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HOME NEWS

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FEDERAL.

SWISS-DUTCH LOAN TO ARGENTINE.

A consortium of Swiss banks, in combination with Dutch banks, have granted a 3½% loan to the Argentine Government of 40,000,000 Swiss francs and 15,500,000 guilders, redeemable within two years in three-monthly instalments. The money is to be used exclusively for public works in Argentina.

SWISS VINES DESTROYED IN SNOWSTORM.

A severe snowstorm swept over Switzerland, and snow accumulated to a depth of 4 in. in the eastern and central regions.

During the night the temperature fell to 26deg. at the level of Geneva, and the vineyards and fruit trees were so badly damaged that to-day peasants speak of a disaster. In Eastern Switzerland from 60 to 80% of the vines were destroyed, while around the Lake of Geneva the loss is estimated from 50 to 70%, according to the districts, which represents a loss of some £2,000,000 on the total yield of Swiss vineyards.

BRAZIERS IN RHONE VALLEY ORCHARDS.

So intense has the cold in the Rhone Valley become that farmers are lighting braziers in the orchards at night to protect the peach trees now in blossom. It is feared, however, that even this expedient has proved in vain and that the prospective peach crop, the valley's chief product, has been wholly destroyed. A similar tale of ruin is told of the cherry and apricot crops of the north, which had been exceptionally promising.

The drought has ended at last, only to be succeeded in some districts by snow, which has made conditions still worse.

INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS.

The sixteenth International Congress of Physiology will be held at Zurich on August 14-18, under the presidency of Prof. W. R. Hess and will consist of six sections devoted respectively to general and comparative physiology; biophysics; biochemistry; applied physiology (sport, aviation); psychophysiology; pharmacology. Further information can be obtained from Prof. Rottler, Sonnenweg 6, Basle, Switzerland.

SWISS NEUTRALITY AND SANCTIONS.

The question of Swiss neutrality is to be brought before the Council of the League at its forthcoming session. M. Motta, the head of the Federal Political Department, has informed the Secretary-General that the Federal Council is preparing a memorandum for the Council on "the neutrality of Switzerland within the framework of the League," and has asked that it shall be placed on the agenda.

The question of the restoration of complete neutrality for Switzerland has been under consideration by the Federal Government for some time, as the result of circumstances which arose out of the obligation to apply economic sanctions in the Abyssinian War.

The purpose of the new application will be to exempt Switzerland from this obligation. As, under the Declaration of London of 1920, Switzerland was already absolved from any obligation with regard to military sanctions, the result of the new exemption would be that Switzerland would take part only in the social and humanitarian activities of the League.

It is understood that the Federal Government have already discussed the question with the Governments of Great Britain and France.

Should the Federal Government be absolved from all obligations under Article XVI., the question would arise whether the retention of Geneva as the seat of the League would not constitute, in time of war, a breach of neutrality. This question will also be examined.

SWISS ALUMINIUM WORKS FOR NEWPORT.

The general assembly of the Aluminium Industrie Neuhausen, Switzerland, has decided to pay a dividend of 10% and to build a branch factory at Newport, Mon., in which the aluminium clay will be worked.

SWISS SHORT-WAVE EMISSION STATION.

The construction of a new short-wave station, at Schwarzenburg, near Berne, is to be commenced in the near future. This station is destined for both the radiodiffusion of Swiss programmes to overseas countries and for commercial telephonic communications with them. The possibility of increasing the power of this station is already foreseen.

MOTOR VEHICLES IN SWITZERLAND.

According to information recently received from the Federal Statistical Bureau, at the end of September, 1937, there were 120,844 motor vehicles in circulation in Switzerland, which represents an increase of 2% on the corresponding control for the year 1936. This number includes 93,372 automobiles and 27,472 motor-cycles. The number of automobiles has increased, whereas the number of motor-cycles has decreased, but in a lesser degree than in the preceding year.

CAPITAL INVESTED IN SWISS ELECTRICAL WORKS.

The capital invested in Swiss electrical works amounts to 1,040 million francs for hydraulic works and to 40 million francs for thermic works; these figures do not include transport nor power distribution installations. The average age of the whole of the installations was, at the end of 1936, 15 years. A good part of the capital invested has already been paid off.

A NOVEL MEANS OF COMMUNICATION.

The Swiss National Exposition, which will be held at Zurich in 1939, will be situated on the two banks of the lake. Special boats and a *téléphérique* will be responsible for the transport service between these two shores. In addition, it was necessary to find a means of enabling visitors to reach, with ease, the various sections which will extend over a fairly long distance on the lake sides. For this, a very original solution has been found, and the construction of a long canal, which will pass through the exposition and thanks to which visitors will be able to pass from one pavilion to another, is foreseen.

SWISS NATIONAL BANK.

On March 31st, 1938, the gold reserves of the Swiss National Bank amounted to 2,885 million Swiss francs; discounts and advances on securities reached 36.8 millions. The notes in circulation (1,538 million) and the other liabilities at sight (1,896 million) were covered by 84% by gold.

NEW BULGARIAN MINISTER.

Dr. Detchko Karadjoff, the newly appointed Bulgarian Minister, has presented his credentials to the President of the Swiss Confederation.

Dr. Karadjoff was, until recently, Bulgarian Minister in Berlin.

SWISS LEGATION BUILDINGS IN BERLIN.

The Federal Council has accepted the offer of the German Government for a plot situated at the corner of the Rauchstrasse-Lichtensteinallee—where it is proposed to build the new Swiss Legation. The present building will shortly be demolished owing to the new town-building plan.

LOCAL.

SOLOTHURN.

From Solothurn comes the news of the death of M. Rudolf von Arx, at the age of 87.

The deceased was a member of the cantonal government from 1885-1908, and Sub-manager of the "Kantonal Bank" from 1908-1923.

M. von Arx played for many years an important part in the political sphere of the canton of Solothurn. In the Army he reached the rank of lieutenant-colonel of the infantry.

LETTER FROM SWITZERLAND.

During the first months of 1938 the economic situation of Switzerland has kept its level of the past year. In several branches certain improvements are noted, while in others a slight falling back has been experienced. One must not, however, see in these movements a return to the times of crisis, except perhaps in certain sections of the textile industry.

During the first three months of 1938 Swiss imports reached 400 million Swiss francs, thus showing a decrease of 55 million francs on the

figures for the first three months of 1937. Exports, on the other hand, amounted to 306 million francs, an increase of 42 million francs on those for the corresponding period of the preceding year.

In the building trade, the perspective is a little better than that of last year. In 28 towns 4,175 apartments were constructed, during the 12 months from March, 1937, to February, 1938 (2,951 for the preceding 12 months). The construction of 6,685 (3,457) apartments has been authorised.

Compared with the results for the preceding year the movement of affairs in the retail trade shows an increase of 1.6% for January and 1.3% for February. Compared with 1936, the amelioration is respectively 10.2 and 7%.

The number of failures registered during the two months of January and February, 1938, is 145, compared with 203 for the first two months of 1937.

The results for January published by the transport and communications undertakings show an increase in the number of persons transported by the Federal Railways and in the receipts for telephonic communications, while goods traffic and postal payments have weakened. The results are, nevertheless, far superior to those recorded for the month of January, 1936. As to touristic traffic, the number of nightly visitors during the year, 1937, was 20% higher than in 1936. In January, 1938, on the other hand, they have not reached the number for the preceding year.

Seasonal unemployment does not show improvement, except in a feeble measure, for the first two months of 1938. At the end of February there were 93,000 persons out of work; 12,000 fewer than at the end of February, 1937, and 26,000 fewer than at the end of February, 1936. As a result of the increased activity in the building trade it is expected that, for the month of March, the result will be more favourable. The Swiss money market continues to show an extraordinary liquidity; the inflow of foreign capital has, however, slowed down. Events in Austria have not had any marked effect on the money market and capitals in Switzerland.

ANGLO-SWISS DINNER AT THE DUDLEY HOTEL, HOVE.

Young mountain goat sent by plane from Switzerland, was served to members of the Brighton and Hove Branch of the Wine and Food Society, who assembled at the Dudley Hotel, Hove, on Thursday, April 21st, for the Branch's 17th meeting.

This took the form of a Swiss dinner, each course, in addition to the wines, being a product of the country from which the dinner took its name.

Even the hors d'œuvre consisted of typical Swiss dishes, of which the most interesting were the bündnerfleisch, which is beef dipped in brine and allowed to hang in fresh mountain air for several months, thus becoming naturally cured, and fleischkäse, a type of brawn, both of which were specially imported.

Since, owing to its geographical position, Switzerland is not noted for its fresh fish, an original dish was introduced at this dinner in the form of a vol-au-vent, which is typical of those served in certain parts of the country on festive occasions. A very tasty dish with a flavour of mushroom and of veal, this proved to be a popular addition to a well-balanced menu.

The principal course consisted of young milk goat, which was prepared in true Swiss fashion, and was accompanied by spätzli au beurre, an every-day dish among the country folk in Switzerland, and similar to, though not so heavy as, the familiar home-made dumpling.

The Chalet Suisse, artistically created out of meringue and ice cream, such as is often served on the Swiss National Day, provided the perfect sweet, while a popular savoury was found in a ramequins au gruyère or cheese tartlet.

As the Wine and Food Society exists solely to satisfy the delicate tastes of the epicure, the after-dinner speeches were brief and to the point. Mr. Lionel Turner, of Eastbourne, proposing the most important toast, that to "The Chef," Monsieur J. Schnieper, who, himself a Swiss, was responsible for the preparation of the menu.

Monsieur F. Kung, the Swiss manager of the hotel, had a word to say about Swiss wines, reminding the diners that the Swiss are great wine drinkers, and that, in consequence, few brands are allowed thoroughly to mature before exportation.

"Some of the finest Swiss wines," he asserted, "never cross the borders of our country."