

Zeitschrift:	The Swiss observer : the journal of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK
Herausgeber:	Federation of Swiss Societies in the United Kingdom
Band:	- (1940)
Heft:	968
 Artikel:	Swiss Federal Railways in wartime
Autor:	Meile
DOI:	https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-692792

Nutzungsbedingungen

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. [Mehr erfahren](#)

Conditions d'utilisation

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. [En savoir plus](#)

Terms of use

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. [Find out more](#)

Download PDF: 17.01.2026

ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>

- b. By the same order Swiss persons shall not make use of any private motor vehicle or bicycle, and shall not be out of doors between the hours of 8 o'clock in the evening and 6 o'clock in the morning without the permission of the registration officer of his district.

- III. By an Order which appeared to-day (June 4th, 1940) the protected areas will be extended as follows: (Protected Areas Order No. 857):

The Tyne and Blyth Area,
The Lowestoft and Great Yarmouth Area,
The Portland Area,
The Falmouth Area,
The Severn Area,
The Milford Haven Area,
The Mersey Area,
etc.

- IV. An Order which came into force yesterday (June 3rd, 1940) and which is applicable to all Swiss residents within the United Kingdom, prescribes the following restrictions in respect of the foreign population in Great Britain.

- a. No alien shall have in his possession or under his control a bicycle, motor vehicle, sea-going craft or air-craft.
- b. Unless authorized by a police permit, no alien shall be absent from his ordinary place of residence between 12 midnight and 6 a.m. within the Metropolitan police district of London and 10.30 p.m. and 6 a.m. in any other districts in the United Kingdom (except the special prescriptions in the protected areas).
- c. All foreign visitors in private houses have forthwith to be reported in writing to the nearest police station immediately on arrival.

Exemptions from these prescriptions can only be obtained by application in writing to the nearest Police Station.

Exemptions are only granted if the applicant can prove beyond any doubt that this exemption is absolutely necessary for the carrying on of his trade or business.

Application should not be made for the mere reason of convenience. A compatriot who used to reach his business by motor-car can in most cases reach it by underground or 'bus equally well. Such a compatriot should not apply for exemption.

If however the particular character of the trade (e.g. a tradesman who cannot carry on business without a delivery van) demands exemption, the necessary application may be made.

Persons whose trade or profession compels them to be out of their houses after the curfew hour, such as doctors, waiters and so forth, are equally entitled to apply for exemption.

Persons wishing to visit theatres, attend dinners, etc., are not entitled to apply for exemption.

In the interest of the Swiss community in London, it is extremely important that such application should be avoided.

- V. Aliens Restriction Order No. 754, dated May 21st, applies only to aliens who have entered or enter the United Kingdom after May 9th. This order prohibits aliens from having certain ma-

terials in their possession or under their control without the written permission of the registration officer of their district. The following are the materials involved:

1. Any explosive or any material intended to be used for the manufacture of an explosive.
2. More than three gallons of inflammable liquid.
3. Any motor car, motor-cycle; sea-going craft or aircraft.
4. Any camera or other photographic apparatus.
5. Any map drawn to a scale larger than four miles to one inch.
6. Any nautical chart.
7. Any document intended for the use of members of any armed force; or
8. Any such document describing or depicting any ship, aircraft, vehicle, weapon or equipment of a kind used by the armed forces of the Crown, or any such list of persons in His Majesty's service, as is for the time being specified for the purposes of Article 9a of the Aliens Order by an Order of the Secretary of State.

SWISS LEGATION,
June 4th, 1940.

SWISS FEDERAL RAILWAYS IN WARTIME.

By Dr. MEILE,
General Manager, Swiss Federal Railways.
(“Modern Transport,” 1.6.40.)

Wartime operating conditions were imposed upon the transport undertakings of Switzerland simultaneously with the mobilisation of the Swiss army. From the moment, transport of all kinds came under the direct orders of the Commander-in-Chief, the Director of Movements being responsible for the efficient operation of transport and being the chief military authority so far as the technical aspects of railway operation are concerned. Generally speaking, it may be said that it is only where military transport is directly concerned that the Swiss Federal Railways come completely under the control of the military authorities. In other respects, the administration of the undertaking is maintained in the same way as in peacetime. Thus, the railway administration continues to be responsible for financial and commercial

TRADERS WITH SWITZERLAND
are informed that the

WORLD TRANSPORT AGENCY LTD.

have resumed their regular Groupage Services to and from Switzerland.

All enquiries to:
LONDON : 1, Martin Lane, Cannon Street, E.C.4.
Telephone: MANSion House 3434.

BASLE : Markthalle.

MANCHESTER :
28, Oxford Street.

HULL :
25, Queen Street.

LIVERPOOL 3.
Dock Board Bldg.

questions, for new works and supplies, and, in the main, for such questions as staff, etc.

The principal task of the Directorate of Movements is to ensure the availability of the rolling stock necessary for the exceptional traffic which passes in wartime, special emphasis being laid upon the necessity for facilitating the transport of goods originating in foreign countries, including overseas traffic. This, necessarily, must be effected in close collaboration with the railway administration and, naturally, with the greatest possible economy. Such is the organisation of the headquarters offices, and particularly of the operating department, that both military and commercial traffics are dealt with without the slightest difficulty. Incidentally, the mobilisation of the Swiss army was carried out in record time, and without the slightest hitch, and in this connection attention may be drawn to the efficient manner in which the railways of belligerent countries handled the exceptional traffic which war conditions thrust upon them, this including not only the transport of troops, war material and foodstuffs in vast quantities, but also, in many cases, the evacuation of hundreds of thousands of civilians.

The economic mission of railways in wartime is, of course, of equal importance to their military task. The main problem is to supply the country with raw material, half-finished goods, food, and, indeed, commodities of all kinds. The railways have, moreover, to arrange not only for the rapid and safe delivery of foodstuffs, but also for their distribution on the widest possible scale, similar requirements also applying in the case of imported coal, petrol, iron, metals, cotton, grain, sugar, etc. The handling of large tonnages of imports requires, of course, an abundant supply of goods wagons, which must be operated as economically as possible. It is, perhaps, unnecessary to recall that, under the terms of international agreements, railway companies upon which goods originate are responsible for supplying the wagons in which they are carried. That, at all events, is the rule — in principle. Consequently, at the present time there is in Switzerland an average of from 10,000 to 12,000 foreign wagons daily, whilst approximately 5,000 Swiss wagons are in foreign countries. Naturally, these figures fluctuate from day to day. However, although foreign railway companies assured the Swiss Federal Railways early in 1939 that, even in case of war, they would, wherever possible, provide their own

wagons for the transport of goods to Switzerland, they have, since September, 1939, requested the Swiss Federal Railways to provide their own rolling stock for the transport of goods destined for Switzerland. Obviously, such demands could only partly be met.

As a result of such conditions, it is not surprising that the number of Swiss Federal Railways wagons available for loading was somewhat sparse from time to time. This, indeed, is the reason why, in an effort to ensure the greatest possible availability, the time hitherto allowed for the loading and unloading of wagons was curtailed. However, although the strain on its rolling stock resources was severe, the very heavy traffics which were offered were all dealt with satisfactorily, and the railway administration has authorised the purchase of additional wagons at a cost of several million francs. With the aid of the new rolling stock, there will be an adequate supply of wagons for Swiss internal requirements despite the continued necessity for providing Swiss wagons for carrying imports from foreign countries. So far, therefore, Switzerland has not experienced a transport crisis. Meanwhile, it can be stated without fear of denial that, despite the development of road transport, Swiss railways are still the "backbone" of the country's economic and military strength. Indeed, it can be stated without exaggeration that, in wartime, Switzerland's supplies of food and raw material depend exclusively on the railways, for the Swiss Federal Railways not only deliver, but provide storage facilities for the goods they carry. This is a service which makes the railways more than ever vital to the country they serve.

The improvement of operating conditions — particularly so far as safety and speed are concerned — must not be neglected in wartime any more than in peacetime, for any neglect in that direction will inevitably lead, sooner or later, to a worsening of operating conditions and will reflect adversely upon the efficiency of the railway undertaking. Maintenance on a high standard is essential, and this holds good for rolling stock as well as for the permanent way.

Thus, apart from the orders they have placed for new goods wagons, the Swiss Federal Railways have also placed orders for twenty-two electric shunting locomotives and tractors, which, whilst being themselves efficient units, also enable economies to be made in the use of coal, diesel oil and petrol. Furthermore, as war conditions have made such extremely heavy demands both upon locomotives and engine crews, the traffic requirements have been met in large part by the introduction, wherever possible, of electric units designed for one-man operation.

Meanwhile, the extension of the Swiss Federal Railways system has been carried out, despite the war, as far as finances have permitted (about 25 million francs per year are being expended, including rolling stock), in which connection it may be recalled that 74 per cent. of the system is electrified, and this carries 94 per cent. of the total traffic. It is, of course, realised that the purchase of fresh coal supplies can only be effected at present at very high rates, but, fortunately, the energy necessary for electric traction in Switzerland is taken exclusively from the immense water power which continues to be at our disposal.

Telephone Numbers :
MUSEUM 4302 (Visitors)
MUSEUM 7055 (Office)

Established
OVER
50 Years.

"Ben faranno i Pagani"
Purgatorio C. xiv. Dante
"Venir se ne dee giu
tra' miei Meschini."
Dante. Inferno. C. xxvii.

PAGANI'S RESTAURANT

GREAT PORTLAND STREET, LONDON, W. 1.

•• LINDA MESCHINI ARTHUR MESCHINI } Sole Proprietors. ••

The use for traction purposes of energy so generated does not, however, involve the Swiss Federal Railways in additional expense, whereas the operation of wartime railway services with steam locomotives would have involved a heavy annual charge for coal. Electric traction, owing to the increase in price of coal, is, in fact, much cheaper than an equivalent steam-hauled service would be. This difference in cost will increase when the coal prices rise even more. Electrification has also another important aspect in wartime; for it is more economical in personnel than steam operation, and thus military defence benefits. Therefore, the electrification of the Swiss Federal Railways has proved, in wartime, to be an important asset from which the whole country benefits.

As to wartime operation in general, owing to the temporary cessation of French-Swiss traffic, and the complete suspension of shipping on the Rhine, traffic had on many occasions to be diverted to frontier stations other than the customary ones. Consequently, quite small frontier stations had to deal with traffic which they had never handled before. As to non-military traffic, on October 8th, 1939, the military authorities agreed to re-establish the peacetime time-table, and the 1940 summer time-table now provides for the acceleration of most of the express trains on the lines from Geneva to Berne, Biel to Zurich and Basle by reducing the duration of halts at important stations. It also provides for the running of new light express trains and for the improvement of express passenger services on subsidiary lines.

So far as passenger fares are concerned, the Swiss Federal Railways have maintained all the concessions which were in force before the war, a noteworthy fact considering that in certain foreign countries the issue of cheap tickets was restricted, or even, in some cases, abolished. Rates for goods traffic have, moreover, not been increased, and even special tariffs have been kept at pre-war levels.

The earnings of the Swiss Federal Railways from passenger traffic amounted in 1939 to 132,715,000 francs, compared with 131,906,000 francs in 1938, an increase of 0.61 per cent. Actually, traffic to the Zurich Exhibition, as well as military traffic, was just sufficient to balance the decrease in normal passenger traffic earnings, and especially in international traffic, for the outbreak of war brought tourist traffic to a complete standstill. Of special importance are goods traffic earnings in wartime. These amounted to 175,716,000 francs in 1938 and increased to 213,395,000 francs in 1939, an improvement of 37,500,000 francs, or 21.4 per cent. The increase in earnings was greatest during the months of October, November and December.

The reason for this heavy increase is, first of all, the result of heavy Swiss imports and exports to provide against shortages due to war conditions, while a second reason was the big reduction in road transport competition owing to military requisitioning of vehicles and the rationing of petrol. As a result of the reduction in the number of road services — to probably only a third of those normally available — high-rated traffic which had been diverted to the roads during recent years reverted to the railways, and this was also a factor affecting the increased earnings of the undertaking.

EDITOR'S POST-BAG.

The Editor,
The Swiss Observer.

6th June, 1940.

Dear Sir,

On behalf of Members of the Swiss Colony who have sojourned in this great country for many years, enjoying the same freedom and protection as its own subjects, allow me, through the columns of your paper, to express to our hospitable English friends a few thoughts which, in these stirring times, are uppermost in our hearts.

First of all, we tender our sincere sympathy to all those who mourn the loss of one of their dear ones or near ones and to those suffering with wounds and the ravages of War.

Secondly we rejoice that such a large number of the B.E.F. and allied armies were able to extricate themselves from the jaws of death or captivity and have reached the sanctuary of British Ports. It was indeed a miraculous deliverance.

Last, but not least, we respectfully salute the Gentlemen of the Army, Navy and Air Force and pay homage to their valour, gallantry and heroism. They have covered themselves with imperishable glory by turning a crushing defeat into a magnificent retreat. Outnumbered, overwhelmed by tanks and aeroplanes, they fought as few armies have fought before.

There is consolation and inspiration in the knowledge that by their noble example, bravery, sacrifice and devotion they have laid a secure foundation for ultimate Victory.

Without wishing to enter into high politics let us assure our English friends that the sympathies of a large majority of the Swiss people are with the Allies. Everybody without an axe to grind realises the fundamental truth that this is a fight between tyrannical and oppressive Dictatorship versus tolerant Democracy.

Switzerland, like Great Britain, puts her faith in democratic institutions.

The Swiss, like the British, have been nurtured in the traditions of independence, freedom and liberty and are firmly convinced that these are noble and precious things worth fighting for.

SWISS BANK CORPORATION,

(A Company limited by Shares incorporated in Switzerland)

**99, GRESHAM STREET, E.C.2.
and 11c, REGENT STREET, S.W. 1.**

Capital Paid up	s.f.	160,000,000
Reserves	- -	s.f. 32,000,000
Deposits	- -	s.f. 1,218,000,000

**NEW YORK AGENCY
15 NASSAU STREET.**

**All Descriptions of Banking and
Foreign Exchange Business Transacted**