

Sundry news from Switzerland

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"We wish to express in this letter our heartiest thanks for the greetings which came to us from so far away. We would have loved to have the donor who knitted the "Ohrenkappe" amongst us, so that she could have seen with her own eyes how delighted our small boy was, when he was presented with this garment. "This is something I have wished for a very long time for my skiing", he exclaimed, and when he was shown the picture of the Botanical garden which was enclosed, he felt very proud indeed of his benefactor..."

SUNDRY NEWS FROM SWITZERLAND.

In view of the fact that the head of the Vichy-French Government, Marshall Petain, apparently is in captivity, the Swiss Government have recalled the Swiss Minister at Vichy, Dr. Walter Stucki. On the other hand, the Vichy ambassador at Berne, M. Paul Morand, has declared that his mission has come to an end as he is completely out of touch with Marshall Petain and Pierre Laval.

Numbers of German soldiers have fled into Switzerland over the borders near Geneva, and have been interned.

The precipitate military events in France have induced the Commander-in-Chief of the Swiss Army to mobilise additional troops to defend the Swiss frontiers. The borders most exposed are in the Jura mountain region from Geneva to Basel. The Swiss radio confirms the arrival of allied troops at the borders of Switzerland near Geneva. The Swiss message emphasizes the importance of the fact that the country is no longer surrounded by only one side of the belligerents.

SWISS TRADE ARRANGEMENTS WITH BRITAIN & U.S.A.: Following the liberation of the French region of Savoy bordering on Switzerland and the arrival of allied troops on the Swiss borders near Geneva, Switzerland has concluded new trade arrangements with Britain and U.S.A. As soon as it is technically possible, Swiss exports to countries of the allied nations and imports from there will again be facilitated. Swiss radio expressed satisfaction at the re-establishment of physical contact with both sides of the belligerents. It is hoped that this will also bring about improvements in the Swiss supply position.

CO-OPERATION OF SWITZERLAND IN THE RECONSTRUCTION OF EUROPE: In a public speech in May, Swiss Federal Councillor Etter said "Switzerland is prepared to co-operate, according to her ability, in the material and moral reconstruction of the European nations and the community of nations, after the war. The question of how our economic strength can be made available for material reconstruction is, at the present time, the subject of deliberation. It is our duty to define what possibilities we can offer for the material and moral reconstruction of the family of nations".

SOCIAL SECURITY: New progressive social legislation will play an important part in the deliberations of the forthcoming September Assembly of the Swiss Parliament. In a recent address, the Social Democrat member of the Swiss Federal Council, M. Ernst Nobs, declared that his colleagues in the governing body of the Federation, belonging to other political parties, were in full accord with him regarding the issue. Although experiments made in this field in other countries would not be overlooked, it was the consensus of opinion that in Switzerland a solution had to be found which was in keeping with the spirit of the Swiss people and the economic fundamentals of the country.

REFUGEE PROBLEM IN SWITZERLAND: The Swiss radio declared that the refugee problem in Switzerland is one of the most important with which the country is confronted. At the beginning of 1944 there were 70,493 civilian refugees in Switzerland. This invasion is raising many political and economic problems. Up to now the Swiss Federal Government has spent about £NZL 700,000 for the support of these refugees and this sum does not include a number of large grants advanced by private welfare organisations.

ALIEN CHILDREN RELIEF: Children's Relief Organisations in Switzerland are preparing to take into their custody many more of these little foreign guests in need of help. Alien children up to the age of 14 will be admitted into Switzerland without exception, in cases where their lives and health are in danger.

INTERNATIONAL MUSIC FESTIVAL AT LUCERNE: Despite the gravity of the hour on the European continent, the City of Lucerne has staged again this year an international music festival, which has just ended. The opening concert was devoted to the works of the Swiss composer Arthur Honegger.

FRENCH ACADEMY AWARD TO SWISS AUTHOR: The French Academy awarded the first prize for French Literature to the Swiss author Benjamin Vallotton, whose works chiefly describe Protestant life in French Switzerland.

THE NEW HYDRO-ELECTRIC POWER STATION AT VERBOIS: The Verbois hydro-electric power station, near Geneva below the junction of the Rivers Rhone and Arve, has just been inaugurated. This plant is a magnificent technical achievement of Swiss industry and has been built on the most modern lines. The machine hall has been constructed to receive four hydro-electric groups with vertical axis. Three of these have already been installed with three-phase generators of 22,000 KW at 18,000 V. The plant is the most powerful hydro-electric station now running in Switzerland.

THE FIRST RAILWAY IN SWITZERLAND: One century ago, on June 15th 1844, the first railway in Switzerland was put into service. The line ran between the St. Louis Station on the Alsatian frontier and the St. John Station in the town of Basle.

THE 1945 SWISS INDUSTRIES FAIR: The date of the XXIXth Swiss Industries Fair, an important economic event which takes place every Spring in Basle, has been fixed for April 14th-24th 1945.

THE SWISS INDUSTRIAL SITUATION: At the end of the first 1944 quarter, the situation in Swiss industries was characterized by an increase in the difficulties which hamper exports and by a continued shortage of raw materials. Generally speaking, however, industrial activity could still be considered satisfactory, although the total number of employed had decreased by 3.1% as compared with the preceding quarter.

Leaders and executives gave their opinion on the industrial situation for the quarter under review as follows: 23.7 considered industrial activity as good; 52% as satisfactory and 23.9% as bad. As regards prospects for the near future they were pronounced good, or at least satisfactory, by 35.6% of Swiss firms, bad by 16.1%, and uncertain by 48.3%.

THE SWISS LABOUR MARKET IN WARTIME: Up to the beginning of the present year, the number of workless seeking employment in Switzerland had steadily decreased since the outbreak of hostilities. Last year, unemployment figures were lower than in 1929, a year of great activity.

This favourable evolution of the labour market is due to the combined efforts of War Economy Departments, which have succeeded in supplying industry with indispensable raw materials, and of the leaders of industry who have striven to adapt their production to circumstances; it is further due to agricultural extension which absorbed a great amount of man-power, and to national defence measures. Military service permanently eliminated from 100,000 to 200,000 workers from the labour market, while at least 70,000 were absorbed owing to armament orders received by industry and to national defence works. The development of public departments, resulting from war conditions, has also absorbed a great number of wage-earners. The Government alone has an increased staff of almost 20,000 as compared with the pre-war period.

A SWISS STEAMER WITH WOOD-GAS PROPULSION: The "Bürgenstock", a passenger steamer on Lake Lucerne in Central Switzerland, has just been modernized. The most interesting technical modification it has undergone is the transformation of its Diesel engine, which now runs on wood-gas.

THE SWISS FEDERAL RAILWAYS: The Swiss Federal Railways now cover about 2,968 kms. of lines, 1,837 of which are single-track and 1,181 double-track; 2349 kms. of the system are electrified. Owing to the configuration of this country, the Swiss Federal Railway system includes over 239 tunnels of a total length of 170 kms., and 1,300 large bridges.