

Sundry news from Switzerland

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SWISS COURT STOOD FIRM.

In connection with the recent warning to neutral countries not to hide Axis leaders, it is interesting to learn how Switzerland lately gave proof of its high spirit of justice.

A German decree of Nov. 25, 1941, denationalized all German Jews abroad and forfeited their property to the Reich. Two Jewish residents of England, one of them having become a British subject by marriage, thus were unable under German law to acquire anything from the estate of their father, who had died in Germany.

Berlin representatives of the estate refused the children their legitimate portion out of assets in the estate, which were located in Switzerland. The children succeeded in Swiss courts in preventing the transfer of assets to Germany and in getting their portion.

The Court of Appeals in Zurich pointed out that such provision of German inheritance laws connected with the confiscation of Jewish property in favour of the Reich is "diametrically opposed to the Swiss ordre public.... To recognize the restriction of the capacity to inherit under German law would constitute an 'intolerable violation of our native sense of justice' (Reports of the Federal Court 641, 198) and is therefore not open to the Swiss court."

It is noteworthy that judges of a country which is surrounded by Axis-controlled neighbors have not lost the high courage indispensable for any administration of justice.

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SUNDRY NEWS FROM SWITZERLAND.

It is announced that Federal Councillor, Dr. Ernst Wetter, head of the Department of Finance & Customs, tendered his resignation for the end of the current year.

According to an official communique, Mr. Wetter, Federal Councillor, in a letter addressed to the Federal Assembly, gives the reasons for his retirement. At the time of his election in 1938, Mr. Wetter considered that his true task was to carry out a final settlement of the financial relationship between the Cantons and the Confederation. With the outbreak of the war, the immediate financial requirements took first place and the head of the federal department of finance had to give most of his time to the working out of an emergency financial program. This task can now be considered as finished. Therefore, Mr. Wetter who is 66 years of age is of the opinion that he should leave the work concerning the Confederation's financial regime to a younger man.

M. Pilet-Golaz, head of the Political Department, received the following message from Mr. Richard M. Law, minister of state in the British Cabinet with regard to the exchange of sick and wounded prisoners: "Now, that the repatriation from Germany of sick and wounded prisoners and medical personnel attending them has become an accomplished fact, I should like in the name of the Secretary of State to express to you and through you to the Swiss representatives and their collaborators to whose efforts we owe so much our sincere and grateful thanks. Without the help of Switzerland this work which has been welcomed with such profound satisfaction and relief here and throughout the Commonwealth, would have been impossible."

In October, income from customs duties amounted to 6,400,000 francs, which is a drop of 4 million as compared with October, 1942. During the first ten months of 1943 this drop has reached a total of 18 millions. The figures show, that the decrease has a tendency to become more rapid as the month passes.

A ceremony marked the completion of the correction work of the river Dünern in the Canton of Solothurn. This work included the construction of an 18.5 km Tunnel and took 10 years to build. The cost amounting to 8 million francs, was shared by the Confederation, the Canton and the Communes concerned.

The newspapermen accredited in the Federal capital were invited to visit the newly constructed electrical power plant at Rupperswil on the Aare River, above Aarau. The work on the project was begun in 1942 and is to be finished in 1945. With this plant, the Federal Railways that are associated with a private enterprise in northeastern Switzerland in carrying it through will have the facilities for electrical production amounting to one hundred million kw hours. The associated private enterprise will have a like amount at its disposal. At present, 1100 men are permanently at work on the ground. The construction work covers from 7 - 9 km in all.

The University of Lausanne decided to bestow the title of Dr. honoris causa upon Prof. Max Huber, a lawyer of world-wide reputation, former president of the international court of Justice of The Hague, and at present President of the International Red Cross Committee at Geneva.

Large quantities of medicaments sent by the Swiss Red Cross for civil hospitals in northern Italy have passed through Chiasso. The goods will be stored temporarily in Como, from where they will be distributed to the various hospitals.

The International Red Cross Committee has lost its first boat, after two years of activity by the special navigation company in the committee's service, the SS. Padua. She had sailed from Lisbon on October 19 with a cargo that included 11,000 sacks of mail and war prisoners' packages. She struck a mine and went to the bottom near Marseille. 15 people were saved among them the official Swiss agent. 6 Portuguese members of the crew are reported missing. This was the 19th trip of the SS. Padua for the Red Cross, between Lisbon and Marseille.

According to the latest statistics published by the Swiss National Bank, the gold reserves amount to nearly 3900 million francs. The note circulation is 2852 million francs.

The finance committee of the Federal State Council (Standerat) examined in the course of a meeting that lasted three days the Confederations' budget for 1944. The committee decided to recommend the adoption of the budget by the chambers but made a number of reservations regarding certain estimates for constructions which did not in the committee's opinion appear to be very urgent. The budgeted deficit for 1944 stands at 123 million francs.

The workers parties of Geneva and Vaud have appealed to the federal assembly, complaining that as a result of the law against the communists they were not free to present a list of candidates in harmony with their choice. They could not propose, among others, Mr. Leon Nicole who was not considered eligible by virtue of the federal ruling.

It is announced officially, that in the course of the raids on Hamburg, 23 Swiss citizens were killed.

Information from our agricultural expert tells us that fruit is still found in great quantities on the market and is well in demand. The relatively warm temperatures of the fall allowed the late fruit to ripen. The bumper crop of vegetables reported last month has now been used up.

Figures relative to Switzerland's foreign commerce have just been made known. They show a definite drop in imports and an increase in exports. The result is something quite unusual for Switzerland, i.e., practically an equilibrium in commercial relations with other countries, but our foreign trade is nevertheless on a downward trend, both for the value and the quantity.

In its last annual report, the Swiss Foundation for the Youth recalls that last year it organized a campaign in collaboration with the Swiss Winterhelp to secure shoes and food for needy children high up in the mountains. Moreover with the collaboration of the foundation "Works for the Swiss" the society procured in 1942 refuge for 3500 young Swiss living abroad.

A recent broadcast from the Schwarzenburg station stated that our country was now entirely surrounded by German troops which seems to indicate that traffic with our southern neighbour would be temporarily interrupted. In fact it was reported at different times that the frontier was "closed" and "re-opened"; the harbour of Genoa will naturally be no more available for Swiss shipping which once again will have to be diverted to overland routes via Portugal, Spain and France. There is no justification for the statement printed first by the "Daily Express" that the German government has demanded the use of our railways for the war transport to Northern Italy and it is to be regretted that the B.B.C. in a German broadcast repeated it with comments. We know the news from the B.B.C. is welcomed by our people at home for their truthfulness and this "Canard" is likely to create doubts in their veracity.

After a meeting of the Federal Council on September 21st dealing with questions arising from occurrences along the Italo-Swiss frontier it was stated that refugees in civilian clothes carrying weapons will be refused admittance.

The party conference of the Swiss Socialists held at Winterthur passed a resolution by 440 against eight protesting against the Government suspension of the Federation Socialiste Suisse (Nicole's communist party) and its affiliated associations. Another resolution passed by a three to one majority insisted that any communist must renounce his membership of the latter before he could be admitted to the socialist party.

In a speech delivered on August 21st, at Rapperswil, Federal Councillor von Steiger stated that during the war 32,000 Swiss had returned from abroad; of these 6,000 managed to resume their vocations abroad while 26,000 had to remain in the country. He could not give the total number of Swiss citizens residing in foreign countries but estimated that about 100,000 were living in France, 45,000 in Germany and 15,000 in Italy.

New regulations affecting naturalisation in Zurich make it compulsory for applicants to possess a knowledge of a German-Swiss dialect; the age limit is 64.

Arrests in connection with the black market trade in ration cards have led to the discovery of a secret printing plant in a private house on the outskirts of Lausanne which specialised in the production of faked sugar coupons.

Four American Fortresses made a forced landing on September 6th, one came down near Magadino and the other three near Dübendorf. Another machine crashed on the Lake of Constance near Romanshorn; nine of the crew, all hurt, were saved by approaching fishermen.

Events along our southern frontier have prompted our authorities to mobilise a number of military units in order to strengthen the existing garrisons at the alpine passes and tunnels. No incident has been reported yet. For some days there was a steady stream of fugitives chiefly Italians. Some papers reported that near Geneva a company of Italian soldiers crossed the frontier fully armed. At other sectors, notably on the Ticinese frontier, soldiers discarded their uniforms and presented themselves as civilians; there were also a number of British, Serbian and Greek prisoners who had escaped from near-by camps. There is no reliable news of their fate; the last we heard is that they sat beside their hand luggage while the frontier authorities were waiting for instructions from Bern. On the other hand papers say that members of the Italian Royal family and other notable persons were passed through without hindrance.

The warm dry weather had made it possible to bring in the hay but the absence of rainfall has been damaging to pasture land. Should the dry weather continue the milk will certainly not be as abundant as it has been so far during the war. Another consequence of the drought is that the meat supply is again more abundant. It had been decided that after September 1st there is to be only one meatless day in the week, Friday, in private homes and two, Wednesday and Friday, in catering establishments.