

Zurich and its museums

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holders and partners in the owning companies must be of Swiss nationality. These strict provisions have been laid down because it was wished, should hostilities ever break out again, to avoid the neutrality of the Swiss flag being contested by the belligerents with any reasonable cause for complaint.

Composition and Problems

At the end of 1949, the Swiss merchant fleet had a total gross tonnage of 61,000 tons on the seas. When the Korean war broke out in 1950, the Confederation asked shipbuilders to make an extra effort and double their tonnage with ships capable of sailing on any seas. In order to achieve this result, the Confederation agreed to grant reasonable loans, which made it possible for shipbuilders to carry out the programme envisaged.

Thus the Swiss merchant fleet today numbers some 35 ships totalling more than 630,000 tons. Out of these 35 ships, 20 have been built since 1948, which means that they are modern ships, equipped for travelling at fast speeds. Twenty-two of them have displacements of more than 6500 tons and are therefore suitable for sailing on the high seas.

Once a ship is launched, Swiss shipbuilders may run it in one of three ways, either as a tramp, a regular line vessel, or on a time-charter basis. Ships chartered as tramps go anywhere in the world, taking a full load for a destination indicated by the charterer. The regular line vessel has its obligations and must make a certain number of trips per year and all over the same route. The third possibility is the time-charter—where certain Swiss shipbuilders hire out the ships they have built to other shipbuilders who handle their commercial exploitation. The choice of one of these possibilities is a difficult one to make as fluctuations in freight charges are liable to be both sudden and large.

During the war, Swiss foreign trade overseas was carried on first and foremost under the national flag. In peacetime, Swiss importers and exporters are entirely at liberty to transport their goods under any flag they choose. The Swiss merchant fleet therefore works with the main international markets.

A serious problem for the Swiss merchant fleet is that of crews. At the present day, approximately a thousand men sail under the Swiss flag, only 25 per cent. of whom are Swiss nationals. Shipbuilders are working to train still more men, for it is of the greatest importance to prepare a nucleus of Swiss sailors against troubled times. It is also interesting to give the greatest possible number of young Swiss boys the opportunity of taking up a difficult but varied career.

ZURICH AND ITS MUSEUMS

Zurich, the dynamic metropolis of Switzerland, has grown today to the stature of a great European city and for a variety of reasons attracts general attention. Its situation on the shores of a delightful lake at the far end of which the snow-clad alpine peaks rise in grandeur is in itself sufficient to lend enchantment to this town with its thousands and more years of history. This city of light, whose cleanliness and neatness have become legendary, enchanted the famous Italian sculptor Benvenuto Cellini, who cried: "Zurich, city of wonder, sparkling like a gem!"

Despite its extraordinary development during the past fifty years, this commercial, financial and industrial centre with its international character has retained its quality of a garden city built in the form of an amphitheatre round the bay of its lake, and it thus felicitously combines the amenities of a large town with the attractions of a holiday resort.

If modern Zurich presents the features of a "model town," frequently studied by town-planners from other continents, this is due not only to a town-planning programme drawn up at a very early date by the public works authorities but also to the lively interest evinced by the inhabitants of Zurich in the development of their town. Zurich is without doubt the only European municipality that, in an attempt to encourage architectural designs in harmony with the traditional setting and the natural beauty of the site, awards prizes for private buildings whose appearance helps to beautify the town.

(To be continued)

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