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The Swiss Observer

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NEWS AT RANDOM

Federal

Import figures for August 1942 are stated to be 176.5 million francs, $1\frac{1}{2}$ million less than in July 1942. These are the import figures. Exports were 108 million francs, 40 million less than in July. The number of wagon-loads exported was larger than in July, but their value was smaller. Comparing these figures with August of last year, 12,500 wagon-loads less were imported — about a quarter of the total. Exports decreased by a third. Owing to higher prices, and taking the 1938 figures as 100, imports in 1942 were 115, and exports 55. Since August exports decreased more than imports, the balance of trade has tipped further over to the debit side. Sixty-eight million francs worth of merchandise was imported above what was exported which is 37 million more than in July, and exports were only 61 per cent. of imports. The ratio is about the same as in August 1941. For the first eight months of 1942, the deficit is 428 million francs against 370 million in 1941. Customs receipts were 12.2 million francs in August, 1942, or about the same as in August 1941, when they were 12.6 million. In the first eight months of 1942, 108 million francs were received against 107 million in 1941. The Swiss cost of living index was 195.2 in August 1942, June 1941 being taken as the basis. This is 0.2 less than in July 1942, and 42.3 more than in August 1939. The slight decrease in August is due to a lowering in the price of potatoes. The food figures have gone down by 0.4, but gas and electricity have gone up by 1.1 to 153.5.

The September figures which have just become available show little change in the picture. Imports amounted to 171 million francs, a decrease of about $4\frac{1}{2}$ % as compared with August; exports reached 130 million francs, the increase of 22 million being mainly due to the high quality of manufactured goods sent abroad. The index for wholesale prices including foodstuffs and raw materials is about the same; a slight increase in the prices for textiles, leather, rubber, metals and fodder, balances a cheapening of vegetable foodstuffs.

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At a recent Swiss Bankers' conference Councillor Wetter emphasized the fact that our war deficit at the end of the year will amount to frs.4,600 millions, which

at $3\frac{3}{4}$ % interest and amortisation will require an annual amount of 330 to 340 million frs. for twenty years. Should the war last longer the annual payments will have to be greater and the period of amortisation preswill have to be prolonged. It is intended that the present generation should bear the cost of the mobilisation and that it should not be shifted on to the shoulders of our descendants. The inflexible will to fulfill the financial obligations honestly and promptly is the best way of preserving a healthy state of economy.

* * *

The definite figures of last year's national census have now been published 4,265,703 being the exact number of inhabitants on the day of the census, against 4,066,400 on December 1st, 1930. Politically the outcome will be an increase in the memberships of the National Council from 187 to 194 councillors and this will be the basis for the next elections in October 1943. Of the seven additional mandates the canton of Zurich will claim three, Berne two and Baselstadt, Valais and Vaud one each while Neuchâtel will forfeit a seat.

* * *

A new order by the Federal Council instructs the cantons to refuse permission for demonstrations or meetings organised by foreign associations; so far these meetings were tolerated, but it was an offence for a Swiss national to attend such a gathering. This action follows a so-called "Harvest festival" arranged by the German colony in Zurich and addressed by a prominent leader from across the Rhine.

* * *

The recent intensified attacks by German papers on Swiss neutrality have been sharply rebuked by the Swiss press; our leading daily says that the propaganda of frightening can hardly remove the distrust of small countries for the new order." The Government is exercising a strict censorship and such utterances are very near the line of the "permissible." A mild protest against the existing news restrictions has been

CITY SWISS CLUB.

Messieurs les Membres sont avisés que

L'ASSEMBLEE MENSUELLE

aura lieu Samedi, le 7 Novembre à 1 p.m. au Brown's Hotel, Dover Street, (near Green Park Tube Station).

ORDRE DU JOUR:

Procès-verbal.

Démissions.

Admissions.

Divers.

Les participants sont priés de bien vouloir s'inscrire au plus tôt auprès de Mons. H. Bingguely, 167 Clapham Road, S.W.9. (Téléphone: Reliance 4150).

Le Comité.

voiced at the general meeting of the Swiss Press at Neuchâtel when the committee submitted its report. "The Times" (October 6th) publishes the following comment from its Geneva correspondent:

The tendency to hamper the press in the role of imparting information to the public was obviously felt recently in questions of internal politics when, for instance, newspapers were forbidden to publish questions asked in Parliament with regard to a recent "black market" affray in Canton Schwyz. In the opinion of the Press, it would be inconsistent with the interests of Swiss democracy not to resist obstacles to the free working of the newspapers. False rumours and renewed uneasiness in economic and political life since the outbreak of war could mostly be ascribed to the fact that the Swiss people had not been kept fully informed. The association therefore expected that the authorities would second the efforts made by the newspapers to inform the public of all circumstances, both of external and internal politics, affecting the interests of the country.

* * *

The bulletin of the Zurich banking firm Julius Bär & Co., estimates that the indebtedness of Germany to our country on clearing accounts amounts to 800 million Swiss francs.

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The bad reception noticed during the last few weeks of our broadcasts in the German language is stated to be due to deliberate jamming on the part of the German radio against which our authorities are protesting.

Cantonal

The Council of Basel-Stadt has decided on a number of emergency measures. A bread allowance to large families was approved. The Council asked the Grand Council to approve of a supplementary credit, for emergency measures to benefit the needy, as well as Bills concerning autumnal and cost of living allowances for the personnel of the administration and private industry.

* * *

The Swiss Fair at Lugano was opened on Tuesday, October 4th in ideal autumn weather. Apart from Federal Councillor Pilet-Golaz, the official guests included the presidents of the National and States Councils, Rossetti and Fricker, representatives of the Federal Court, the Ticino authorities, the Consular Corps and Col. Fardelli on behalf of the army. In his address Federal Councillor Pilet said: "Switzerland wishes to remain outside the armed conflict, but her traditional neutrality, to be justified and useful, must be loyal, complete, and humane.

"Switzerland must inspire confidence everywhere by her dignity and will to serve."

* * *

An unusual and serious occurrence is reported from Steinen in the canton Schwyz. On a charge of black market offences a local trader, Joseph Nufer, was placed under arrest and taken to Aarau where an inter-cantonal gang of profiteers was awaiting trial. A few days afterwards Federal officials arrived at Steinen to take an inventory of Nufer's stock; they were uncere- moniously received by an excited crowd and badly handled with the result that one of the functionaries suffered serious injuries.

At the present moment the first three turbo-generators each of 56,000h.p. are being installed at the new power works at Innerkirchen in the Haslital, so that at the beginning of January a start with the distribution of current may be made. The machines, the largest of their kind in Switzerland, will produce 355 million kWh. (kilowatt hours) constant annual energy and an extra 70 million kWh. summer energy. The generating station is completely blasted into the rock and is 100m. long, 26m. high and 19.5m. wide. The water which drives the turbines comes from the existing power works Handeck on the Grimsel where it is collected immediately underneath these works and conducted in a 10km. long tunnel, also blasted into the rock with a diameter of 3.5m. to a water castle from which through an underground armoured pressure pipe line it drops 673m. on to the turbines. The motor current of 13,000 volts is augmented in the transformers to 150,000 volts and transmitted to the high tension conducting cables. The installation is estimated to cost about 45 million francs; the Bernese Power Works are contributing half and the towns of Berne, Basle and Zurich one sixth each. These three towns will secure a welcome improvement and increase in their electricity supply.

* * *

A few days ago the Aerenbach which has its source at the Gruben glacier situated on the left hand side of the Oberhasli, brought down such a large amount of water that it tore away a part of the Grimsel road just below the Handeck power works, also a fairly large forest together with a workmen's hutments built in the woods. Examinations showed that a large lake unseen from above and caused through the abnormal melting of the ice, formed underneath the glacier and unexpectedly broke its bounds. Such outbreaks of the Gruben glacier have occurred three times during the last one hundred years. To prevent such further catastrophe it is planned to construct a tunnel through the rock barrier of the glacier in order to drain off the melted ice regularly.

Army

A recent Federal Decree applies to the training of officers in the engineers (Genie). Prospective officers will in future, have to attend a special course at an Officers' Training Centre, which, instead of the former 88 days, will now last 122 days. Requirements of modern warfare, which make additional demands on officers, is the explanation, but students of the Technical High School will be able to complete their military training up to the rank of lieutenant, in one course, so that they lose less of their study period than was formerly the case.

* * *

Ten soldiers, in addition to a woman and a foreigner, were sentenced by the military tribunal of the eighth division for espionage and disclosure of military secrets. Two sergeants Werner Zürcher from Zurich and Jakob Feer from Ballwil were condemned to be shot. The foreigner, Adolf Fritz, an agent in Zurich (presumably the instigator) was sentenced to penal servitude for life and the remainder to similar punishment from ten to one year. This is the first time in Swiss history that the death penalty has been passed by a court-martial. All the condemned have appealed against the judgment; the death sentence can be commuted only by the two Houses of Parliament whilst

the final decision on the other sentences is the prerogative of General Guisan.

* * *

Several other court-martials are dealing with similar offences.

* * *

Lt. Martin Fritsch, age 22, from Glaris, was killed when his plane, during military exercises, crashed near Schüpfheim-Heiligkreutz. Another machine came to grief near the lake of Pfäffiken when Lt. Max Lauer from Basle lost his life.

Economical

The Federal Council, having consulted the Federal Commission for Wartime Alimentation, finds that the vitamin position is now more satisfactory than before the war. Through rationing, foodstuffs poor in vitamin value have been replaced by others rich in vitamins, such as vegetable and brown bread. There is therefore no need for the provision of vitamins in artificial form.

* * *

The National Council debated the report of the Federal Council's Commission, dealing with the protection of threatened branches of national economy, and the postponement of the Plebiscite on the revision of the Economic Articles of the Federal Constitution. After discussion, the first paragraph was adopted by 152 votes to 13 with three abstentions, laying down that the Federal Council, in respect of the Federal Act relating to national defence and maintenance of neutrality, is empowered in urgent cases to take measures to preserve the existence of branches of the national economy threatened by war conditions. The second paragraph of the Commission's Economic Articles of the Federal Constitution in accordance with the resolution of the Federal Assembly, was passed by 137 votes to seven.

* * *

The Department of National Economy ordered a further expansion in the food-growing duties of the non-agrarian population. It increases the obligation devolving upon them to extend the area under cultivation. In 1942-43 industrial undertakings will be affected if they employ 50 or more workers or if their capital exceeds 500,000frs. Small cultivators must extend cultivation where possible.

* * *

Last spring the arable area of our country surpassed 300,000 hectares and reached the expanse which is being retained after the war. The stipulated increase 1941/42 of 33,400 has been attained as well as the shortage of 7,000 ha. made good which was left over from an earlier stage. In the coming weeks and next spring another 100,000 ha. will be put under the plough, of which half is to be obtained by melioration and the other half by clearing of forests.

* * *

Public interest in the question of stabilisation of wages and prices was indicated by the fact that one-fifth of the members of the Federal Assembly applied to take part in the discussion — an unprecedented number. Stabilisation of prices in Switzerland, so dependent on her international economic relations, would involve a State subsidy of 200-300 million francs — this at a time when the Federal Council's financial pro-

gramme calling for 100 million francs additional taxation, has caused general concern. To reconcile the plenary financial powers granted to the Federal Council with the prerogative of the Federal Assembly, the latter will be given a chance to discuss the Government's finance programme before it comes into force next January.

* * *

The compulsory labour law which is in force since May 1940 has lately been strengthened by decree of the Federal Council in such a manner that in future the necessary labour for increased cultivation, melioration work and other work of national importance will be forthcoming. All unemployed persons or persons without regular occupation will have to register forthwith at employment offices. On principle it is a matter for the cantons to call up people liable for labour duty, but this can now be done in future also by the department for employment on war and industrial labour. Prosecution for disregarding the regulations covering compulsory labour rested up to now with the cantonal tribunals, where generally mild and unequal punishments were pronounced, in future cases offending against war regulations will be dealt with by special federal commissions. Thus shirkers will receive short shrift in future.

* * *

It has become clear that the fixing of the price for milk is a delicate business. In a session lasting more than four hours, the National Plenary Powers Commission has voted 11:3 for a price increase, but there were eight abstentions which may mean that there was an equal number for and against the project. The whole problem was treated with reticence. The amount by which the price is to be raised was not mentioned. The Confederation will defray the cost of this rise, and not the consumer. It was also suggested that bread, potatoes, rents, heating, clothing, etc., should be fixed at the present price level. There are great practical difficulties in the way.

It was further proposed that higher wage increases should be introduced, and more than half of the rise in prices should be paid to the worker in the form of a wage increase. The previous wage-increase of 50 per cent. of the additional cost of living is therefore considered insufficient. All these problems are being discussed at the autumn session of the two Houses which began on 21st September.

* * *

The Federal Council has authorised an increase of one centime per litre in the price of milk as from

Xmas Greetings

Following last year's practise we propose to publish in our December issue a collective greeting. Those of our readers and friends wishing to be included should forward name and address to our office, not later than Friday, December 11th, together with remittance for 5/-.

1st November. The new price will facilitate distribution. The producers had asked for an increase of two centimes. In the Cantons of Ticino, Valais and Grisons, owing to local shortage through drought, milk has to be brought from other areas, so the producers here will receive an extra centime to be defrayed by Federal and municipal authorities. Prices of cheese and butter will not be affected as the existing stocks were made from milk at the former prices.

* * *

The dispositions of the Federal Department of National Economy regulating the use of unfermented grape juice came into force on September 19th.

The section "Agriculture" is supervising the cultivation of table grapes, certain quantities being reserved for the manufacture of concentrated essences. It is hoped to market 4 million kg. of grapes. The whole campaign is carried out by the National Organisation of Fruit and Vine growers, which supplies wholesalers and retailers. The prices range from Frs. 1.40 per kilo for Valais grapes to Frs. 1.30 for those from other districts.

* * *

A test-trial to produce oil in quantities from seeds of the grapes from the districts on the lake of Geneva, proved such a great success at Morges, that the whole of this year's grape harvest is to be included in the scheme. In the autumn of last year ingeniously constructed machinery separated 1,500 tons of seeds from the grape marc out of which 100 tons of oil was produced, viz. 30,000 kg. of fine table oil and about 70,000 kg. of technical oils. In this manner an almost useless refuse proves a welcome contribution to our national economy.

* * *

In July, 1942, the Federal Council made arrangements for the collection of rubber tyres and tubes to form reserves for army and emergency traffic. This resolution has come into force on 15th September. Bicycle tyres are excluded altogether. Only superfluous reserve tyres, and old stock no longer usable is to be given up. Old rubber will then be reprocessed. Rubber rings for tins, cables, hoses, shoe soles, etc., can be manufactured from it. We depend on our own rubber stocks as we have no production plants for artificial rubber. In any case, large quantities of coal and electrical energy would be needed. The petrol shortage is a helpful factor because a large number of cars and motorcycles had to be laid up; but there was still a sufficient number of official cars, lorries, etc., to make the present shortage acute. The collection took place from 15th to 30th September. This should safeguard a sufficient supply of rubber for some time to come. Tractors and army cars, in particular, must have tyres. Should the collection yield less than expected, more definite measures will have to be taken.

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As from 26th October all transport of timber, firewood and charcoal will be subject to licence. The Cantons will be entrusted with the task of carrying out the Federal transport requirements.

* * *

In view of the fact that the cultivation of corn, potatoes and vegetables in the mountain districts is of importance to the provisioning of the country, though requiring a considerably greater exertion of labour than in districts where agricultural machinery can be

used, leading circles have approached the competent authorities to grant to mountain farmers a cultivation premium. It is proposed that for an area of 100 m². of arable soil at a height of from 600 to 800 m. 50cts. to 1fr. should be paid in grants and at heights of over 800m. the rate should be doubled. Although the produce of the mountain cultivation is for the most part for consumption of the local farmer, yet it relieves the provisioning of the total population. A certain equalisation of the higher cost of production and harvest risks appear therefore justified.

* * *

The drought which lasted for many weeks in some parts of the country, particularly in the cantons of Geneva, Vaud, Neuchâtel and the Bernese Jura, has played havoc with the grass so that farmers were forced already for a long time to feed their cattle with hay. A large number of cattle will either have to be sold or sent to different parts of the country for feeding, as it is not possible to keep them during the winter owing to shortage of fodder. The milk supply in these particular districts may be gravely affected.

* * *

The exceptional heat accompanied by heavy thunderstorms experienced this summer in some parts of our country is reflected by a record claim of 4½ million francs which will be met under the compulsory hail insurance scheme. By far the greatest damage has been suffered in vineyards particularly in the canton of Vaud.

* * *

The recent initiative (signed by 177,000 voters) demanding a comprehensive national insurance scheme might create the impression that insurances in Switzerland are not very popular. This is not the case; on the contrary the Swiss are on an average the best insured people. The Confederation exercises a well-defined supervision which has been in operation ever since 1886 over all the insurance companies; in the 54 years to end of 1940 the companies have collected premiums to the tune of 8½ milliard francs and have paid out about half this amount in claims and expended policies. The bonuses earned by profit-sharing life-policy holders amounted to 1.2 milliard bringing the grand total returned for that period to 5.4 milliard francs, or just under 64%. Of the 78 insurance companies trading at the end of 1940, 25 were branches of foreign concerns; fifteen concentrated on life, 49 insured against all kinds of accidents and eight were reinsurers, the remaining six giving thought the process of liquidating.

* * *

Notwithstanding the difficulties in obtaining raw materials and fuels as well as the limitation in export, the Swiss industries present still a favourable aspect.

The number of employed persons at the end of June is 2.5% higher than last year's June maximum. The position in the various industries is, however, very unequal. Retrograde figures are met with in the necessities and luxuries industry, the clothing and some branches of the textile industries. In contrast with these business has improved in the earth and stone, the chemical and wood working industries. 32.7% of the works comprised in the official statistics report good business, 48.6% satisfactory and 18.7% bad. Fully occupied are at the moment the watch, silk, artificial silk, paper, leather, metal, engineering and wood working industries. Prospects for the near future are

reported as being good or satisfactory by 40.1% of the works, as bad by 18.1% and doubtful by 41.8%. Since the outbreak of the war the average increase of wages, including regular cost of living allowances amounted at the end of June to 21.6%, which represents about half of the increase equalisation.

* * *

The Swiss geologist Dr. Walter Fisch in Zurich has after many years of experimenting and checking perfected a procedure of discovering and probing coal deposits. According to this procedure the composition of the several strata of the earth down to a great depth can be ascertained with accuracy. Already before the war Dr. Fisch carried through geo-electrical experiments in Ireland and Greenland, as well as for cantonal and communal authorities in our country. In this manner he examined the geological conditions of the landslide near Twann on the lake of Bienne by order of the Bernese cantonal government. The procedure, which has fully proved its reliability is to-day particularly valuable.

* * *

A recently published technical study estimates the yearly increased demand for electric power in Switzerland at some 260 million kilowatts, or 350 million delivered at the source. About one-quarter of this would be for domestic purposes, and some 6 per cent. for transport; the rest is absorbed by agriculture and industry. In fifteen years, this increase would amount to 525,000,000 kw.-hr. At the beginning of 1941 the maximum yearly output of the present water-power plants was estimated at 7,800,000 kw.-hr. It would be possible to increase the present installations to give a total figure of 21,000,000 kw.-hr. a year. The reservoirs, however, would occupy about 0.25 per cent. of the useful area of the country. It has often been asserted that the importation of fuel for heating purposes could be avoided by a greater utilisation of water power, but about 13 million kw.-hr. would be needed to do this, and, in view of other calls for power, it is considered that the change is not practicable.

Rationing

Bread and milk are the latest intruders on the Swiss ration card. For bread the daily allowance is $7\frac{1}{2}$ ozs. for ordinary adults and rises to 17 ozs. for men engaged on heavy work. The normal daily milk ration is three-quarters of a pint with a maximum of $1\frac{1}{4}$ pints for babies in arms. In announcing the new restrictions Federal Councillor Stampfli appealed to the people to accept these sacrifices, which were very small in comparison with those imposed on other peoples by the war. Rationing was necessary to ensure the equal distribution of foodstuffs. Although the present year's harvest was favourable, wheat supplies would be insufficient to feed the population. Imports of wheat were infinitesimal, and our people had to rely entirely on home production. The rationing of milk was due to further dwindling of the national herds.

* * *

By a better orientation in the allotment of cattle for slaughtering, the war provisioning department has been able to regulate the supply of meat for a long time in advance. Already in September 500 points more could be released, bringing the basic ration again up to 1,000 points or 1,000 gr. of meat. For April,

1942, to April, 1943, the monthly meat supplies will amount to approximately a million cwt. which will make it possible to increase the average monthly ration for adults to 1,500 gr. Large stocks of frozen, salted and tinned meat have been accumulated in order to counteract the expected falling off in the supply of cattle for slaughtering.

* * *

Some alleviation in the limited supply of electric current may be anticipated from the fact that the copious rainfall during the last few weeks has refilled the artificial lakes and restored the water-power.

* * *

The food ration card for November shows few changes as compared with that of October, but the rations have been adjusted to meet the increased winter demands as well as the shortage due to new rationing measures. In order to make full use of this autumn's big fruit crop, particularly the favourable quince harvest, it was necessary to issue an additional sugar ration of 250 grammes for jam-making purposes. Holders of meal coupons and military ration cards will also receive this extra ration. There will also be an additional 100 grammes of cheese. Another coupon which will come into force is that allowing an additional 250 grammes of bread. From 16th October frozen veal may be obtained temporarily, 200 grammes with bones for 100 points, and 200 grammes without bones for 125 points.

Traffic

The Federal Railways submitted to the Federal Council their Budget estimate for the coming year. Expenditure on construction works has overstepped the limit of 25 million francs by about one-fifth. Increases in the price of material, and war needs have caused this rise. It may be pointed out that Switzerland has to send her own rolling stock for the bulk of her imports. The extension of electrification especially the one between Wyl and Wattwil in the Toggenburg; is one of the main items. Increased war time traffic necessitated an increase in personnel. At the end of the Budget year more than 29,000 employees will be in the service of the Federal Railways. At the end of last year there were only 27,900.

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The two Grisons Railway lines have merged with Rhaetian Railway. This is part of the reconstruction scheme of the Grisons Railways as the State is now extending financial support. One railway line alone would not have been of sufficient economic importance to warrant support, but the three of them, forming a complete Rhaetian Railway system, will be State supported, and promise to develop favourably in the future.

* * *

At the tenth Swiss National Commercial Aviation Conference it was reported that the sum of S.fr. 20,000,000 is to be spent on improvements of Swiss ground facilities after the war. Although definite plans have not yet been drawn up, large airports are to be built at Zurich, Basle, Geneva and possibly also at Berne, and there is a scheme for a central airport to be used for transatlantic air services. It is not expected that Switzerland will play an important part as an air junction and intermediate base for services across Europe, but it is anticipated that more and larger airports will be required to deal with the influx of tourists and commercial visitors.

* * *

Operating revenue of the Berne-Lötschberg-Simplon Railway from both passenger and freight traffic reached unexpected proportions in 1941. Freight carried amounted to 4,288,717 tons, although, when the line was built, the maximum goods traffic which could be handled without difficulty was estimated at 500,000 tons. This increase of more than 800 per cent. shows the effect of the German-Italian transit traffic over this single track electrified line. The increase in freight traffic compared with 1940 was 1,037,758 tons. The number of passengers carried increased by 835,496 compared with 1940, and amounted to 3,850,845 passengers carried. The number of passenger train kilometres run was 1,954,909, an increase of 163,639 train kilometres compared with 1940. The profit and loss account showed a surplus of 10,500,000frs. It was stated at the annual general meeting that measures are being taken still further to increase the capacity of the line.

* * *

The freighter "Lugano" which has been overhauled and re-conditioned by a British firm at Lisbon has now been put into service. The British Consul and the Swiss Minister were both present at the inaugural reception given on board the ship by the Swiss Navigation Company. The Lugano is the largest unit of the ten ships belonging to our merchant fleet and was originally bought at the port of Dakar where she had been immobilised.

* * *

In the dockyards of the lake of Geneva a new liner the "Leman" has been built, which, however, only half the size of her sister ships, has particularly outstanding advantages. The boat is unusually light, which considerably decreases her working costs. 54.5 m. long and 5.64m. wide, she has a seating capacity for 336. Her smart appearance and the working advantages make the "Leman" the *pièce de resistance* of the lake of Geneva flotilla.

Humanitarian

State (Ständerat). The scheme began three years be-

fore the war, then unemployed and their families had to be supported. To-day higher prices create growing difficulties for those in our population who have only modest means at their disposal. Last year, in addition to 2 million francs in money over 1 million frs. were distributed in kind, and other grants were made to soup kitchens and milk distribution centres, for clothing, heating and rent. "The Winter Relief should foster a spirit of Christian neighbourly love, encourage those in adversity, and extend to them a brotherly hand" said ex-Federal Councillor Minger in opening the campaign.

* * *

The conference of cantonal judiciary and police directors, which took place in Altdorf dealt mainly with the refugee problem. After hearing a report from the Federal Department of Justice and Police, satisfaction was expressed that the Federal authorities had struck the right balance between humane considerations and the interests of the state. The conference regarded the free enjoyment of the right of asylum as one of the country's noblest and most important traditions and agreed that Switzerland should abide by this tradition to the same extent as hitherto.

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The refugee problem continues to be one of the chief topics in the daily press and a perpetual source of anxiety and perplexity for our authorities who strive to work out a practical middle way between the dictates of humanity and the interests of the State. The many decrees regulating and practically forbidding the entry of refugees have little practical value as so far we have not broken with our old tradition of admitting "victims of persecution." Federal Councillor von Steiger hinted, however, in the National Council that it might become necessary to close the frontier altogether; he added that on the previous night 150 people entered secretly and that over 100,000 people were trying to escape into Switzerland from France and Alsace. A recent decree inflicts severe punishment on Swiss assisting in any arrangement for illegal entry or departure. A regular black market trade in refugees has grown up which apart from despoiling the victims of their belongings is said to be used for espionage purposes. Our compatriot Dr. Kulmann, Assistant Commissioner for Refugees under the protection of the League of Nations, was interviewed by a "Daily Telegraph" reporter and this is what he stated (September 30th): "Enormous profits are being made in the occupied countries of Europe by unscrupulous persons who assist refugees to escape into Switzerland.

Refugees, fleeing from Holland, Belgium and France, take tickets to the Jura Mountains. The men who guide them over the frontier into Switzerland often extort from them all the money and valuables they have brought.

Dr. Kulmann stated that he had assurances from the Swiss Government that acknowledged political refugees would still be admitted into the country. At the beginning of the war there were 7,000 refugees in Switzerland. Many thousands had since arrived with out visas and with no means of support. The law made in 1939 to expel every person entering the country clandestinely had not been applied, but was now to be enforced because of the present food and fuel shortage.

The expulsion rule does not apply to deserters, political refugees, or British prisoners-of-war escaping

from Germany. Prisoners-of-war from Russia will continue to be accepted, as they have hitherto been."

The plight and determination of these refugees (made up from all creeds and nationalities, even German army deserters) is illustrated by one or two examples. A dozen of them were discovered 11,000 feet up in the snow of Mont Blanc trying to find their way from Haute Savoie into the Valais. Along the Jura frontier it is a common occurrence for the inhabitants to be awakened at night-time by piteous cries from women and children exhausted and unable to walk any further.

The appointment of a Refugee Commissioner has been announced; he will study the refugee question in the frontier districts and keep the central authorities in Berne informed. The Commissioner is the architect Ulrich Wildpolz; he was previously at the Central Youth Secretariat in Zurich.

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The equalisation fund instituted by the Swiss watch manufacturers at the beginning of this year has paid out for the first six months nearly Frs.700,000 to workmen and employees. The grants are calculated on the basis of Frs.8 per month for each child under 18. The cost is borne entirely by the respective employers.

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Besides collecting money for the International Red Cross Committee there is also a collection throughout the whole of the country for the "Help the Children's" Fund, centralised at the Swiss Red Cross. Both these collections are supported by a number of the most diverse associations and organisations. For instance the Federal Gymnastic Society recently collected a very nice sum for the "Help the Children's" Fund. The record, however, goes to the Federal Polytechnic Academy in Zurich, which organised in its spacious rooms a bazaar for the starving children in Europe, at which a quarter of a million francs was realised. The well donated "tombola" and the "lucky wheel" alone showed a net profit of frs.100,000.—

On Saturday and Sunday 12th and 13th September, the 20th Auslandschweizertag took place at Neuchâtel and proved a great success. Besides the Committee of the New Helvetic Society and a large number of compatriots returned from abroad, a considerable number of delegates from Germany, France, Italy, Sweden, different parts of Africa and even one from Brazil were present at the assembly of delegates on Saturday. These delegates gave an account of the life in the various colonies and reported on the wishes and needs of compatriots from afar. Several times the request for an increased measure of spiritual food to be sent across the border was mentioned, particularly from those countries where our compatriots have no newspapers from home nor where they may listen to the radio news from Switzerland. In the distressed countries of Europe provisions sent from home are welcome, as are also any other kind of material assistance. Dr. Imhof of the secretariat of the Swiss abroad unfolded some projects for the development of the education of the children of Swiss abroad as state citizens. These were listened to with great interest, as they gave clearly to understand that there was a firm intention on the part of the authorities to keep these young people loyal to the homeland. On

Sunday a large congregation was addressed by Federal President Etter and a number of high officials of the political department and the department of police and justice as well as by representatives of the diplomatic and consular services. National Councillor Gut from Stäfa and Mr. Robert Vaucher, the representative of various Swiss newspapers in Vichy spoke about the problems of Switzerland and the Swiss abroad. It was with satisfaction that the meeting learned from National Councillor Büchi from Winterthur that the Federal Assembly is taking notice in an increased measure of the needs of the Swiss abroad. This was confirmed at the banquet by Federal President Etter who assured the Swiss abroad of the active sympathy for them by the Federal Council. The whole meeting was permeated by the recognition that the homeland must not nor would not lose its sons abroad, just as these are keeping their loyalty to the land of their birth.

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The Schlosshotel Hertenstein near Lucerne, which in its better days was the residence of celebrities from all over the world, is being pulled down. In its place some villas are being built. The last glorious days of this imposing house which stands in a wonderful park on the shores of lake Lucerne, date to 1921 when Emperor Charles of Austria with a large retinue was staying there. From there he made his attempt to restore the monarchy in Hungary which miscarried and which led him into exile and an early death.

Further, the widely known Hotel Beau Rivage in Lucerne, with about 200 beds is disappearing, as will the popular hotel "Hecht" at Teufen (Appenzell A/Rh.) with which, for over 200 years the history of the canton and the municipality were closely connected. It is being converted into a pharmacy.

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On September 4th, Mrs. Anna Gallati-Michel, in Glaris, the oldest Swiss woman, completed the 103rd year of her life. She is in good health and carries out her own house-work and has adapted herself excellently to the new conditions of rationing.

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The last but one Swiss hermit, Frater Makarius Aigner was taken seriously ill in his hermitage in the Mythenwald, above Schwyz, and had to be taken to hospital. There will be no successor at the lonely hermitage as the Order of the Hermits has been dissolved a few years ago by the church. The Tschütschi Hermitage in the Mythenwald was founded about 600 years ago by a Conrad ab Yberg. The last inhabited hermitage in Switzerland is now the St. Verona Hermitage near Solothurn.

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Further details of the life of the previously reported death of the mountain guide, Benedikt Supersaxo, who for many years acted as guide to King Albert I of Belgium, are to hand. Together they made over 60 excursions into the Valais alps, the Engadine and the Dolomites. Humorously the royal mountaineer called his companion not only the "guide of the King" but "the King of guides." Unfortunately the first world war made an end to these happy relations, but they remained in constant correspondence until the sudden death of the King. At 71 Supersaxo was able in full vigour to commemorate his golden jubilee as a guide on the summit of his native "Lenz-

spitze." Now he rests at the foot of his beautiful, beloved mountains.

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Another outstanding personality in the canton Ticino has disappeared with the death of Dr. Arnaldo Bolla, who passed away in a Lugano hospital following an operation. Born in 1885 in Olivone, he studied law and occupied in turn most of the important public offices of his canton. In 1920 he was elected to the National Council as a radical democrat but the following year changed over to the States Council of which, after a long interval, he was a member at the time of his death.

* * *

The creator of the world-renowned Pestalozzi Calendar, Dr. Bruno Kaiser died recently in Berne. He left the publishing rights of this work for the young to the Pro Juventute foundation, together with frs.200,000.— in order that the work may be continued in the same sense as now.

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Dr. Joseph Käppeli, the one time chief of the branch for agriculture at the Federal Department for political economy and director of the war provisioning department, died after a long illness in his 70th year. As chief of the agricultural branch in the war and crisis years 1913 to 1938 he rendered invaluable services to Swiss agriculture, and the results of his labours as director of the war provisioning department for the benefit of the provisioning of the whole community in the years 1919-1922 and again in 1939 until shortly before his death, will never be forgotten by the whole of the Swiss people. With providential care he organised long before the outbreak of war the rationing of the most important victuals in such a thorough manner that it required so to say but the pressing of a button to set the whole organisation into a smooth working motion. His work will continue and is a blessing to the country in a difficult time.

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Col. Guillaume Favre died in Corsier (Geneva) at the age of 67; from 1925 to 1930 he commanded the fourth division. As a cavalryman he took great interest in horse-breeding and often acted as judge at races and other equestrian events.

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Melchior Anderegg, former president and honorary member of the local S.A.Club and son of the renowned "king of guides," died in Meiringen at the age of 82.

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PRISONERS OF WAR RELIEF MEASURES.

The following is an extract from an address delivered on July 29th to the British Community Council in Buenos Aires by H.M. Ambassador Sir David V. Kelley, K.C.M.G., M.C., who has spent over two years in Switzerland in a similar capacity.

Consignments are divided into sections, each one of which is numbered and addressed to the International Red Cross delegate at Lisbon, Colonel Iselin, who is responsible for checking them on arrival and for their forwarding to Geneva. This is effected on ships controlled by the International Red Cross Committee though chartered by the British Red Cross. There were recently three Portuguese and two Swedish ships and they were assigned to the transport of relief for prisoners of war and civilian internees without distinction of nationality. They make on an average one and a half journeys monthly from Lisbon to Marseilles, and between February, 1941, and last March they had made 54 journeys and carried 30,000 tons of goods. There are at any given time approximately 4,500 tons in stock at Lisbon, so that delays in forwarding must be expected from time to time, though so far, I am glad to say, your Committee know of none in our case. At Marseilles the second International Red Cross Committee delegate checks the goods and forwards them by rail to Switzerland, unloading them direct from ship to railway truck — a job of ever-increasing difficulty on account of the scarcity of rolling stock. They enter Switzerland through either of two duty-free warehouses, one at Geneva and one at Vallorbe.

The headquarters at Geneva is composed of a large group of distinguished Swiss citizens, mostly volunteers, presided over by Monsieur Max Huber, a leading citizen of Geneva, most ably assisted by the Vice-President, Doctor Karl Burckhardt, the well-known Swiss historian and philosopher, who will also be known to you as the former League of Nations High Commissioner at Dantzig. The headquarters, through its sections, arranges the distribution in accordance with the wishes of the donor, the camp's strength (transmitted by the camps themselves), and the requirements of the camps as indicated by the prisoners of war through their own representative. In accordance with the quantities allotted, consignments are sent, sometimes as an entire truck-load for one camp, sometimes a truck-load containing consignments for several camps; very small quantities may even be sent in postal bags. They are addressed to the representatives of each nationality in each camp, chosen by the prisoners themselves from among their own compatriots. This representative corresponds direct with the Committee and personally sends the acknowledgment of receipt for every one of the despatches. He distributes the consignments according to the requirements of the prisoners. Consignments may go to Germany, Italy, occupied or unoccupied France or North Africa, but the procedure in Germany is typical of the rest. There sits at Berlin a commission of responsible Swiss gentlemen, eight in number, representing the International Committee; and these arrange for visits to the camps in such a way that every camp is visited at least once in three months by two of them, of whom one is specially concerned with the distribution of the parcels. On these visits, the International Red Cross