

Serious food and raw material shortage in Switzerland

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SERIOUS FOOD AND RAW MATERIAL SHORTAGE IN SWITZERLAND.

On March 27th, an important exposé was submitted by the head of the Department of Public Economy, Mr. Stampfli to the National Council. Mr. Stampfli portrayed in detail the situation of the country and gave information on the recent negotiations in Berne. The reason for our difficulties, he said, was that Switzerland is a highly industrialized country without raw materials of her own. She has to import both foodstuffs and raw materials needed by her industrial machines. And the fact is, he continued, that despite appearances Switzerland is today a land threatened by famine and massive unemployment. Our wheat supply, consisting of last year's crop added to our existing stocks, which have not been renewed since March, 1944, is not sufficient to carry us through until the new crop is harvested in 1945. This is why we have been forced to cut down the bread ration from 250 to 200 grams per person a day. A new reduction is unavoidable if we do not succeed in importing 6,000 carloads before the coming fall. Our reprovioning in fats and oils is still more unfavorable. For other articles our reserves will be sufficient until fall. Only meat can be distributed on the same basis as heretofore. This situation, said Mr. Stampfli, makes an agricultural effort more urgent than ever, for unfavorable weather last fall made it possible to do only about one half the autumn work of sowing. Happily better weather has come this spring and earlier than usual, making it possible to make up the lost time to a certain extent. As for our reprovioning in raw materials for our industry, the picture is darker still. For years now we have received no wool, no cotton and our supply in rubber and leather is no better. Coal is the greatest lack. On this point, Mr. Stampfli recalled that nothing is being imported and that the Allies could make us no promise of compensation. This naturally makes it necessary to place drastic restrictions on the use of gas for cooking. Our coal stocks will not last longer than the end of the present year if we do not succeed in getting some coal from outside. Mr. Stampfli then spoke further of the Berne negotiations and expressed the hope that the representatives of the great powers would do everything they could in order to enable us to ward off a catastrophe.

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SUNDRY NEWS FROM SWITZERLAND.

Sunday, March 4th, has been marked by a very serious violation of Swiss neutrality. In the morning foreign aircraft dropped bombs on Basel and Zurich.

In Basle, many explosive bombs were dropped of which 10 did not explode. Damage is especially serious in the area of the freight station of Wolf. Fifty to sixty railroad cars were destroyed, depots were razed to the ground, the electric wires were blasted away, tracks torn up and switches put out of commission. Repair work will last months and will be very difficult because of the present shortage of certain materials. Passenger traffic has to be detoured in several directions in order to avoid the danger caused by unexploded bombs. Mr. Celio, Federal Councillor, head of the Department of Railways and Mr. Paschoud, general manager of the Federal Railways have visited the area. Furthermore, 15 big fires were started by numerous incendiary bombs in the Gundeldingen and St. Alban quarters. Damage caused to private property will amount to at least 8 million francs. So far no deaths have been reported but one very severely injured person was pulled out of the rubble.

Clearing work in Basle revealed that 80 high explosive bombs were dropped by the Allied airmen during their attack last Sunday. More than 1000 incendiaries were dropped on the freight station and its immediate vicinity. More than 1000 square meters of glass will be required to replace the broken window panes.

In Zurich six planes dropped bombs on the region of Milchbuck and Schwamendingen. The bombs fell near the agricultural school of Strickhof, where a building was set on fire. Several houses were completely destroyed and some 20 were seriously damaged. Work to clean up the debris started immediately.

Five people were killed and fifteen seriously injured. They were from the region between Zurich and Oerlikon. House No. 29 In-der-Hub was completely destroyed by fire and three people lost their lives in it.

The Swiss-Turkish Agreement on trade exchanges and payments concluded on August 4, 1943, has been prolonged for another three months, i.e. until June 1, 1945.