

Sundry news from Switzerland

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PRESIDENT OF INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS FINDS JOB DIFFICULT.

Today the President of the International Red Cross Committee is M. Max Huber. He is 69 years of age and has held the post since 1928. He was formerly a permanent judge on the International Court of Arbitration at The Hague. Because he has to work the Axis and Allies alike, the job is delicate. Because the misery of war is great the job is a big one.

In an interview he said: "The most difficult task is to maintain the impartiality and patience necessary to conduct negotiations with belligerent Governments, taking into account that their main business is to make war and that everything else must be relegated to second place. We must look after all our prisoners and these prisoners are held by all belligerent countries. If by some thoughtless action we displease one country we may be debarred from helping prisoners and internees in camps there. We cannot take sides even in face of conditions which conscience urges should be alleviated".

He hinted that his past experience as an international judge, as a member of important Swiss foreign commissions and as a collaborator with the world's experts on international law was sometimes hardly sufficient background for dealing with the delicate and complex situations arising among belligerents.

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SUNDRY NEWS FROM SWITZERLAND.

SWISS POTATOES FOR SPAIN: A Ruter dispatch from Barcelona announces that a cargo of Swiss potatoes arrived there which were bought by the Spanish government for the reprovisioning of the Province of Barcelona until the next crop. The reason for this Swiss export of potatoes is the same as the reason for the temporary admixture of potatoes to our bread. The potato stocks stored during the winter have to be consumed by a certain date in Spring, as with the beginning of the new crop season they are exposed to the danger of deterioration. The potatoes exported to Spain are also forming a valuable article of trade compensation for Switzerland. However, there is no question of an over-production of potatoes in Switzerland. A reduction of the Swiss potato cultivation is out of the question as potatoes, in case Switzerland would be entirely cut off from abroad, would have to become the main element of our food, even more than they have already been.

The total indebtedness of the Confederation at the end of 1943 was 5553.6 million francs, an increase of 1116.7 million francs compared with the previous period.

Considerable damage was caused when the agricultural establishment including a distillery, large stables and stock, machinery, etc., belonging to the communal councillor Anton Büeler, in Hasli near Seewen (Schwyz) was practically reduced to ashes on Friday night, February 11th.

The municipal theatre in Lucerne is to receive a subsidy of Frs. 205,000 for the next winter season. A further considerable sum has also been voted by the town fathers to enable the steamship company on the lake to carry on; for the last twenty-five years this undertaking has been enjoying financial tonics.

The canton of Fribourg in view of the anticipated post-war boom conditions has decided to make a strong bid for attracting tourism to its regions.

A new political party has come into being in Basle and styles itself "Partei der Arbeit"; it is a counterpart of a new group in Geneva under the name "Parti Ouvrier Suisse" and promises to support the socialists whenever possible.

Inoculation against diphtheria has been made compulsory in the canton Vaud for all children up to twelve years.

In the Grossrat elections in the canton of Thurgau on March 26th the socialists more than regained the seats which they lost three years ago and are now holding 32 mandates (24) out of a total of 116. The chief losers were the liberals and the liberal bloc has now lost the absolute majority in the council.

During manoeuvres a military plane had to make a forced landing near the Griefensee causing the death of the two pilots, Willi Zwahlen, age 26, from Matten, and Walter Thoma, age 22, from Kaltbrunn.

Just over 26 kg. meat per head has been consumed in our country during last year. Over a million animals were slaughtered of which about 35% were cows, 15% calves, 11% oxen and 20% pigs. The figures are only slightly lower than those for the previous period but practically no meat in any form has been imported.

The firm of Escher-Wyss & Co., in Zurich which for over 100 years has been building turbines has just produced a propeller for aircraft, which is able to brake an aeroplane on landing in an uncommonly short distance. The landing strip on an aerodrome can, thanks to this adjustable propeller, be reduced from 300 to 100 metres.

The most recent official statistics show that deposits on saving books and accounts at the 43 savings banks of the country increased by 244 million Swiss frs. in 1943, whereas the rise registered in 1942 was 185 million and in 1941 only 45 million. There are about 4.5 million saving accounts in Switzerland, which represent more than one per head of the population. One third of these books hold deposits amounting to less than one hundred francs and another third of the number do not exceed one thousand francs. The spirit of thrift still exists in Switzerland.

The numerous landings of belligerent aircrafts on our territory, particularly in the Zurich area, have made it necessary for the military authorities to take a certain number of measures, such as forbidding civilians to visit the planes or to go near the airdromes.

The celebration known as "Sechsschläuten" has been forbidden. The parade was to have taken place on April 17th. The reason is not only that a great panic might occur when an air raid such as recently befell Schaffhausen should take place, yet it was even feared that an air alarm might cause unfortunate consequences.

The New Helvetic Society held a meeting of delegates in Berne. The resignation of Prof. Arnold Lätt, President of the Committee of Swiss Citizens Residing Abroad, was accepted. He has been at the head of this committee for 10 years. As his successor, the society elected the vice-president, Mr. Charles Bernard of Geneva, the former director of agriculture of the Dutch East Indies.

Several speakers set forth the views on neutrality of the future. A lively debate followed. The conclusion seems to be that the New Helvetic Society remains firmly attached to the maintenance of our neutrality, even though our country should, as is highly desirable, adhere later to some international organizations of the World or of Europe.

Saturday morning, April 22nd, 1944, Mr. Edmond Schulthess died at the age of 76. He was Federal Councillor from 1912 to 1935, during which period he played a foremost role in the country's political life.

The Federal Council approved the proposal made by the committee for the National Day (August 1st) that this year's collection be turned over to needy mothers.

According to a report from the Political Department, the foreign interest section of said department has been charged with the protection of the interests of 29 states in all. These states are: Egypt, United States of America, Brazil, British Empire, Bulgaria, Chile, Costa Rica, Germany, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Franco, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Iran, Iraq, Italy, Japan, Colombia, Cuba, Netherlands, Nicaragua, Panama, Peru, Roumania, San Salvador, Thailand, Uruguay and Venezuela.

The appeals of Robert Klee, Dr. Alfred Zahnder and John Spengler against the decision of the Federal Department of Justice and Police to withdraw their right to Swiss citizenship were rejected by the Federal Council.

The City Council of Schaffhausen granted the municipality's government full power until December 31, 1945, for carrying through projects for the city's reconstruction, made necessary by the April 1st bombing. A credit of 2,5 million francs was voted to cover the cost of the plan. A special commission of 9 members has been formed.

According to German sources, the Swiss steamship "Chasseral" has been attacked by British aircraft in the Mediterranean, west of the Rhone estuary. Though hit, she could be towed into a French port (Cette) by small units of the German marine which went to her rescue.

The attack made on the S/S "Chasseral" off Port Vendres on April 22 by aircraft, resulted in the death of the ship's chief engineer, Maurice Jaccard, 35, Swiss. The "Chasseral" received many hits, seven of them below the water line. As already announced, the "Chasseral" was towed into Cette harbour in South France, and repair work is already under way.

O B I T U A R Y.

It is with much regret that we announce the death of Mr. Emile Arnold Cattin, of 42 Awa Road, Miramar, Wellington, which took place suddenly in Wellington Hospital after a very short illness.

Mr. Cattin was born at Lagendorf, Ct. Solothurn, where he passed through the State and High Schools, and after completing his education, attended the Watchmakers' School at Bienne where he qualified with honours. Later, he went to London and worked with Sir John Bennett, the well-known horologist, for two years. Eventually he came to New Zealand where he lived in Whangarei, Gisborne, and finally in Wellington, where he conducted a flourishing business at 19 Willis Street.

He was one of the founders of the New Zealand Horological Society, in which he always took a great interest and of which he was an active member for many years.

Emile Cattin was always a keen supporter of the Swiss Benevolent Society, of which he was also Vice-President for two terms.

His passing will be felt deeply by all his compatriots, who were always made welcome in his home. He was the life of any social function among the Swiss here, and was passionately fond of a game of "Jass" for which he would travel miles.

The funeral was attended by many friends and fellow countrymen, and we extend deep sympathy to Mrs. Cattin and her daughter, Beverly; also to Miss Olga Cattin of Eltham, Mr. Paul Cattin and family of Te Kauwhata, and Mr. Ernest Cattin in Washington, D.C.

BROADCAST FROM SWITZERLAND: No information has yet been received as to any special broadcast on the occasion of our National Day. We refer members therefore again to the usual twice-weekly broadcasts to Australia and New Zealand transmitted from the Swiss National Broadcasting Station at Schwarzenburg which are received here on:

Wave Lengths:	23.14 m and 25.61 m
Time:	8 - 9.30 p.m. on Tuesdays and Saturdays.

As the 1st of August is on a Tuesday, it is possible that no other arrangements will be made, and that a special National Day program will be heard at the above mentioned time. We shall be pleased to hear from members regarding the reception of this broadcast.