match did the Swiss team prove victorious, securing two goals against one of their opponents.

* * *

At the time of going to press we have not yet received the results of the Six Day Motor Cycle Race which terminated at Geneva on Wednesday.

British representatives were making a great effort to win the trophy. They were ahead on points on Monday last, but later were passed by our Swiss team.

Sweden has lost its best rider, and a great struggle had ensued between the British and Swiss teams.

* * *

The preliminary results of the Gordon-Bennett Balloon Race have been published as follows:—

Uncle Sam (United States), pilot, Mr. Honeywell, 1.
Picardie (French), pilot, M. Bienaimé, 2.

United States Army Balloon, Major Westover, 3.

Uncle Sam landed at Tapio-Gyoergye, south-west of Budapest, and 662 miles from Geneva.

Triomfale VI, one of the Italian balloons, landed at Puyendorf, near Vienna, having covered about 630 miles.