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It is not surprising that industrial construction during the first months of 1941 was above the level of the first quarter of 1940. Residential building, however, declined by 50 per cent. The engineering and metal industries are working on orders from Germany and German occupied countries, and attempts are being made to keep up exports of textile goods. In April, unemployment amounted to 7,853 fully unemployed against 9,582 in April 1940. Yet 9,500 workers are employed in emergency public works, in the labour service or in training centres — the majority are employed in building roads.

At the end of May, 1941, the index of wholesale prices had increased by 62.9 per cent. from the level of August, 1939, and the index of the cost of living had risen by 23 per cent. The wages of roughly three-quarters of the workers have been increased since the beginning of the war — by some 6 per cent. on the average. This compares unfavourably with the general increase in prices and the wartime increase in income tax of 16.5 per cent. The real wages of the workers have thus fallen considerably.

Switzerland's financial situation shows the familiar signs of "war economy." The Budget deficit in 1940 was 845.5 million francs. Emergency expenditure was 1,165 million francs; national defence required 175.5 million francs and mobilisation 864.8 million francs. Additional wartime taxation yielded only 304.6 million francs. Since the start of the war, total notes in circulation have increased from 1,723 million francs to 2,095 million francs. The hoarding of notes, which was widespread at the beginning of the war, has diminished gradually. Average interest rates showed a tendency to rise, and official policy tried to counteract it by a reduction in the bank rate from 1.5 per cent. to 1.25 per cent. Price increases and great financial liquidity have created a widespread fear of inflation.

ENGLISH NEWS IN SWITZERLAND.

The following correspondence appeared in "The Times," July 22nd. It seems a pity that no steps are being undertaken to remedy this state of affairs.

We have heard a good deal recently about the Ministry of Information: the criticisms passed upon its competence have not always been complimentary. Perhaps with some reason. The following extracts from a letter received lately from a Swiss friend of mine may be worth attention. He writes:—

English news is very scarce; more strictly speaking, news about England is scarce, being limited to official bulletins, while English news is non-existent. English newspapers are unobtainable; and the wireless which we used to get splendidly at 9 p.m. till this spring, does not come through since the wavelength was altered. All English stations seem to be systematically blocked by German concerts, which we prefer to do without. The R.A.F. would be usefully employed in dropping newspapers (not leaflets). Our (Swiss) newspapers are flooded with German and Italian *communiqués*; what we pine for is something convincingly true. Anyhow, there is nothing certain to go upon, only propaganda — proper for geese!

ONLY NEUTRAL CITY IN THE WORLD.

(Under this heading "Everybody's Weekly," of July 19th, publishes the following data about Bern's colourful history; attractive illustrations accompany the article.)

On a sunny April morning in 1191 Berchtold, fifth Duke of Zähringen, marked with his sword point a large cross upon the mountainside.

"Here," he said, "I will build a stronghold that shall for ever stem the hordes of envious bandits."

That very day the work was started. Men dug a huge moat about the site, and others toiled up the steep pass with hewn slabs of stone. Before many months had passed, a giant castle stood proudly against the sky — and it stands to-day, as sturdy as ever, but now it is called the Nydeck Palace, and its site is the Square of Justice in Berne, capital of Switzerland.

Prince Bismarck called Berne the "only neutral city in the world." And Laval himself, speaking in 1939, confessed that "Switzerland is the only nation of which it may be said here is neutrality undefiled."

But before we consider modern Berne, with all its fascinating byeways, trades, and privileges, it is as well to take one more peep into the past — into a wintry evening when the castle was still in its 'teens, when the aged Duke was haunted by tales of a terrible bear that ravaged the countryside.

Berchtold, despite his years donned armour, buckled on his sword, and rode away on his charger to slay the ravager. They met, near the castle walls, and after a terrible struggle the monster was slain.

From that day until this the town has been known as Berne (the Swiss word for bear) and it is impossible to walk through its streets and parks without seeing some monument to the Duke's victim.

For the past seven hundred years, a bear pit has been kept in the city, at the public expense, in memory of the ducal exploit. The first seal of the city, in 1224, bore a bear's head. And, since the fourteenth century, two mechanical bears have together tapped out the hours in the old clock tower.

Most of the city's printing presses bear the imprint of a bear, and the art shops are even to-day crammed with brass bears, tin bears, silver bears and golden bears. Bears look down at you from the cinema walls, and bears look down at you from the niches of the ancient Gothic cathedral.

Berne has always been the stronghold of Freedom. It became a free imperial city in 1218, and from 1288 until 1339 it waged unceasing war against the dictator Rudolph of Hapsburg.

In 1528 it took the side of the free churches against the autocracy of the Papacy, and it was not until 1798 that fifth columnists opened the gates to Napoleon, and thereby lost half their possessions.

How did Switzerland come to be the home of neutrality, the great stronghold of non-intervention which even Nazi Germany has so far respected?

Actually it was England that gave Switzerland her historic neutrality, for in 1815, at the Congress of Vienna, Napoleon having been defeated, Prince Metternich proposed that part of Switzerland be given to Austria.

The English foreign secretary protested and counter-claimed that Swiss soil should be forever