

Swiss railways increased receipts

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SWISS FEARS OF INVASION.

("Economist," 8.6.40.)

Switzerland experienced anxious days when important German concentrations along her border and other signs suggested that Germany intended breaking through. Though many inhabitants of the frontier districts hurriedly left their homes on their own initiative, the population remained calm and resolved. A few days before, the whole Army had been remobilised and, within twenty-four hours, the troops were all at their fighting stations. That mobilisation concerned about one-third of the Army which was on leave, as nearly 300,000 men were permanently guarding the frontiers.

The invasion of Holland and Belgium was a lesson for the Swiss, who at once took drastic measures with a view to coping with the fifth column and parachutists. Local guards were formed of men no longer liable to military service, of young men who already had some musketry training, and of members of the rifle clubs. Nearly 500,000 volunteers were thus recruited, who are patrolling the country day and night with the police and special anti-parachutist army units. Switzerland has thus over one million men at her disposal, a splendid effort when one remembers that the population barely exceeds four millions.

At the same time, all foreign residents were ordered to hand over to the police any firearms and ammunition they possessed, and almost all willingly complied with the Government order. Though travelling by train and motor car remains unrestricted, the police and soldiers are stopping all passers-by on the roads and even in the towns, and foreigners are not allowed to move their residence from one Canton to another without a special permit. These measures have already made possible the discovery and arrest of a number of people who had so far escaped the control of the police or had no passports. Special measures have also been taken with a view to preventing foreign seaplanes from landing on the lakes.

The invasion menace resulted in heavy withdrawals from the banks, but there was no limitation on withdrawals, and the run did not last long. The report of the National Bank of May 15th shows that banknote circulation increased by Frs.162 millions and reached Frs.2,169 millions. The amount is less than that recorded at the time of the Sudeten crisis or in August, 1939. On the other hand, the gold reserve decreased by Frs.70 millions and stood at Frs.2,054 millions, so that it represented 73.76 per cent. of the banknote circulation, and, together with foreign currencies, it represented 98.79 per cent. of the engagements of the Bank. Since then banknote circulation has risen by a further Frs.56 millions, while the gold reserve showed a new drop of Frs.72 millions.

The threat to Switzerland has now somewhat abated, but precautionary measures have not been relaxed, and the Swiss people are more than ever unanimously resolved to defend their country and their liberties to the last drop of their blood. That is further proved by a manifesto issued by the Swiss Socialist Party, which says that all Swiss workers are ready to sacrifice themselves for the defence of the country and of freedom.

SWISS RAILWAYS INCREASED RECEIPTS.

("Modern Transport," 8.6.40.)

Statistics of the Swiss Federal Railways for the year 1939 show a marked improvement in operating results for the first time in more than seven years. Our Swiss contemporary *Der Eisenbahner* deploras the coincidence of this improvement with the deepening shadows of war in surrounding countries, but comments on the fact that the most remarkable increases have taken place in purely internal traffic, due to a better economic outlook and to reduced road vehicle competition. The increase in receipts from entirely Swiss traffic amounted during 1939 to 75 per cent. of the whole increase of approximately 30 millions of francs. About 10 per cent. (four millions) came from transit charges.

Gross receipts during 1939 came to 361.2 million francs, as compared with 323.1 millions in 1938. Of the total receipts, 204.6 millions resulted from goods traffic, 133.6 from passenger traffic, 9.6 from mail contracts, and 6.4 from various sources. Increased goods traffic is almost solely responsible for the improvement, showing a rise approaching 40 millions as compared with the previous year's results. Passenger receipts rose by 1.7 millions.

Operating expenses showed a simultaneous reduction during the year, dropping from 229.5 millions in 1938 to 223.9 millions in 1939. Retrenchment resulted in a 1.1 per cent. staff cut, staff reduction having taken place since 1920 to the extent of 31.1 per cent. The continual expansion of electric traction has, of course, been chiefly responsible for such reductions. In 1920 the staff of the Swiss Federal Railways amounted to 39,676 employees; the present figure is 27,328.

During the same period, train miles have risen by no less than 98 per cent. During 1939 the operating ratio has been reduced from 71.02 per cent. to the extremely favourable figure of 61.99 per cent., the best since the formation of the Federal Railways in 1902-3. Expenditure on wages and salaries during 1939 amounted to 42.2 per cent. of the total expenses.

Traffic returns for the first four months of the present year reveal a truly colossal increase in goods traffic carried. In January, 1,414,412 metric tons of freight were carried, as compared with 1,008,827. For February the increase was from 1,052,967 to 1,582,767 tons; in March it was from 1,246,035 to 1,875,188 tons; while April shows an increase of no less than 920,666 tons, the figures for 1939 and 1940 being 1,190,598 and 2,111,264 metric tons respectively.

SWISS POSTAL RAILWAY.

("Electrical Review," 7.6.40.)

An underground railway has recently been built in Zurich for the conveyance of letters and express packets between the branch post office at the main railway station and the Sihl post office, a distance of about three-quarters of a mile. A driverless electric truck is set in motion by pressing a push-button on the control panel. At the railway station terminus the truck runs on to a lift, which operates automatically, rising to the level of the post office above.

The railway is operated by a three-phase, 220-V, 50-cycle supply, which obviates the need for convertor sets or special gear on the motor truck for reversing,