

Sundry news from Switzerland

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SUNDRY NEWS FROM SWITZERLAND.

The end of the year usually brings changes in the Army's higher commands. This year, the Commander in Chief of the Swiss Army, General Guisan, gathered together the officers taking over new commands on the site of the soldier's monument in Les Rangiers.

Here is an extract of the speech General Guisan made on that occasion:

"To lead does not only mean knowing, willing and believing. To lead also means to hope. The man in command must believe in the success he is endeavouring to prepare and to achieve. One has always heard of the wonders which happen on battlefields. The thing one calls wonder, is in fact the will of God and the will of a single man, the man in command. The time can always come when this will play a decisive role. And this will must endure until all the means at the command's disposal are exhausted."

The Federal Council has taken measures on December 3, 1944, relative to the protection of the Swiss publishing business against undue foreign influence. The commission constituted by the Federal Department of Interior, according to those decrees, has just held its first and constitutive sitting in Berne. The commission's task will consist in examining all demands dealing with the foundation of transformation of the publishing business, as well as the grant of the right of purchasing licenses covering foreign publishing rights. The commission, which will be composed of leading personalities of the Swiss publishing business and of our country's cultural life, will be presided over by the well-known professor, Dr. Karl Henschen who is at present rector of the Basle University.

Prince Francois-Joseph II of Liechtenstein has decided to maintain a Legation in Berne. The Prince's brother has been appointed Charge d'Affaires. The diet of the Principality gave its approval for the plan on December 21st.

The City of Basle holds the record of being the city in Switzerland where the air raid warning is sounded most often. This is due to the city's proximity to a frontier beyond which fighting is unceasing. During the first four years of the war, the alarm was sounded 49 times, but during the year of 1944 the number of alerts went up to 255.

It is officially announced that according to news sent to the Swiss Legation in Tokio from Manila, the Swiss Colony in the Philippines is in good health and sends hearty greetings and good wishes to their parents and friends at home.

The French Red Cross has just decided to maintain a permanent delegation in Switzerland in order to entertain closer relations and better co-operation with the International Committee of the Red Cross, with the Swiss Red Cross, with the League of Red Cross Societies and with headquarters of various Swiss and international relief organizations in Geneva.

A considerable number of Christmas parcels sent by the various Red Cross Societies to Switzerland could be distributed by the International Red Cross Committee in prisoner of war camps. For instance, the British Red Cross and parent organizations in the Dominions sent more than 200,000 parcels containing food, toilet articles and games. The American Red Cross made up 70,000 parcels which reached the camps in Germany through Geneva and Goeteborg. The German Red Cross put 2,500 tons of foodstuff and Christmas presents at the disposal of the German prisoners of war in France, the British Empire and America.

The mutual relief work organized in the Canton of Neuchatel in favor of war victims in the French department of the Doubs, particularly in favor of the inhabitants of the frontier area, has gathered foodstuffs, medical supplies, clothing and household articles for a total value of 275,000 francs.

All the cantonal budgets show a budgeted deficit for 1945 of about 71 million francs. The 1943 accounts balanced with a total deficit of 16.5 millions. Only a few cantons were about to report a final surplus in income over expense. Zurich showed a surplus of more than 3 millions, Berne merely one million, and Glarus, Solothurn, Basle Land, Schaffhausen and Thurgau showed smaller surplusses.

During the third quarter of this year, the construction of city dwellings in Switzerland greatly developed. The number of new apartments in the 33 largest localities of the country went up to 1977, which was 60% above last year's figure. In comparison with 1939, however, building was down by 20%.

The city authorities of Lausanne have decided to organize during the winter vacation period a course in skiing at Les Diablerets for a certain number of primary school children. For this course some 60 boys and 30 girls were chosen by the City's Health Department, among the children who seem to be the most in need of fresh air.

According to a decision by the Executive Council of the Canton of Lucerne, Lake Sempach and its shores have been decreed a National Reserve.

The Federal Council at its meeting of January 9th made two important appointments: It decided to place Minister Pierre Bonna of Geneva in charge of the Swiss legation in Athens. During the last nine years, Mr. Bonna has been the head of the Section for Foreign Affairs of the Political Department. Mr. Walter Stucki, former Minister to France was put in charge of the Foreign Affairs Section of the Political Department. Mr. Stucki will take up his work immediately.

The Federal Council opened a new credit of 10 million francs in favor of the Political Department. The credit is to cover additional expenses caused by the diplomatic representation of foreign interests.

On January 10th, at night, Swiss air space was violated by several foreign planes in the North and the West of the country. Then, on January 11th, at 1.20 p.m., a squadron of ten American machines appeared over Chiasso and one of them machinegunned a train standing on Swiss territory in the Station of Chiasso. The engineer, father of a family, was killed and the fireman was badly wounded. After that the same plane machinegunned another train which, on its way from Como to Chiasso, was at the Swiss border at the mouth of the Monte Olympiano tunnel, near the Station of Chiasso. The engineer, an Italian subject, was badly wounded and had to be taken to the hospital of Chiasso. For one and a half hours, a panic was reigning among the population of this border region.

The cost of living index drawn up by the Federal Office for Industry, Trade and Work shows no change during the month of December. It stands at 208,2 in comparison with June 1914, and at 151,7 in comparison with August 1939, the base being in both cases 100. This means that the cost of living has doubled and more since the start of the first World War, and that it has gone up by 50% during the present conflict.

Mr. Xavier de Gaulle, the brother of General de Gaulle, has been appointed Consul General of France in Geneva. Mr. Xavier de Gaulle, who had to leave France in 1942 in order to keep out of the hands of the Gestapo, found asylum in the little City of Nyon on the Swiss shores of Lake Geneva.

France has permitted the transit of four trains consisting of Swiss cars to fetch goods in Marseille destined for Switzerland. Three trains have already returned to Switzerland. The fourth train will probably bring the rest of the Swiss goods stored in Marseille.

Furthermore, since the end of December, three empty trains were sent to Cerbere in France to fetch the goods for Switzerland stored at this station and at Portbou.

The French authorities have, furthermore, declared themselves ready to permit the transit of one train every day for the transport of overseas goods of Spanish and Portuguese origin stored at Cerbere and Portbou. Two of these trains have already left Cerbere. These trains will probably also transport Swiss export

goods. Negotiations for unloading facilities in French Mediterranean ports are still continued,

On January 11th, 40 trucks loaded with about 100 tons of foodstuffs and mail bags for Allied prisoners of war arrived at the Swiss border near Geneva. The President of the International Red Cross, accompanied by several of his assistants was present at the arrival of these trucks.

A collective bargaining contract has been signed in the Swiss chemical industry, which employs a large number of workers. This agreement is greeted with satisfaction both in employment circles and by the trade unions. It marks another step in the peaceful settlement of labor conflicts in Switzerland.

The National Committee of the Alliance of Independence held a meeting in Zurich. It passed a resolution approving the Federal Council's determination to repulse as in 1940 all attempts to bring pressure to bear on Switzerland in matters of foreign policy. The resolution ends: 'From the viewpoint of social peace it is indispensable that the Federal Council take legislative measures making it possible for the heads of enterprises not to lay off their employees because of unemployment. The Confederation should intervene by granting credits enabling industrialists to hold out until the importation of raw materials has improved.'

The faculty of medicine of the University of Zurich conferred the title of Doctor honoris causa to Professor Max Huber, former President of the International Red Cross Committee, for his activity in behalf of suffering humanity. In honor of Prof. Huber's 70th birthday anniversary, the professors of the University of Zurich have published a work entitled "From War to Peace".

At Zizers in the Canton of the Grisons a priest named Johann Künzle, died at the age of 87. He had acquired a big reputation in the surrounding territory for his knowledge in the use of healing plants. Johann Künzle was the author of several remarkable works on medical plants. He was also the editor of a very popular almanac which was printed yearly.

The Federal Council voted on January 16 an important measure within the framework of its policy regarding the upsurge in the cost of living. At the beginning of the war, a number of decrees were issued against speculation on farming property and agricultural real estate in order to avoid a rise in prices. The control set up at that time did not apply to city properties, but the price of such property exerts an influence on rents which means that rents could not be kept under control unless the sale and purchase of buildings were too. Therefore the Federal Council decided to require a permit from the Federal Control Office for the sale of all non-agricultural properties as well.

The reprovisioning of Switzerland in foodstuffs, despite the arrival recently of a few trains loaded with Swiss goods from the ports of Marseilles and Genoa, remains critical. However, the food rations for the month of February, in spite of the cold weather, has been reduced, though the meat and bread rations will be maintained, no doubt, at the same level as for January. The total attribution of oils and fats will be slightly smaller on the cards for children but they will insure sufficient food just the same.

The refugee camp organized in the Basle Fair ground's buildings has just been closed. The camp sheltered up to 5,000 refugees at the time from the neighbouring Alsace. All these Alsacian refugees now either have returned home, have gone to other parts of France, or are receiving hospitality with friends or Swiss private families.

On Thursday, January 11, the organization pro Polonia in Fribourg organized a well attended manifestation in favor of the needy children of Warsaw. Several films about the life of the Polish people were shown. A Polish student thanked the meeting for its great sympathy for the suffering of the Polish population.

As a recognition of the fact that many Zurich doctors received their training in the University of Leiden in Holland and as a testimony to the good relations that always have existed between Dutch and Swiss intellectual circles, the University of Zurich Senate has decided to lend support to a resumption of the activity of the University of Leiden. It is expected that Dutch teachers will be invited to make a stay in Switzerland just as soon as communications with Holland make the plan feasible, and Swiss professors will be sent to Leiden.

The Swiss ski camps for 500 girls at St. Moritz and 500 boys at Arosa have been crowned by extremely satisfactory success. Despite the very cold weather, the health of the young people has been excellent. Thanks to the initiative of the Swiss Ski Association and thanks to general donations another 1000 young Swiss have thus been given an opportunity to learn this healthy sport.

The Federal Political Department announces that all persons travelling to France have to be careful not to carry any letters on them as according to French regulations, it is strictly prohibited to bring any letters into the country. Persons who disregard these regulations will have to face considerable inconveniences. It is declared that after the resumption of postal traffic with France the normal way of transmission must be used again.

On January 24th, railway traffic between France and Switzerland was resumed on the line from Vallorbe to Frasno. On week days, two trains will be at the disposal for the passenger traffic from and to France with rail communication from Frasno to Dijon and vice versa. Under certain conditions, freight traffic to and from France will also be possible again via this border station.

One of the main problems of Switzerland's economy, the restrictions imposed on our building trade, is still greatly pre-occupying the minds of both our authorities and the public. These restrictions were brought about by the difficulties which the shortage of coal is causing to our production of cement. Almost all large communes in Switzerland have recently been forced to work out large scale building programs in order to fight the ever-increasing housing shortage. In Berne, a special association has been formed to defend the rights of private apartment construction enterprises. This committee will immediately enter upon negotiations with the authorities.

It has been learned with satisfaction that the Swiss Colony residing in that part of Holland occupied by the Germans is safe and sound.

In Berne, a Swiss-Norwegian Society for the furtherance of mutual relations between these two countries has been founded. At the foundation ceremony, the Norwegian Minister in Berne and representatives of the Swiss authorities were present.

Federal Councillor Kobelt, head of the Federal Military Department, visited an emergency hospital for 400 badly wounded Allied prisoners of war in Geneva. These prisoners had just arrived from Germany and are awaiting the first opportunity to return home by way of Marseille. Federal Councillor Kobelt was accompanied by Mr. Picot, member of the government of Geneva and chief of the Genevan medical department and by several high officers.

During the next few days, the transit of seriously wounded and sick prisoners of war through Switzerland will come to a close. So far a total of 13 trains with German soldiers from Marseille and 8 trains with Allied soldiers have passed our country. Some three to four hundred sick Allied soldiers stationed at the Plain Palais barracks in Geneva, will leave for Marseille within a few days.

On Friday, January 26th, the S.S. "Henry Dunant" left the harbor of Lisbon after having been ready to sail since December last year. The steamer carries a cargo of 4,850 tons of foodstuffs provided by the "Swiss Gift to War Victims" and destined for the civilian population of occupied Holland. Negotiations carried on between representatives of the International Committee of the Red Cross and of the belligerent countries has now made it possible for the "Henry Dunant" to sail to the Swedish port of Göteborg by a route leading around the British Isles. In the interest of a rapid aid to the suffering population of Holland, it is to be hoped that in the meantime negotiations have come to a final conclusion allowing the goods to be transferred from Göteborg to a Dutch port.