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HELVETIA



Monthly Publication of the
SWISS BENEVOLENT SOCIETY in New Zealand

Groupe New Zealand of the N.H.G.

AUCKLAND,
DECEMBER, 1940.

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6th Year: Vol. 3.

HIE ISCH d'SCHWYZ
(This is Switzerland Calling)

1 December, 1940.

Yes, Switzerland "was there" again, but at Wellington at the beginning of the program, which started as usual at 5.45 p.m., the popular tunes came through as faintly as if they were broadcast from the moon, although Daventry, Moskow, Rome, Berlin, etc, were not bad at all. Announcements and reports could not be understood until about 7 p.m. My notes disclose that at 6.45 p.m. my wife and I were wondering whether the frightful noise which was shaking my receiving set originated from an old Gotthard locomotive about to explode. 2 minutes later hell seemed to break loose, and all of a sudden it dawned upon me that it very probably was a Basler drummer concert to which we were listening. In face of such unfavourable receiving conditions unfortunately we missed the preceding monthly reports in the 3 national languages on events and happenings in November. It was only at 7 p.m. when "the fog lifted" that we understood that the stage was the New Congress Building at Zurich and the scene the presentation of military marches to the Commander-in-Chief of the Swiss Army, General Guisan. It is the third time, to the best of my knowledge, that we here in New Zealand heard the General's voice, and as bad as the reception of the Swiss broadcast of December 1 until that moment had been, every word he said in appreciation of the gift, which was being tendered to him for the Army, now was clearly understood. The voice of General Guisan is impressive, his speech discloses determination, energy and temperament. By now we had learned that Swiss Federal Councillor Minger, the Defence Minister, has resigned, and will be replaced at the session of the Swiss Parliament early in December. Had we been able to understand the earlier reports and announcements on events and happenings in November, we probably would not have been left so much in the dark regarding the reasons which have prompted his resignation. The report in English which soon followed General Guisan's address unfortunately was not distinct enough to help us out. All we could gather from the English report is that by a re-adjustment in the membership of the Swiss Federal Council a more adequate representation of the political parties and different sections of the country in the governing body of the Swiss Confederation should be made possible. It has been common knowledge for a long time that for instance French Switzerland in recent years was not adequately represented in the Swiss Federal Council, and that the Socialist Party, which is strongly represented in the House of Representatives, so far never has been represented in the Cabinet at all. It was a foregone conclusion that a

reshuffling in the membership of the Federal Council was possible only by an increase in the number of its members or one or the other resignation. Rudolf Minger, one of the most popular Federal Councillors, has drawn the lot and leaves the executive body of the Swiss Confederation to go back to the tilling of the land. It has always been a matter of pride for the Swiss people, that one of their Federal Councillors came from the hardworking rank and file of the Swiss farming community. High personal qualities, intelligence, interest in politics and the army, arduous work and forceful oratory, carried this man about 8 or 10 years ago to the top of the ladder of the greatest political career in Switzerland, and before he was elected a Federal Councillor, he had already worked his way into the House of Representatives and in the army he had attained the rank of a Lieutenant-Colonel, quite an achievement for a farmer, who had to make his career without college and university education. When the announcer told us that for the last time we would now hear Ruedi Minger's voice in his capacity as Federal Councillor, all listeners must have been thrilled. It was a reproduction of part of a speech, which he recently delivered at Basel, urging the people to accept the proposed new law for pre-military training. The forceful oratory in genuine Bärner dialect held us spellbound for the rest of the program, and the juicy vocabulary, which is flourishing in those parts of Switzerland where "Reudi" hails from, the farm lands between the Bernese Alps and the Bernese Jura mountains, filled our living-room with spontaneous, roaring laughter and a bit of blissful air from home.

The next broadcast from Switzerland to Australia and New Zealand will take place on -

NEW YEAR'S DAY, January 1, 1941.

and again on the -

FIRST SUNDAY IN JANUARY, January 5, 1941.

Wavelengths as usual 20.64 or 26.31; time 5.45 p.m.

Please try again the Swiss broadcasts on wavelength 25.28 every day from 11 p.m. to 0.45 a.m., New Zealand time, and wavelength 46.66 on weekdays only, from 6 a.m. to 9.30 a.m., New Zealand time, and report the results of your efforts to the Swiss Consulate at Wellington.

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SEASON'S COMPLIMENTS

The Committee of your Society desires to extend to all our members, as well as their families and friends, the very best wishes for a happy Christmas and prosperous New Year.

Our esteemed Consul, Dr. W. Schmid, requested us to publish the following letter:

"The Committee of the Swiss Benevolent Society in New Zealand,
P.O. Box 85, AUCKLAND.C.1.

Mr. President and Members of the Committee :

I have read with great interest the article of Mr. Werner Ungemuth, the Secretary of the Swiss Benevolent Society in New Zealand, on the activities of our Society, in the November issue of the "HELVETIA". The story of the Swiss Benevolent Society in New Zealand in my estimation is a fine record of the spirit among the Swiss people in New Zealand, because it certainly is no easy task to group our fellow-countrymen, who are strewn all over the country, in one Society. Above all, it was necessary to have the right men on the Committee to secure success, and I am therefore pleased to extend to you my vivid congratulations and deep appreciation. It is really reassuring to see how the membership from the time of the foundation of the Society in 1935 went up from 49 to 150 members in 1940.

From a perusal of the membership list I notice that there are still a considerable number of our fellow-countrymen who