

# The new President of the International Red Cross

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of transport facilities through France for Swiss exports and the application of import restrictions in certain Allied Nation countries. If, as reported in the press, Allied supplies to Switzerland have now also been cut off, then certainly a grave state of affairs for the Swiss people has arisen.

Switzerland, a country of 4,250,000 inhabitants, is intensely industrial, but has no domestic sources of raw materials of any consequence, and is not self-supporting in foodstuffs. Without exports, she can feed only half her population, and without imports of raw materials and many foodstuffs, unemployment and food shortage on a wide scale must result.

As regards the alleged export from Switzerland to Germany of war materials, first of all the statement must be made, that in terms of international law exports of such merchandise from neutral countries to belligerent countries are not forbidden. In other words, the meaning of "economic neutrality" is unknown to international law. In the course of this war, the Swiss Government, however, has been most cautious in its international trade policy and has always kept both camps of the belligerents informed of its trade negotiations with either of them. In order to safeguard Swiss industries from the accusation of exporting arms and machinery which can be used in actual warfare, it also has forbidden business houses to make contracts with foreign governments or their representatives. Unilateral declarations to foreign governments binding contractors to import or export goods are also banned. Further, since October 1, 1944, there has been complete prohibition of the export from Switzerland of war materials, including specifically ball-bearings, aircraft and submarine parts and any similar products.

The Swiss radio also stated that Switzerland has always fully complied with the requirements of existing international conventions as regards railway traffic through Switzerland of goods or persons between the Italian and German borders, which subject was likewise mentioned in the reported press campaign. Neither has Switzerland ever allowed on her territory military traffic from Germany to Italy or vice versa.

In reply to the further unofficially made demands to Switzerland in the current press campaign that she should take militant and satisfactory steps to halt the use of the country as a base for German financial transactions with the outside world, and for the concealment of National-Socialist assets, it must be pointed out that Switzerland has not only become a shelter for refugees from all over Europe, but also an asylum for foreign capital from many countries, not only Germany. Specifically on the subject of the transfer of German funds in Switzerland to overseas countries, the Association of Swiss Banks recently stated that no Swiss banks have ever carried out or collaborated in the transfer abroad of funds of National-Socialist leaders. In this connection, it is also noteworthy that the Swiss Government has made it clear, that asylum cannot be granted to persons who have manifested an unfriendly attitude towards Switzerland, nor to those who have committed actions contrary to the laws of war, or whose past bears witness to conceptions incompatible with the fundamental traditions of law and humanity.

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#### THE NEW PRESIDENT OF THE INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS.

The International Committee of the Red Cross has appointed Professor Carl J. Burckhardt as its president. In this office he will succeed Professor Max Huber who has been president of the committee since 1928 and has now intimated his intention of resigning these duties at the end of 1944. Professor Burckhardt has therefore taken over his new mandate on January 1, 1945.

Professor Burckhardt is well known in Switzerland and abroad for his literary, scientific and diplomatic activity. Born in Basel in 1891 as the son of Karl Christoph Burckhardt, he graduated from the University of Zurich. From 1918 to 1922 he was attached to the staff of the Swiss Legation at Vienna. In 1923, Gustavo Ador, who was President of the International Committee of the Red Cross at the time, entrusted him with the work of organizing the repatriation of Greek prisoners of war from Turkey. After his return to Switzerland, he once

more devoted himself to his historical studies and was subsequently appointed Professor of Modern History at the Zurich University. Since 1933, he has occupied a chair at the Graduate Institute of International Studies in Geneva. In 1933 he was appointed a member of the International Committee of the Red Cross.

In 1937, Professor Burckhardt was appointed by the League of Nations to the office of High Commissioner in Danzig. During this particularly difficult period, he devoted all his energies to the maintenance of peace. His role at that time was recognized and appreciated by all the states. Thus, Lord Halifax, the Foreign Secretary of Great Britain, stressed in a letter to the Swiss Federal Council the outstanding part played by Professor Burckhardt.

After Professor Burckhardt had presented to the League of Nations in November, 1939, his report on his mission in Danzig, he devoted himself to the International Committee of the Red Cross, especially to the promotion of relief schemes for prisoners, internees and civilians, and negotiations in progress with the various powers.

Professor Burckhardt furthermore is chairman of the joint relief commission which amongst the International Red Cross organizations was founded to handle relief for civilian population.

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#### SUNDRY NEWS FROM SWITZERLAND.

In the National Council, the retiring President, Dr. Paul Gysler from Zurich informed the chambers of the letter of resignation handed in by Federal Councillor Pilot-Golaz. He said that it will be left to the new President of the National Council to thank the retiring Magistrate for his services. Mr. Gysler also stated that Russia's refusal to maintain relations with our country must not be underestimated, but it has in no way left a shock or even a weakening of our domestic problems. According to the opinion of the Federal Council, our government has given the only right answer to the refusal of Russia, namely, that the Swiss government today, as before, has always fought for the maintenance of liberty and that our country is ready to entertain friendly relations with all nations, including Russia.

On December 7th, the chambers were in joint session, as the Federal Assembly. The meeting was behind closed doors. On the agenda were the three requests for pardon submitted by men sentenced to death by military courts. The reasons for these sentences were particularly conclusive. The defendants were found guilty of treason and espionage in favor of German interests. After hearing a report on each case, and after a thorough discussion which lasted five hours, the requests for pardon were refused by an overwhelming majority.

The Parliament decided that its financial dues to the League of Nations amounting since 1940 to about 1.4 million francs would be met and sent over to the League. The Swiss contribution for the year 1945 has been fixed at 600,000 francs. Since 1941, when the League of Nations closed most of its services, the Swiss government stopped the payment of any financial contribution to the League, but she has continued her practical services, these exceeding the value of her financial quota.

On his return to London from a short visit to Switzerland, Major General Sir Richard Howard Pike head of the section for English prisoners of war camps made the following statement: "I went to Switzerland to thank the Swiss people for all they have done for us. We shall never be able to repay our debt to Switzerland for without her help it would never have been possible for us to secure about what has happened in English prisoner-of-war-camps in Germany. The ability of the Swiss officials is absolutely admirable. The Swiss know how to select authorized delegates who are able to achieve good understanding between the commanders of the camps and the prisoners of war. We are deeply grateful to Switzerland for this achievement.