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HELVETIA



Monthly Publication of the
SWISS BENEVOLENT SOCIETY in New Zealand

Groupe New Zealand of the N.H.G.

AUCKLAND,
FEBRUARY, 1941.

+++++ 6th YEAR - VOL. 5.

HIE ISCH D'SCHWYZ
(This is Switzerland calling).

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First let us say that the Swiss broadcast of the 2nd of February 1941 has killed once and for all the news-bug about the existence of a state of siege in Switzerland which recently has been reported in the New Zealand press. We never had a doubt that this news was erroneous.

Conditions of reception of the broadcast.

Discounting the static disturbances the reception would have been excellent, because the program came in very strong, but especially in the beginning and for a part of the further duration of the program the static made it impossible to understand everything that was said. In comparison the broadcasts from Daventry, Berlin, Rome, Moscow and America were excellent and without any static.

The monthly report.

The keynote was the unchanged condition. It was interesting to hear that a Swiss commission has been sent to Moscow for a discussion of the economic relations between Russia and Switzerland. We must remember that so far the Swiss Confederation has not recognised the USSR. Another economic commission was sent to Spain, especially for negotiations regarding transport questions, as it seems that the Swiss Government has been successful in chartering additional ships from Yugoslavia and Panama. Such measures reflect the importance of the transport and supply problems with which Switzerland at the present time is confronted. The English reporter especially stressed the significance of the export trade for Switzerland, for which a solution of the transport problem is of paramount importance. Regarding the increase of food production at home we learned that additional 50.000 hectares will be taken under cultivation. The food supply is still sufficient, but it was necessary to ration the consumption of lard to a minimum. Oepfelchuechli and Mayonnaise have been outlawed! Linked with the increased cultivation of land are the measures envisaged against unemployment, for which a special Department has been set up. A quota of 40% has been prescribed for the home consumption of coal as compared with normal times. On the basis of a Franco-German agreement 30.000 allied internees were repatriated, which, of course, also tends to alleviate the food situation in Switzerland.

In the month of January further foreign airplanes have flown over Switzerland and the Government had to make protests to both of the belligerent parties. For victims of the recent air-raids at Basel and Zurich in the meantime a relief action has been started.

As regards internal affairs we have learned that the question of an increase of the membership of the Swiss Federal Council from 7 to 9 councillors is again under parliamentary discussion.

On January 23 a function was held in memory of Giuseppe Motta, the former Swiss Foreign Minister who died a year ago. There is no doubt that the Swiss Government and the Swiss people are still looking up for guidance to Giuseppe Motta, our greatest statesman and citizen in recent times.

Under the heading "Sports News of the Day" we heard that snow conditions in Switzerland have been great for skiing and all other winter sports. Further, the Swiss football team has been successful against the Italians at an encounter which was staged at Basel, scoring 7:2.

A great entertainment of the broadcast was a musical recital entitled "A Winter Evening in Switzerland". Unfortunately, the spoken word was not always comprehensible, but when it was, it was very much enjoyed. The songs and the instrumental music, which came to us from a cosy and warm drawing-room of a typical Swiss farm house, were a great treat. The quality of the voices and of the instruments was excellent, and fortunately the reception became better and better all the time as the program went on.

Unfortunately I could not very well understand the spoken correspondence, because it was too fast for me, which everybody will understand, when I say that I am hailing from Berne. However, I gathered that on the 2nd of March, Mr. Blau, the former Acting Consul of Switzerland in New Zealand, will send personal greetings through the ether to his friends in New Zealand.

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CENTURIES AGO SWISS CHEESE BEGAN RISE TO PRESENT FAME.

The Swiss thrive on it. Roman legions took it back to Rome with them after invading northern Europe 2,000 years ago. It constitutes one of Switzerland's principal industries.

As far back as 1291, when the three tiny mountain states of Uri, Schwyz and Unterwalden united to promulgate the first Confederation, the Swiss cheese, with its heavy outer coating and its maze of holes inside, was treasured as an "essential food."

It had its place in Alpine legends and figured quite early as a medium of payment. As such it is mentioned in a twelfth century document of the Monastery of Engelberg. As a gift to "honor its recipient" cheese was being used since the end of the thirteenth century.

Export of Swiss cheese had its beginning in the fifteenth century. At that time the Monastery of Murbach, in the Alsace, one of Switzerland's foreign clients, had issued a decree that on certain days each of the brethren should receive as final course of his dinner a quarter of a cheese "Caseus armentarius" (dairymen's alpine cheese) - generally known as Swiss cheese. Italy also was an important customer for Swiss cheese in that period, its purchases including the so-called "Sbrinz" variety, particularly suitable for grating. "Sbrinz" cheese originated at Brienz in the Bernese Oberland, but was later also exported from Unterwalden as "Unterwaldner hard cheese."

Today cheese production in Switzerland is no longer the primitive industry it used to be. There are about 2,900 cheese factories all over the country and most of them are equipped with up-to-date machinery and appliances. As a result of careful scientific study present-day Swiss cheese has attained a quality which is known all over the world.