

# The Swiss workers at the end of the war

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Nobody can say that there is not enough to eat in Switzerland. But our responsible authorities are not only thinking of the present moment, they are planning for the coming winter, they are calculating with our food supply, with the shortage of fats and oils and with our dwindling stocks of foodstuffs. The end of war has not rendered the tasks of the war economic offices less difficult, because today a strong urge for freedom from restrictions makes itself felt in our country and a certain impatience for the food supply to normalize itself again. This impatience is continuously kept under control by our authorities who still have no guarantee that the promised imports will really arrive. Today the question of transporting goods is almost more difficult to solve than the problem of buying goods. There are goods enough on the world's markets, but there is a definite lack of shipping space and port facilities to unload them and of communication lines to and from the ports to our country. The best example of Switzerland's dependency on foreign imports is our bread supply. In normal years our country produces about 17,000 freight cars of ten tons of cereals. Before the war we imported every year about 43,000 carloads. This explains the worries of our war office for cereals when at the end of last year imports of cereals completely stopped.

Every report on new facilities for our imports arouses new hopes. It is reckoned that most foodstuffs will still have to be rationed during part of 1946. The coming month will show how the situation is developing and how much the crops will yield. So far only the rationing of dried eggpowder from America has been abolished. This article, however, is expensive and has never become a popular foodstuff. The first great relief in the food situation will only come when the fats and oils which Switzerland has stored in Spain and Portugal will arrive in our country. But even after that there will be many problems to be solved in our national supply system. Coal is one of the main problems among them. Whether the European coal producers will be able to meet the joint plan for the exploitation and distribution of coal on our continent remains still to be seen. Experts declare that if the various coal producing countries will not come to a final agreement, not much may be expected in this field.

#### THE SWISS WORKERS AT THE END OF THE WAR.

If we compare the situation of the workingman at the end of this war, the end of the first war, we find that in the Fall 1918, the Swiss workers had been in fierce opposition to the state and society in general, having even organized a general strike and having fought against army and federal Council. Today the workers have a representative in the Federal Council which is a coalition government. There are no strikes, no unemployment and the workers are among the most loyal soldiers. Nevertheless, it would be wrong to think that everything is perfect.

The workers have a number of difficult years behind them. The general cost of living has increased by 53% and in most trades this increase has only partly been equalized by higher wages. Many workers' families have to struggle very hard to make the money last for the week. If this situation has not had strong repercussions on our domestic situation, this is mainly due to the fact that so far labour has been in great demand and that no one has had to be without work. The number of families where almost each member has its own job is considerable.

The Swiss workers are more or less in constant negotiations with the state and their employers, having learned that in this way much can be gained. Moreover, they are making comparisons between their own situation and that of the workers in other countries. Our rationing system takes into consideration the requirements of our working class and in the cities like Basle, Zurich, Berne and others the workers and their representatives are either in the majority or have at least an important word to say and are thus able to co-operate in the establishment of social work and in the reduction of social differences.

In the first world war there were rich people who could get anything money could buy. This time, rationing is much more rigorous and there is greater justice for all. Furthermore, our system of wage compensation for mobilized soldiers has also greatly contributed to a more peaceful situation in our country.

With this measure the financial problems of our soldiers in active service have at least been reduced to a great extent. Nevertheless, the cantonal elections of the past month have brought considerable success to the workers' parties of the extreme left which formerly had been in close contact with the Communists. It is generally thought possible that these parties at least in Geneva, Basle, Zurich and Neuchatel will be able to play the role of an opposition party. The reasons for this change are not only to be sought in Russia's success in this war, but also in the increase of the general cost of living, and in the uncertainty of the future. These motives have made the Swiss Socialists put the security of labour and the creation of work possibilities at the head of their postwar programs. The demobilized soldiers and all those workers who so far have been engaged in our war industries, not only in the manufacture of armaments but also of all the other war products, must not be exposed to the danger of unemployment. On this point all responsible political circles of our country agree. In the field of social reforms, certain groups of workers demand, before anything else, the introduction of a federal old age and survivors insurance. The extremists of the left are demanding immediate payments to aged people, while the Socialists are supporting the insurance plan worked out by the Federal experts which is built on a business basis.

The Swiss workers are hoping for a new and more successful international collaboration. For the time being they are expecting this to be achieved by the trade unions and workers' organizations, rather than by a new kind of political world organization with which most unsatisfactory experiences have been made in the past.

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#### SUNDRY NEWS FROM SWITZERLAND.

The Federal Council accepted the new military service relief plan. Immediately after the end of the hostilities in Europe, the Swiss army high command had decided that all dispensable troops should be dismissed as soon as possible. Only three regiments will have to remain on active service for guarding purposes. The military service relief plan will be renewed every month and adapted to the changing circumstances. The services will last 32 days as a rule, so that every soldier will know exactly when he will be dismissed. If possible, all men who have already done military service in World War I will be excused from the coming services.

The efforts aimed at the opening of the port of Genoa to Swiss imports have so far led to no positive results, as a number of difficulties have still to be overcome in the negotiations with the American military authorities. The Federal Council, however, hopes to receive the permission within the next few weeks to begin with the transport of Swiss goods from Genoa to Switzerland.

Already before the war, a committee of action had been formed for the construction of an international academic sanatorium at Leysin. The Federal Council accepted the honorary patronage of this work and the Federal Assembly granted a subsidy of half a million francs. Under the circumstances, however, it has not been possible to realize this plan during the war. A number of foreign students are to be admitted to the existing clinics at Leysin, for which purpose the Swiss Gift has granted a first credit of 400,000 francs. Already on February 6, the first group of consumptive French students were welcomed at Leysin. The success of their cure has so far been very satisfactory. On April 23, twenty-nine sick Belgian students were received. Further groups are expected.

Eight hundred Russian soldiers who have been sheltered in the buildings of the Swiss Trade Fair at Lausanne have now been transferred to the Canton of Glarus where they will be able to find occupation in different public works.

On May 29, 750 French children from the Normandy and from the Paris region left Switzerland for France. Thanks to the children's aid of the Swiss Red Cross, these little French boys and girls have been able to spend a holiday in Switzerland and to regain their health.

On May 30, 451 Dutch children arrived in Switzerland for a three month stay. This vacation was offered them by the aid to children action of the Swiss Red Cross. The Dutch boys and girls will find accommodations in the Cantons of Aargau, Fribourg, Glarus Graubünden and Zurich.