

# Sundry news from Switzerland

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Just as strong as the impulse to freedom of the individual Swiss peasant is the instinct of mutual aid and community feeling, both essential for the maintenance of a truly free and independent national state. This impulse for mutual aid is furthered by the hard living conditions in the high Alps, where a peasant has to be ready to help his neighbour out of a snowdrift or his neighbour's family out of an avalanche.

Co-operation was in evidence among the first Swiss in their method of land holding. Besides their individual farms in the valleys, they possessed alpine meadows and forests in common.

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SUNDRY NEWS FROM SWITZERLAND.

An increase in the emoluments of Federal Councillors is proposed by the finance commission of the States Council. In future a Federal Councillor would be entitled to an annual salary of Frs. 35,000 and Frs. 5,000 representation expenses with an additional Frs. 3,000 for the President.

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Federal Councillor Kokelt of the Military Department issued a warning stating that "in this war of surprises no one can say that a situation will not develop which might threaten us. Military service has been cut to a minimum in view of economic needs, but it cannot be further reduced without impairing our preparedness."

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The immediate outlook for the supply of meat is somewhat gloomy. The ration has been halved and is now 500 grammes per month and hotels and restaurants have to observe three meatless days per week instead of two as hitherto.

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It seems almost a wonder, that after three years of world war we are still able to buy bread at a proportionately low price and without bread cards, although not white any longer. It is easily understandable that this fact has caused a great increase in bread consumption during these last years. The increase is from 170 grammes per head and day in August 1939 to an average of 260 grammes. This fact, however, is apt to conceal the difficulties in the importation of grain. These are causing great worries to the authorities. Until next year when the increased home production of grain makes itself felt, two thirds of the necessary wheat has to come from overseas. Before the war 100 kg. of wheat could be sent from a North or South American port to a destination in Switzerland for 8 to 9 frs., inclusive insurance and lighterage charges. Today the cost for the same service amounts to 30 frs. from New York and nearly 40 frs. from Buenos Aires. Argentine wheat costs today 48 frs. per 100 kg. i.e. two-and-a-half times more than the pre-war price. This price, however, prevails only when wheat can be brought direct to Genoa, but if it has to go by shuttle service via Lisbon to Genoa, then the price for 100 kg. La Plata wheat rises to 60 frs. If the price of bread were calculated on the basis of cost the 1 kg. loaf would have to be sold at 72 to 73 cts. Actually the price was 53 cts. until recently when a price increase of 5 cts. was introduced by an increase of 4 cts for white flour, the remainder was born by the Confederation and amounted to round 80 million frs. Should the war situation change in such a way that wheat could no longer be imported from the U.S.A., then not only would the price of bread have to be increased, but the problem of tonnage would become more acute, as the journey from New York to Europe is only half the distance of that from Buenos Aires.

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For the first time the intensified cultivation of potatoes has made it possible to provide the country with its own home production of potatoes from harvest to fresh harvesting. Already early potatoes have appeared on the market at the end of June at prices below last year's Italian price for earlies. This pleasing fact is in the first instance due to the result of the increased cultivation which from 48,000 ha. in 1940 rose to 63,000 ha. in 1941, and although there was only an average harvest, a total of 100,000 truck loads of 10 tons each was at the disposal of the country. Further, thanks to a number of wise measures on the part of the authorities, above all the compulsory storage of 3,000 truck loads, made it possible to supply deficiency districts without the need to import foreign potatoes. Even seed supplies were at hand until the arrival of seed potatoes from foreign countries with which agreements for such supplies were in existence.

The compulsory surrender of all spare tyres and inner tubes for heavy motor vehicles has been ordered. The measure is intended to safeguard the replacement of these parts on lorries and tractors vital in the national interest. If the urgency arises the order may be made applicable to all motor vehicles.

An official poster is being widely displayed emphasising the urgency of the utmost food production. Over the slogan "plant more or die of hunger" a man is shown digging watched by an onlooker with hollow cheeks and sunken eyes.

The new Swiss steamer "Lugano" (10,000 tons) acquired by the Nautilus A.G., in Lugano, was handed over with the customary ceremonial and banquet at Dakar where owing to its former Italian nationality (its ancestral name being "Semion") it had been securely moored for the last two years in consequence of the blockade.

The unemployment insurance organisations recognised by the Confederation have paid out last year for total or partial unemployment the sum of 12.4 million frs. or seven million less than in the previous year. The average relief amounted to frs. 23.61 and is the lowest since 1929, when the average daily assistance was frs. 4.83, against frs. 5.32 today. The welcome development is due to the continued favourable conditions in the various occupational branches of industry whereby members of these insurances have found employment in work of national importance as well as in agriculture.

Over 3,000 sisters from the Congregation of the Holy Cross at Ingenbohl near Schwyz are at work all over the world in hospitals, schools and educational establishments. But the post of a Superior General is, since the death of the venerable Sister Agnes Schenk a year ago, still vacant. Now the General Council of the Congregation has elected Sister Diomira Brandenburg, from Zug, who for nearly forty years is a member of the Congregation, to the post of Superior General. Sister Brandenburg has been in charge of the well-known Clinica Quisisana in Rome for the last three years.

According to the "Manchester Guardian", August 17th, a party of Swiss journalists is expected to visit England. The visitors will include members of the staffs of both German and French Swiss journals representing the main political currents in the country. Among the papers represented will be the "Basler Nachrichten", the "Neue Zuercher Zeitung", the "Gazette de Lausanne", and the "Journal de Geneve".

The object of the tour is clearly to enable the leading figures of the Swiss press to observe war-time conditions in this country at first hand and to make themselves familiar with current political trends and opinions on war and post-war problems in this centre of Allied activity.

If the latest reports are reliable the party has so far not been able to obtain the requisite transit-visas.

#### OBITUARY.

The Swiss Benevolent Society in New Zealand sadly mourns the loss of one of the original members, Mr. John Schlaepfer, whose death occurred at his residence, the Helvetia Ostrich Farm, Pukekohe, on October 2nd, 1942.

The deceased was one of the best known and most popular old Swiss in New Zealand, who always took the keenest interest in the welfare of his compatriots. The Swiss Benevolent Society enjoyed his entire support from the beginning and beside the many kindnesses to anybody irrespective of nationality, his pockets were ever ready to the various calls from our country.

The funeral, which took place in Pukekohe, on October 4th, 1942, was one of the largest in the district, a fact which proved the great respect and popularity he enjoyed during his long residence.

Floral expressions of sympathy were also very numerous. The wreath of the Swiss Benevolent Society represented a Swiss Cross.

The Swiss community, especially the membership of our Society, was very well represented.

On behalf of the whole Swiss Community in New Zealand, we wish to offer to the bereaved brothers, John, Robert, Arnold and Walter Schlaepfer, our deepest sympathy and regret in their sad loss.