

Editor's post-bag

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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, Bienne 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.

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In framing the Swiss constitution, we, like many other countries in the old world and the new, learned much from the Magna Charta and the mother of parliaments.

In all these things Switzerland, in her small way, has much in common with Great Britain. The Confederation of Switzerland is composed of 22 free cantons which formed the "Eidgenossenschaft" between 1291 and 1815, when the neutrality of Switzerland was ratified by the congress of Vienna and Paris.

Against this, we have the British Commonwealth of Peoples, which, thanks to the broad outlook, toleration and farsightedness of their statesmen, have been welded into the greatest League of free nations ever known in history.

In conclusion let us quote the immortal lines in Schiller's "William Tell," being the Eternal Oath sworn by the founders of the Swiss Republic:

"We want to be a brotherhood of peoples; never to be separated in times of peace or war. We wish to be free as our fathers were and we would sooner perish than submit to bondage."

How history repeats itself. The Motto of the Swiss in 1291 has become the clarion call of the Allies in 1940.

And let our British friends be of good cheer. History shows that a cause founded on Truth and Justice is never lost, Justice being the first concern of mankind.

Napoleon, who said that God was on the side of the biggest battalions, found in the end that there were other things, moral and spiritual, which carry through adversity, recover lost ground and in due time, win through to Victory.

Sustained by the knowledge of fighting a just cause the strength of the Allied soldiers, sailors and airmen will be multiplied and help them, as already shown in Flanders, to perform miracles of courage and endurance.

And last, but not least, the words of an Athenian statesman spoken over 2,000 years ago are still true: "Great is the dominion of the sea."

I am, Sir, yours faithfully,

F. ISLER.

LETTER BOX.

H. de P. — We apologize for the clerical error; your subscription terminates with issue No. 1017.

W. T. — Your fears are unfounded. Even should Switzerland be involved in the war the position of our young English born compatriots is quite clear. There are quite a number who have been members of territorial units before the outbreak; they preserve their dual nationality and though according to our Constitution no Swiss may serve in a foreign army they do so with the tacit knowledge of the army authorities as they are exempt from the payment of the "Militärsteuer" during their active service with the British forces.

CITY SWISS CLUB PARCELS TO SOLDIERS. IMPORTANT.

Will members please send me immediately the names of any members or sons of members who are serving in the Swiss Army or with any of the Allied forces, as the committee is anxious to deal at once with the suggested sending of parcels on behalf of the City Swiss Club.

It is important that full details should be in my hands in the early part of next week.

On behalf of the Committee,

H. Binguely, Hon. Secretary,
Bulle House, 167, Clapham Road, London, S.W.9.

A report of the last monthly meeting which took place on the 4th inst. will appear in next week's issue.

Will members please watch the Swiss Observer for further important announcements affecting the welfare of our compatriots, and communicate the information to those who are not subscribers.

Bee.

PERSONAL.

Mrs. Edith Scheidegger née Ullmer died early yesterday morning, at the age of 70, from the after effects of a serious operation bravely borne. On behalf of the large circle of friends in the Colony we wish to tender our sincere sympathy to her husband, Mr. E. A. Scheidegger, of 34, The Chine, Grange Park, N.21.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS.

Wednesday, June 12th, at 8 p.m. — Swiss Mercantile Society — Monthly Meeting — followed by an address by Mr. Paul Grob, at "Swiss House," 34-35, Fitzroy Square, W.1.

Friday, June 21st, at 7.30 p.m. — Nouvelle Société Helvétique — Monthly Meeting — to be followed by a talk on "Current Events," by G. J. Keller, Esq., at "Swiss House," 34/35, Fitzroy Square, W.1.

Divine Services.

Dimanche 9 juin 1940: à l'Eglise Suisse, 79, Endell Street, W.C.2.

11h. Culte M. M. Pradervand.

11h. Ecole du dimanche.

6h. Culte en allemand au Foyer Suisse.

Mardi 11 juin, 3h. Réunion de couture au Foyer Suisse, 15 Bedford Way, W.C.1.

BAPTEME.

Le 2 juin, Elizabeth-Ann BRUNNER, fille de Willy Ulrich Brunner et de Sylva-Maria née Hauser.

Pour tout ce qui concerne le ministère pastoral, prière de s'adresser à Monsieur le pasteur Marcel Pradervand, 65, Mount View Road, N.4. (Téléphone Mountview 5003). Heure de réception à l'église le mercredi de 11-12h.30.

Sonntag, den 9. Juni 1940: in der Schweizerkirche, 9, Gresham Street, E.C.2.

11 Uhr. Gottesdienst.

6 Uhr. Gottesdienst im Foyer Suisse, 15 Bedford Way, W.C.1.

Für Amtshandlungen und alle Anfragen wende man sich an Pfr. Stutz, 42 Haringey Park, N.8. (MOU. 8585).

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