

# Sundry news from Switzerland

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(November 7th) regular weekly meeting and the following communique was issued: 'As was pointed out in its declaration before the National Council on March 29, 1944, the Swiss Federal government, desirous of entertaining correct relations with all the states, wanted to have relations between Switzerland and the USSR placed on a normal basis just as soon as circumstances would permit. Preliminary feelers put out at that time brought the impression that positive results could be achieved. The Swiss Minister in London returned to his post last July with instructions to enter into contact with the USSR's embassy in Great Britain and to take steps to this end, right from the start of his mission. On September 7th, the Swiss Minister in London, Mr. Ruegger, informed in detail the Soviet Ambassador of the Swiss Federal government's views, relative to the resumption of normal diplomatic relations between Switzerland and the USSR, stressing, among other points, that the reciprocal interests of the two states was to maintain in force the commercial agreement signed on February 24, 1941, and to strengthen existing relations by a friendly settlement of other questions in suspense. The Ambassador of the USSR, Mr. Gouseff, having asked if this statement could be confirmed in writing, Mr. Ruegger was authorized to set forth the Federal government's viewpoint in a written statement dated October 10, 1944, which was handed to the Soviet Ambassador. In reply to this document, a memorandum was handed to the Swiss Legation on November 1st. This memorandum expressed the refusal and gave as the reason that up to today the Swiss government has not changed in any way its previous hostile policy towards the USSR. The reproach that a hostile policy has been followed towards the USSR cannot be based on reality for any impartial observer directly and completely informed regarding the attitude of Switzerland, of the government and of her people. The facts in this connection are so conclusive that the Soviet government cannot fail to finally convince itself of their importance. Moreover, the Federal Council remains with the same sentiments as those that dictated the negotiations now interrupted and which corresponded with its desire to entertain good and peaceful relations with all states.'

The reaction of the Swiss press as a whole can be stated as follows:

"Switzerland has a perfectly clear conscience. She rejects the reproaches brought against her, nor does she allow herself to be intimidated by a gesture the motives of which are yet unapparent. Switzerland will await coolly and calmly for she has entire confidence that the Federal Council has acted correctly in this matter."

#### SUNDRY NEWS FROM SWITZERLAND.

The Swiss Delegation to the International Air Conference in Chicago made proposals for Switzerland's participation in the operation of 17 civil airlines. These would include lines connecting Switzerland with the U.S.A., South America and the Far East. Five of these lines were operated already before the war.

On November 6th, the subscriptions for the new Federal loan were closed. The 500 million francs the public was asked to offer were divided into three loans. One for 20 years at 3-1/2%, a second for 10 years at 3-3/4% and a third for 5 years cash bonds at 2-1/2%. Subscriptions reached 683 millions. The success is all the more important because it was the loan for 20 years at 3-1/2% that got the most subscriptions. The Federal authorities have decided to accept the total amount offered for the 3-1/2% loan, and 200 millions for each of the other two loans. This operation will make possible an appreciable consolidation of Switzerland's loans and debts.

The relations between Switzerland and France have proceeded a further step. Mr. Jean Berge has been appointed French Charge d'Affaires to Switzerland and Mr. Ernst Schlatter has been entrusted with the function of Swiss Charge d'Affaires to France.

Bad weather and abundant rainfall of the past few days have resulted in a rise in the Rhine water level at Basle of nearly 3 meters. This temporary rise has made it possible to get the stranded boats belonging to the Rhine Navigation Office in Basle afloat again. The boats became stranded following the bombing of the dam across the Alsacian line last October 7th. But the Rhine flood waters also carried off the bridge at Petite Huningue made of boats. This bridge was on German territory, just a short distance from the Swiss frontier.

The long discussions between employers and employees of the Swiss watchmaking industry which were held for the sake of labor peace have now concluded with an agreement on vacations and increased cost of living bonuses for workmen. Until now, all workers have had a right to six days of paid vacation a year. In the future, workmen who have been engaged in the same firm for a certain time will get an additional vacation of three to six days. The increased cost of living bonus will be raised from 35 to 45 centimes per working hour, and the monthly household bonus will amount to 35 against that of the former 25 francs.

On November 5th, the election of the four new members of the Schaffhausen cantonal parliament brought a considerable move to the left in the Town of Schaffhausen. So far the Liberal parties of that city held 17 seats and the Social Democrats 13. Now, 20 Social Democrats and 1 member of the Party for Free Economy were elected with only 11 Liberals. The new cantonal parliament of Schaffhausen consists now of 30 Social Democrats (21), 28 members of the Peasant Party (33), 14 Liberals (17), and 3 members of the Catholic People's Party (1). Furthermore, the Party for Free Economy was able to send one representative and the independent voters succeeded in keeping their one seat. The new Labor Party, however, did not obtain their expected seat.

In their fight against housing shortage, the government and parliament of the Canton of Berne has so far granted a total of credits of 5.2 million francs for an effective furtherance of apartment construction. The Bernese government has now proposed to the cantonal parliament assembled in its fall session to grant another 1 million francs credit for the same purpose.

The City Council of Berne has granted a credit of 400,000 francs for special winter bonuses to the officials, employees and workmen of the commune.

During the last 5 years before the war, the sales figures of the Swiss breweries have been more or less stable. They amount to an annual average of some 2,180,000 hektoliters which figure, however, in 1940-1941 decreased to 2,005,000 hektoliters, in 1941-42 to 1,400,000 hektoliters and finally in 1943-1944 reached the lowest level of 866,000 hektoliters. In the fifth year of the war, the total has dropped to 40% of the prewar figure. The reasons for this development are the price increase and the diminution of the strength of the beer.

The Federal Council was asked to clarify its position regarding the right of asylum. The answer reads: 'In harmony with a long series of precedents all of which are an honor to Switzerland, the Federal Council means to exercise the unquestioned right of any sovereign state to extend asylum to fugitives who in its eyes are worthy of it. However, the Federal Council is not willing to authorize without examination even in cases when life is in danger, all who might ask for asylum to enter the territory of the Confederation where the number of refugees has already reached the point of concern. It is clear, in particular, that asylum cannot be granted to persons who have manifested an unfriendly attitude towards Switzerland nor to those who have committed acts contrary to the laws of war or whose past bears witness to conceptions incompatible with the fundamental traditions of law and humanity.'

Inasmuch as the arrival of more groups of refugees is to be expected soon, the Federal Council is asking the Chambers for a credit of 1.5 million francs for the construction and equipment of quarantine camps.



In Berne, the former Federal Councillor Minger pointed out, in an address, that today in the final phase of this war Switzerland needs a strong internal unity. This unity, the speaker declared, has been our strength during the first years of this war. It has to be maintained today as well as after the war.

The members of the Swiss delegation to the International Conference for Civil Aviation in Chicago, together with other members of the Conference, were present at demonstrations of the American Fleet on the shore of Lake Michigan, which gave a vivid picture of the ways and means in which the American fleet carries out its operations in the Pacific.

In their Sunday program, the BBC spoke about the extraordinary hospitality and charitableness the Swiss people have shown during these five years of war. It was said literally: "Switzerland is a mountainous country and, therefore, far from self-supporting. For a long time she depended to a large extent on her imports from Germany. We must also not overlook that a very considerable number of her male population is continuously in military service, guarding her frontiers. All this has made it hard enough for Switzerland to take care of herself. But, nevertheless, this little country has maintained a far reaching activity of international hospitality. Thousands of refugees have found refuge in Switzerland. It will never be forgotten that Swiss families have offered to accept undernourished French children and have sent money when these children no longer could go to Switzerland. Apart from the Swiss people, the Swiss churches also have done great work. We only express our deep feeling of gratitude if we declare that the world famous task of humanity of the St. Bernhard Hospice has been extended to the whole Swiss nation."

The lack of coal and locomotives has necessitated further restrictions in the railway traffic between Switzerland and France. The train between Geneva and Lyon for instance will now only run three times a week, i.e. on Monday, Thursdays and Saturdays.

The present situation of the Swiss fuel supply again demands most careful examination. It is to be expected that the national stocks in our own coal mines will again have to be included to an increased extent into our supply program.

According to a communique issued by the Federal War Office for Food, the rations in Switzerland will be slightly increased for December. The cards will give a total of 650 grams of fats and oils, i.e. 100 grams more than for December last year. Again two eggs will be given on each full card. In view of the coming holiday season, the candy ration for December will go up to 150 points.

The Grand Council of Schaffhausen has been discussing the indemnities to be paid for the damage caused to insured and uninsured buildings by the April 1st bombing. So far 237 cases have been announced. Requested indemnities total 37 millions. By October 1, 14.5 millions have been paid to beneficiaries.

Heavy snowfalls have been reported from all parts of Switzerland. Traffic on the Aigle-Leysin Railroad Line has been greatly handicapped.

In Zurich, Professor Wahlen, author of the agricultural extension plan, has given his inaugural lecture at the Federal Institute of Technology. He spoke on 'Plants and Men'. The new professor pointed out that by a rational use of the soil and a judicious distribution of land produce our ground could feed a much larger population than now, and could occupy a much greater number of workers.

The Swiss Relief Society, a foreign group of the New Helvetic Society, has taken several measures to avoid the danger threatening our Swiss colony in Budapest now that the successful Russian forces are closing in on the Hungarian Capital. With the active support of our Minister in Hungary, Dr. Maximilian Jaeger, and in collaboration with the International Red Cross Committee it has been possible to create an evacuation camp at the castle of Prince Esterhaz at Tschakvar, which will accommodate some 200 Swiss people. Large stocks of food, clothes and underwear at this castle are ready to be put at the disposal of the bombed-out Swiss people. Fifteen cows and 20 pigs are in the stables. Furthermore, it has been

possible to organize a large transport of valuable furniture to be shipped to Switzerland.

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SEASON'S COMPLIMENTS.

The Committee of the Swiss Benevolent Society wishes to extend to all members their sincere felicitations and compliments for the coming festive season. May next year prove a happy and prosperous one to all our Compatriots. Although most of us expected, a little while ago, the European war would be over by the end of the year, Switzerland is fortunate to see one of her frontiers re-opened after 4 years of complete isolation. We rejoice with our people at home and trust that normal relations and trade can now be resumed. Silent prayers are in our hearts for a speedy release from all troubles and turmoil.

GOOD LUCK TO ALL.  
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I should like, both on my own behalf, and on behalf of my family and the Consulate staff, to send most cordial Christmas and New Year Greetings to all my fellow-countrymen in New Zealand. May 1945 bring you all health and prosperity.

As pointed out above, 1944 has seen the end of Switzerland's isolation, and we hope that the coming year will see a further broadening of the traditional friendly ties with the other countries of the world. To cultivate friendly relations with all nations is the supreme principle of Swiss Foreign Policy. I am sure that as we celebrate our Christmas and New Year in this land of plenty, we shall think of our people at home, gladly sharing their small supplies with an ever-increasing flood of refugees; planning to give still more help to war-stricken neighbours, and already playing their part in the reconstruction of devastated countries.

DR. WALTER SCHMID, SWISS CONSUL.  
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OBITUARY. It is with deep regret, we announce the death in Action on September 23rd of Lieut. L.A. Steiner, son of Mr. J.M. Steiner and the late Mrs. Steiner of Cardiff, Taranaki, late of Mahoe. Leaving New Zealand with the 5th Reinforcements, Lieut. Steiner joined an Auckland Battalion as a private, where his leadership soon earned him promotion. His Battalion was in the vanguard of the 8th Army's famous advance from El Alamein, and at Takrouna Heights, in Tunisia, he was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal for auspicious courage, leadership and determination. When his Company was under heavy enemy machine gun fire, he led his depleted Platoon in an attack which wiped out 5 enemy machine gun posts. After the collapse of the Axis Forces in North Africa, Lieut. Steiner went to the Officers' Training School where he gained his commission. Rejoining his Battalion in Italy he saw action in Cassino, Florence and Rimini where he paid the supreme sacrifice.  
"His Duty Nobly Done."

NEW MEMBERS: We have much pleasure in announcing the enrolment of the following further compatriots: Messrs. Geo. H. Merz, C/- The Berry Engineering Works, Palmerston North; J. E. Kunz, C/- Post Office, Whangarei; Paul Kuhn, Howard, Via Marchison; C. Aufdermaur, 104 Clyde Rd., Wairoa; F. Gwerder, Ahipaipa Rd., Okaiawa; J. L. Dettling, Scott Rd., R. D. Hawera; Carl Schon, R. D. Mauna Rd., Whangarei; R. Hiestand, Manaia Rd., Kaponga; M. Kuenzli, 62 Brett's Rd., Christchurch.

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A D V E R T I S E M E N T S.

MR. JOHN BUTLER, Butcher, Tariki:	Varieties of Swiss Sausages.
MR. TONY KOMMINOTH, Wellington:	Visit his new "Lido" Tea Rooms, 118 Courtenay Place, Wellington.
MR. F. GRAEDEL, Orini, R. D., Taupiri:	Manufacturing Mountain Chalet Cream Cheese-4d per cake-plus postage. Orders promptly dealt with.
MR. L. LEUTHARD, New Plymouth:	Visit his "Hygienic Dining Rooms".
MR. L. ZURCHER, 212 Pattison Rd., Hastings:	1944 Apple Cider, 5/- per gallon in two gallon lots, plus freight; samples free of charge; in ordering state dry or sweet. Jars to lend. "Moscht müends aim ghä!

CORRESPONDENCE: Please address to the Secretary - Mr. E. Merz, P.O. Box 85, AUCKLAND.