

Sundry news from Switzerland

Objekttyp: **Group**

Zeitschrift: **Helvetia : magazine of the Swiss Society of New Zealand**

Band (Jahr): **7 (1941-1942)**

Heft 9

PDF erstellt am: **29.05.2024**

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It is interesting to read that a Searchers' Bureau, the like of which has been so extremely active in Britain since Dunkirk, is to be set up in Australia under an experienced searcher from the Middle East.

It must be repeated, however, that care of the wounded and prisoners of war is only one aspect of the work of the International Red Cross Committee in Geneva. The committee devotes a considerable part of its time to the problem raised by the sad lot of internees, and the flood of refugees that the invasion of their countries has set adrift, in countless thousands. They again prove a vast responsibility for the International Red Cross.

CIVIL INTERNEES.

The question of civil internees raises further delicate problems for the committee, since, unfortunately, the draft convention drawn up at the International Red Cross Conference in Tokyo in 1934 had not been ratified at the outbreak of the present war.

The Governments of some countries have notified Geneva that they intend to apply the convention relating to prisoners of war to civil internees, and it is believed that most of the belligerents have now so notified Geneva, and are acting upon that principle. If this is so it clarifies what was otherwise a difficult situation. (And closely linked with the case of the internees is that of the refugees.)

Geneva has supplied to England the names of more than 100,000 prisoners, and a large number of the 2,000,000 French prisoners in enemy camps are known, through its good offices, to their wives and families in France.

In Germany, the energetic delegate of the International Committee, Dr. Junod, is acting in this capacity for his third war. The inspection and the reports upon the prison camps and prisoners in Germany are in his hands, and generally his reports show that our prisoners are being treated with humanity and regard.

FULL REWARD.

So the voluntary work of the International Red Cross goes on; and the reward of the sometimes very tired workers is this, and indeed it is a full reward; the heartfelt thanks of a mother, whether from Edinburgh, from Milan, or from the far Ukraine; the thanks of countless prisoners, the gratitude of some harassed refugee.

Yet, indeed, the work of the International Red Cross expects no reward; its ideals are enough. In its humanitarianism it carries on the best of the Christian and all religious traditions; in its internationalism it forecasts the fuller society of the future and looks, it believes, beyond the limited horizons of to-day.

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SUNDRY NEWS FROM SWITZERLAND.

The Manufacture of Artificial Wool: In order to replace goods from abroad, which it is no longer possible to import in sufficiently large quantities, Switzerland is doing her utmost to manufacture substitutes of various kinds, such as "fibranne" or artificial wool, extracted from wood and manufactured according to methods similar to those employed for the manufacture of rayon. The new installations which are now ready for use will enable Switzerland to produce about 30,000 kilos of fibranne daily. Although this quantity sounds prodigious, it should be borne in mind that supply does not, as yet, meet the demand, as the normal daily consumption of wool and cotton in this country reaches 135,000 kilos.

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The result of the Federal Loan: As we recently announced, the Swiss Federal Government issued a loan of 250 million Swiss francs at $3\frac{1}{4}\%$ and 100 millions worth of bonds at $2\frac{1}{2}\%$. Subscriptions far exceeded these amounts and totalled 580 millions, whereas the Government had asked for 350 millions. Under the circumstances, the nominal amount of the loan has been raised so that the amount actually subscribed will be only slightly reduced.

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Swiss Shipping News: The hoisting of the Swiss flag on the high seas has brought the problem of recruiting young seamen for Swiss shipping to the fore. Whereas in other countries seamen are usually recruited among families in which seamanship is hereditary, Switzerland has had to adopt new methods in order to man her ships.

Two years ago, a training ship was founded in which young boys of Swiss nationality are trained for the sailor's difficult calling. Practical tuition includes principally the following branches: training in simple ship repairs and revision of motor boats in workshops (under supervision); keeping the ship in repair, such as scraping off paint and repainting woodwork, tarring of decks; navigation of skiffs and throwing of anchor lines; service on harbor boats. The future sailors are also taught to cook, to clean and repair working clothes and uniforms. They are also given every opportunity to practise sports.

Experience has shown that youths from mountainous districts are particularly well fitted for the arduous service required of them on shipboard.

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The Federal Council has fixed May 3rd for the plebiscite on the initiative "Pfaendler". This demand sponsored by the Landesring (Duttweiler) seeks to reduce the membership of the National Council to 139 by raising the representative basis from 22,000 to 30,000. It also disqualifies a National Councillor from accepting further election after 12 years continuous office and insists on candidates to disclose their business or financial interests.

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The customs revenue for January and February, 1942 was 21 million francs which is 4 million francs less than in the corresponding months of 1941.

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Although there are constantly a large number of troops with the colours, the General with the agreement of the Federal Council has arranged for a mobilisation practice, combined with regional alarm of the local defence corps and air attack precautions detachment. The exercises are to be carried out in echelons and for each manoeuvre only a small number of troops are called up and are again released after four or five days. These practices are solely done for the purpose of control and instruction. An announcement is made beforehand in order to prevent any scaremongering.

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The Office for War Industry and Labour announced on February 27th, that in view of the difficulties encountered in importing fats for industrial use, it has been necessary to limit the soap allowance for the period January - March 1942 to very small quantities. Some additional coupons will be released for use up to the 5th of April in view of increased requirements for spring-cleaning.

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Meat rationing which has been introduced in Switzerland as from the 1st March includes all meat and meat-preserves, sausages, bacon and offal, the total monthly allowance being about $4\frac{1}{2}$ lbs. including bones and sausages. Oxen,

cows, calves, pigs, sheep, goats and horses are included in the scheme, but poultry, geese and ducks, rabbits, game and fish as well as fish-preserves can be obtained without coupons. Wednesday and Friday will be meatless days in spite of the rationing which is under a points system, the number of points required for each 100 gr. of meat depending on price and quality. All private slaughtering will in future be subject to an official permit.

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The municipal Council of Berne has decided to rename a street in the Kirchenfeld "Motta Strasse" where the late Federal Councillor Motta used to live.

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The removal from Geneva of the League of Nations, the International Labour Office and other international institutions as well as the stoppage of international travelling has placed that town into a difficult position. At the moment there are about 6,000 empty flats, ten large Hotels are closed as well as a great number of shops. To offer some compensation for this loss and at the same time to afford relief to the federal town of Berne, which has not sufficient accommodation for the constantly growing departments connected with the war, the Federal Council has moved some of the administrative departments to Geneva. The town of Calvin will receive the personnel, which deals with the census, national department for Salary and Earnings - Equalisation of Soldiers, the Postcheque control and the Military Insurance - in all about 550 employees, who to a large extent are taking their families with them.

Some other departments of the war administration are moving to Montreux, Neuchatel and St. Gall, where an increase of population is equally welcome.

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Coal to the value of six million francs (65,000 tons) has been produced in the six months to end of December 1941. First in the field are the 13 pits in the canton Valais where anthracite in steadily increasing quantities is being mined.

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Last years 1st of August collection shows net receipts of frs. 1,020,162, which is very gratifying, especially in times of continuing rise in prices and the demand made on the public by innumerable charitable institutions. The Federal Council has just decided that the amount to be collected on the 1st of August, 1942, is to be divided between the Swiss Samaritan Association and the "Nationalspende" for the soldiers and their families.

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The action in aid of the starving population in Greece, which was planned by the International and Swiss Red Cross, has found active support throughout Switzerland. At the request of the Swiss Red Cross the Federal Council has allowed a considerable amount of milk products to be taken from the Federal stores to be exported in order to feed Greek children.