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COMMERCIAL NEWS

Plans for a big new hospital at Berne.

In view of the fact that the Island Hospital in Berne no longer corresponds to modern requirements, it is now going to be enlarged. The Legislative Council of the Canton of Berne has just voted unanimously an appropriation amounting to 69 million Swiss francs for the construction of a new building. It is expected that the work of building this gigantic edifice of sixteen floors will take about seven years. It is interesting to recall the fact that the Island Hospital, which is the Cantonal hospital and comprises university clinics, was founded six hundred years ago.

Swiss beer drunk in Switzerland.

From the end of September 1956 to the end of September 1957 the consumption of beer in Switzerland amounted on an average to nearly 70 litres per inhabitant, as compared with 65 litres twenty-five or thirty years ago. The annual production of beer in Switzerland during the period of production 1956/57 amounted to nearly three million hectolitres, thus showing an increase of more than 10 per cent when compared with the previous business year. Bottled beer represents about 70 per cent of this total; it is the light-coloured beer which is the most popular, the dark kind representing hardly more than 10 per cent of the total Swiss production.

Construction of low-rental flats in Switzerland.

In spite of the great activity which prevails in the building trade in Switzerland the housing shortage in most of the big towns is still very acute so far as families belonging to the lower income bracket are concerned. In Geneva a private Foundation for the building of houses with moderate rents, which was founded by the Geneva Chamber of Commerce, has already built nearly two hundred apartments at very reasonable prices; it is now engaged in building several houses which will contain more than a hundred apartments. The financing of this building project has been assured, thanks to the understanding shown by Genevese industrial and commercial firms which have furnished a capital of half-a-million Swiss francs, as a free contribution and mortgages. It is principally firms belonging to the metallurgical branch who have made the greatest effort in this respect, followed by banking establishments, watchmaking, chemical and commercial firms.

In Zurich, on the other hand, a private association has just made a very interesting project known, which has for its object the building of 500 apartments with low rents, tight in the heart of the agglomeration, on one of the last available plots of ground belonging to the city. The project provides for the erection of three blocks of buildings, 40, 56 and 67 metres in height, which is considerably higher than is usual in Switzerland, but which will make it possible to leave extensive free spaces around these buildings. It is intended that this project, which will require a capital of 26 million Swiss francs, shall be financed entirely by private capital without the aid of any official subsidy or subscription for shares on the part of the tenants.

A fine bequest for the Swiss Confederation.

The famous art collector, Mr. Oscar Reinhart, at Winterthur, has decided to bequeath to the Swiss Confederation his house, with the wonderful collection of ancient and modern art that it contains. This collection, which is of the highest order and known throughout the world, is to be made open to the public as it stands.

The Federal Government has taken cognizance of the donation contract and has expressed to the donor its gratitude for this generous gesture, which will enrich in a quite remarkable manner the artistic heritage of Switzerland.

Swiss Post Office breaks new records.

It is a well-known fact that 1957 was a record year for the Swiss Post, Telegraph and Telephone Administration. The net profits, amounting to more than 77 million Swiss francs, were the highest on record. Total receipts rose to approximately 861 million Swiss francs, whilst running costs totalled more than 780 million Swiss francs. Thus, the gross yield from the work of the PTT amounts to about 80 million francs. It is interesting to note that postal traffic has suffered from a deficit of nearly 60 million Swiss francs, so that it is the profits of nearly 140 million francs realized by the telephone service, which have made it possible to cover the deficit and to close the accounts of the PTT with a surplus.

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