

Sundry news from Switzerland

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Your humane effort has saved the lives of untold numbers of prisoners of war. You have kept open the channels of communication between the prisoner and his family. You have delivered important amounts of vital relief supplies, and maintained hope in the hearts of both prisoners and their families that, after this long and bitter war, they might be reunited.

For your task of mercy still to be achieved in other theaters, I am sure you will have the wholehearted co-operation of all the Allied Governments and of their Armies. The deep devotion of your workers will long be gratefully remembered.

(S) Dwight Eisenhower
Supreme Commander
Allied Expeditionary Force.

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SUNDRY NEWS FROM SWITZERLAND.

Pestalozzi Jubilee in 1946: After the collapse of European culture, there is a deep craving for the revival of human rights and social justice. The 200th anniversary of Henri Pestalozzi's birthday, which will be celebrated on the 12th January, 1946, will be an occasion to recall the outstanding work of this great Swiss educationalist and humanitarian, who was the founder of modern principles of education. An international Congress of men who have dedicated themselves to the study of Pestalozzi's work, and of educationalists from all countries, will take place in Switzerland. Great interest in this event is already being displayed in educational circles in the United States, the British Empire, China, and on the European Continent.

Swiss Model Schools for Germany: It is planned to open in South Germany a number of Swiss model schools and colleges, staffed with Swiss teachers. The plan is supported by the authorities of the French Forces of occupation. To begin with only carefully selected German children and young people will be admitted to these schools. The immediate object is to create exemplary education centres.

Swiss School Text Books for Austria: In Zurich, Switzerland, an educational relief association has been created with the object of collecting school text books for Austria. The Bernese State Council has agreed to a request by the authorities of the Allied Forces of Occupation in Italy, and the Italian Ministry of Education, for permission to reprint Bernese school text books for use in the German-speaking part of Italian South Tyrol.

Swiss Contributions to the International Red Cross: During the war the Swiss Government has granted to the Committee of the International Red Cross at Geneva NZ £7,250,000, while other sources in Switzerland have furnished another NZ £8,000,000.

American soldiers will be allowed to attend lectures at all the Swiss universities; about 2,500 such students are expected. They are not allowed to purchase watches or barter uniforms or parts of their equipment.

By the middle of this month about 50,000 American soldiers were spending their leave in Switzerland; their original pocket money of Frs. 150 has now been increased to Frs. 175 per month. The effect on our hotel industry seems to be in the nature of a temporary boom. The following report from Berne which appeared in the "Daily Mail" September 8th is to be believed:

"For the first time since 1938 Swiss hotels in all the big centres such as Bale, Zurich, Berne, Lausanne, and Geneva are packed to capacity.

A leading hotel-keeper today said he was unable to explain this phenomenon, especially as entry into Switzerland is still difficult.

At Berne and Geneva people are sleeping in hotel bathrooms, while hundreds seek accommodation in private houses or small pensions outside the town. Eight thousand American soldiers daily on leave make big demands on the accommodation.

The rush seems to be due mainly to the passage of people caught by the war in Europe who are now "sorting themselves out" and of a small army of business travellers feverishly seeking whatever markets may be open in Europe.

Among these the British are noticeable by their absence.

A prominent Swiss industrialist told me that they are being overrun by American salesmen, who are offering all kinds of seductive credit terms. He said it was generally regretted that the British appear to be entirely ignoring the Swiss market, which is only too anxious to trade with Britain again.

Swiss also regret that British soldiers on leave are not allowed to join their American colleagues, who are making such a strong impression on their trips through Switzerland.

All the Swiss see of the British soldiers who have helped to liberate Europe is a fleeting glimpse of cheering Tommies as their trains speed through the Simplon route homeward bound twice daily.

The Swiss are clamouring for the British again."

The insistent demands by local residents for the expulsion of Countess Ciano have now been acceded to by her delivery to the U.S. military police; her two children are allowed to remain in Switzerland.

Negotiations are said to be in progress between an American delegation and our Federal authorities for the employment of five to ten thousand Swiss functionaries (interpreters, technicians, teachers, lecturers, etc.) in the American zone of occupation. Applicants would be engaged for one or more years and receive a monthly salary of Frs. 1,000 to Frs. 1,800. After 15 years service they would become entitled to a pension and could acquire, free of cost, American citizenship after five years. No official statement has so far been issued but the above appeared in some of the dailies in Switzerland and as it was not denied the subject was ravenously worked upon. The next piece of news was to the effect that our officials at Berne were confounded by the generosity of the proposal fearing that our teachers and civil servants would rush off to Germany or demand correspondingly higher salaries at home; it had therefore been suggested and agreed that the remuneration - when the proposal was announced officially - would be from 500 to 1,000 francs a month. Advertisements are expected to appear in the Swiss papers. In the meantime a Swiss monthly has revealed to its readers that the American authorities have already received 50,000 applications. All these are of course delightful rumours and may, let us hope, be intelligent anticipations.

An astounding revelation was made in the Bernese Grosse Rat by the cantonal chief of police. In the spring 1940 ten German saboteurs armed with bombs managed to cross our frontier. Their instructions were to sabotage several aviation fields at a time to coincide with the invasion of Holland and Belgium so as to create consternation and panic. One of them, bearing the fitful name "Teufel" was arrested on the aerodrome at Biel when he was getting his fireworks ready, eight were seized within four days before any harm was done and the last one was able to use his return ticket.

A singular operation was recently performed in the Zurich Zoo. A newly born Yak-calf was found to be afflicted with a rupture. The veterinary surgeon decided upon an operation which was successfully performed the calf being afterwards returned to its mother.

The scarcity of heating materials is not altogether unpleasing to the children in St.Gall; during the winter months primary schools will open four days only, from Tuesday to Friday, and secondary schools (from the fourth form) five days.

The chief commissioner for the assessment of taxes in the canton Berne, Rudolf Kellerhals, has received a call from the Turkish Ministry of Finance to act as its expert. The cantonal authorities have granted him the necessary leave; Mr. Kellerhals expects to stay at Ankara for at least three months.

Indignation has been caused among the hoteliers of Lugano at the news that the casino at Campione has opened its doors again. Politically Italian, Campione is practically surrounded by Swiss soil and before the war offered facilities for gambling which are not available in the canton Ticino; it was also a haven or refuge for dubious characters of all nationalities.

According to a Reuter report the Swiss army lost 4,027 men or about one per cent of its mobilised strength during the war. 2,660 died from illnesses, 1,005 through accidents and 362 committed suicide.

Statistics recently published show that during 1944 our country has been entirely self-supporting as regards potatoes, meat, milk and butter. Concerning bread, 20% of the total quantity required for the ration emanated from abroad, though the cultivation of cereals in Switzerland during the years of the war has been more than doubled. Sugar was the only vital food article that depended on foreign imports to an abnormal amount, i.e. nearly 75%, in spite of the fact that home production is nearly four times as high than at the beginning of the war.

The Federal Council decided to enforce an old age insurance. At first the sum of 30 million francs was thought to be sufficient for the realization of this project, but now the sum required is estimated at 100 million francs. Ninety percent of this sum will be covered by the compensation funds and by the Confederation. The other ten percent will be furnished by the Cantons. For couples residing in urban localities, the maximum payment has been fixed at 1,000 frs. This sum is adapted according to the size of the place of residence, the pension being less for those living in suburban districts. For those living in the country, the sum is fixed at 600 francs.

The director of the Bureau of Social Insurance, Mr. Saxer, and two of his collaborators informed the Swiss Press on October 10, regarding the transitory regime adopted by the Federal Council for provisional payments of pensions to the aged and survivors. The decree of the Federal Council taken in virtue of its full powers established the link between old age insurance as it exists now and as it will exist after January 1, 1948. Thus, the Federal Council drew up a provisional regime which went into effect on January 1, 1945. This regime grants a pension to all persons over 65 years and to widows and orphans of Swiss nationality living on Swiss territory and enjoying full civic rights whose incomes do not reach the limits fixed by the decree.

In the month of September, the situation on the Swiss labour market remained unchanged except for a few minor seasonal increases. At the end of the month, 3544 unemployed people were registered at the labour offices, as against 3322 at the end of August 1945, and 2979 in the same month last year.

The reprovioning situation in Switzerland has greatly improved due to better transportation facilities. After October 15, several restrictions will be eliminated. Coffee, tea and cocoa will no longer be rationed. Fresh bread can again be sold, but we will still continue to eat brown federal bread. Three meatless days per week will still be observed in the restaurants. The price of bread has gone down 8 centimes on the Kg. for loaves weighing not less than 600 grams. Textiles will no longer be rationed after October 15, but we cannot yet hope to have the quality of clothing we had before the war.

The Federal War Office for Food Supply announced that 165 tons of valuable products arrived from Sweden by rail on October 11. Thirty freight cars with coal arrived at Chiasso from Newcastle in England and were shipped to the Port of Savona. The supply of coal, however, still remains the most difficult problem in the reprovioning of our country.

Butter reserves in Switzerland are relatively satisfactory. Since oils and fats from the outside are being imported again and even some Danish butter, there is no danger that the manufacturing of butter will become a detriment to the cheese-making industry. It is believed that the coming winter will see an increase in the butter rations.

A caravan of 31 trucks of the International Red Cross entered Switzerland at Riehen-Lorrach. The trucks carried 377 Swiss citizens coming from Germany, mostly from East Prussia, Mecklenburg and Saxonie, regions now occupied by the Russians. Among this convoy were a few people coming from zones occupied by British and American forces. These Swiss compatriots bore signs of the suffering and privations which they had to endure. Some of them had to be taken to hospitals because it was feared they have typhus fever. All others were sent to the reception camp at Rheinfelden where they will be kept in quarantine for the period of time required by health regulations.

The Zurich Police Headquarters announced that the Zurich State Council expelled 240 National Socialists from Switzerland, and 4 Fascists with their families. Counting those made by the Federal Council, the number of expulsions for the Canton of Zurich now totals 291 National Socialists and 26 Fascists. Of those so far only 124 Germans and 5 Italians with their families have left our country, while 14 have been interned.

Preparations are being made for the opening in March 1946 in London of a Swiss exposition to which will be attached a special section devoted to the cultural history of Switzerland. At the same time there will be a comprehensive Swiss exposition of modern architecture dedicated more especially to the reconstruction and housing problems, as well as interior decoration.

A Congress was held in Geneva on the initiative of the Swiss Academy for Medical Science at which were present numerous representatives of the French Medicine and of French Medical Associations, among them a considerable number of France's leading scholars and practitioners, including Professor Roussy, President of the Paris University.

The Federal Council lifted its full power decree of June 30, 1942, with regard to the furtherance of apartment constructions. This means that from now on the furtherance of apartment construction will be considered as part of the program of the creation of working possibilities and will therefore also benefit by the federal subsidies which are at the disposal of this program. Concessions which have already been granted will be treated according to the old system. So far the Confederation has already spent some 45,000,000 francs of subsidies for the construction of between 50,000 and 60,000 new apartments. Co-operative enterprises have received 10% subsidies, while for private construction the subsidy has only been 5%. This difference will now disappear as well as the restriction of the subsidies to areas with an actual housing shortage. Today there is still more unemployment in our building trade, because orders for new constructions have begun to drop off, but it is hoped that the new federal subsidies of 10 and 15% will avert this danger of unemployment.

It has been learned that the Swiss authorities have received through the Russian military mission in Berne, an official confirmation of the fact that the Soviet government has decided to let Swiss citizens living in countries occupied by the Russians return to their homeland. The repatriation of Russian internees in Switzerland finally ended with the departure of the last convoy which left St. Margrethen on October 4th. The Soviet government according to the communication of the Russian military mission has given orders for preparations to be carried out for the repatriation of our Swiss compatriots. Clothing and medical treatment will be given to those who need it and food for 30 days, including two hot meals a day. Those who are too weak to travel will

be admitted in hospitals and doctors will give them the required medical care. The Swiss authorities have been invited to send representatives to receive these Swiss citizens at the points of passage, at Carlen in Germany and St. Valentin in Austria. These representatives will be accompanied by a member of the Russian delegation at present in Switzerland. It is hoped that this repatriation can be carried out as rapidly as possible, i.e., before the winter sets in.

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THE AUCKLAND SWISS BENEVOLENT SOCIETY SOCIAL COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT.

Another year has come to a close, and the Committee has the pleasure to announce a very successful year, the ever increasing attendance show that these little gatherings are welcome and appreciated by our compatriots.

A Picnic was held on the 4th February on the Pt. Chevalier Reserve with good attendance.

The 1st. August celebration held on Saturday the 4th., for convenience sake, was the liveliest ever held. Over 90 persons were present, an increase of about 50% over last year's figures. Good music and singing plus a few drops, put everyone in a good humour for the whole of the evening.

The hospital stewards on the other hand had this year an easy time, thanks to the healthy constitutions, only one hospital case came under the notice of the committee during last term.

At our last Annual Meeting, which was held on the 13th October, the following members were elected to act on the committee for 1946.

PRESIDENT: Mr. A. Peyer.

SECRETARY: Miss B. Haltmeyer.

TREASURER: Mrs. G. Kerler.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS: Mr. G. Bonney, Mr. & Mrs. Moosberger, Mrs. A. Peyer, Mr. & Mrs. Steyer, Mr. & Mrs. W. Suter.

HOSPITAL STEWARDS: Mr. & Mrs. Moosberger, Mr. Peyer, Mr. Steyer, Mrs. Suter.

The Committee takes this opportunity to thank all friends, who have helped them to make past functions a success, and asks for their further support.

To all Compatriots and friends we extend our heartiest Season's Greetings.

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W E D D I N G.

Our well known member, Mr. Alois Muller, formerly of Wellington and now in Manurewa, Auckland, has just been married to Miss Eva Marian Strong of Wellington. The Bride was dressed in a charming white sheer draped gown, with a bouquet of roses. The Bridesmaid, Doreen Crooks, wore a lavender gown set off with deep purple accessories. The Best Man was Mr. C. Camenzind of Putaruru, who arrived in New Zealand seven years ago, at the same time as the Bridegroom.

The many members personally known to Mr. Muller extend to him and his wife, the heartiest congratulations and very best wishes for the future.

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