

**Zeitschrift:** Helvetia : magazine of the Swiss Society of New Zealand  
**Herausgeber:** Swiss Society of New Zealand  
**Band:** 8 (1942-1943)  
**Heft:** 2  
  
**Rubrik:** Sundry news from Switzerland

### **Nutzungsbedingungen**

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. [Mehr erfahren](#)

### **Conditions d'utilisation**

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. [En savoir plus](#)

### **Terms of use**

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. [Find out more](#)

**Download PDF:** 17.09.2025

**ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>**

Equally, or even more important is the work done by the organisation of the International Red Cross at Geneva. The world owes a great debt of gratitude to the Swiss founder of the Red Cross. He was a well-to-do banker when he started his mission but spent so much time and money on the pursuit of his aims that he went bankrupt before his idea was internationally adopted at the Geneva Convention in 1863. Never before or since has a bankrupt made good, paid higher and more lasting dividends than Henry Dunant.

In addition to looking after the interests of the Prisoners of War all over the world, the Swiss are now also actively engaged in rescuing half-starved and wretched children from France, Holland, Belgium, Yugoslavia and other countries. Up-to-date approximately 40,000 children have been collected. The more of these unfortunate and innocent little souls can be gathered together and handed over to the loving and tender care of Mother Helvetia the happier we shall be. One more reason for hoping that nothing will happen to disturb these poor children in their new-found haven of refuge.

Then again, Geneva harbours the seat of the League of Nations. There are some people who say that the so-called Palace of Peace ought to be bombed before the delegates can use it again to hatch further mischief. Happily, there are not a great many people of this type, the majority realising that when the war is finished there will be a lot of work to be done by a resurrected League of Nations, working on a more solid and wider foundation; to reconstruct world order and to establish universal Peace.

In these labours and deliberations Switzerland may be invited to take an active part, not only, to use the words of Mr. Brissot, to assist the Councils "with the cold neutrality of an impartial judge" but with sympathetic and warmhearted understanding for the difficulties and problems of suffering humanity. Even little countries have sometimes great ideas and ideals. As Lloyd George said on one occasion: - "God has sometimes chosen little nations as the vessel by which he carried his choicest wines to the lips of humanity to rejoice their hearts, to exalt their vision and to strengthen their faith".

To conclude, let us recall the words of Carl Spitteler, one of the Swiss authors, when addressing the New Helvetic Society in Zurich during the Great War:

"We are privileged, by a freak of fortune, to watch from the stalls the grim tragedy that is being enacted in Europe. Sorrow is Lord of the stage, and behind the scenes lurks Death. Turn where you will, the mourning of those that weep must reach your ears, and the language of this hopeless grief is the same in all nations, for sorrow knows no distinction of speech. Let us therefore behold this infinite measure of international sorrow with silent and reverent hearts, uncovering ourselves alike before all who mourn. So shall we attain the proper neutral, the proper Swiss standpoint."

.....  
SUNDRY NEWS FROM SWITZERLAND.

The principle of preventive imprisonment has been introduced in the canton Fribourg as a war measure. People of suspicious character who may become a danger or a nuisance to the community can be arrested on an order from a local magistrate who must show justification for his action though there is no actual trial; the victim has the right of appeal to the Conseil d'Etat. The internment may be for one to five years.

.....  
According to a report telegraphed by the D. T. correspondence, General Guisan has issued a warning not to forget the dangers that "may arise overnight". He thinks that a sense of false security might be engendered by the geographical remoteness of the present fighting fronts.

"To-day", he states, "training is of cardinal importance." Swiss citizens must expect this year to continue to be called up for strenuous military training.

General Guisan reveals that he is paying special attention to the task of preparing the army against surprise attack.

Special importance is attached to night manoeuvres. Citizens joining the colours for their term of service might be confronted within a few hours with problems which would arise if war broke out here.

.....

In contrast to the last war the cases of conscientious objectors for whatever reasons, either religious, ethical or political are almost unknown. It is impossible to speak of anti-militarists on religious or political grounds. Consideration is given already at the examination of recruits to those who for honest religious convictions refuse to be incorporated into a combatant branch of the army and they generally are attached to the Army Medical Corps. Of those who are punished for refusing to serve and whose punishment consists of a lengthy term of imprisonment and loss of civil rights for a certain time, only a very small proportion deserves commiseration. This statement was made by a delegate of the Evangelical Churches Federation of Switzerland after a careful investigation of all the cases.

.....

According to the Federal census of live stock in April last the number of cattle in the whole country has been reduced by 91,000 heads or 5.8% and stands now at 1,492,500 heads. This is 38,000 heads less than in 1918, at the end of the first world war. The number of cows has fallen by 4.5% to 823,700, but increased breeding has already been recorded. Pigs at 670,000 is 12.1% less than last year and fully 30% below the number of 1939. The number of horses (1,4300) is about the same as last year. Poultry keeping has dropped from 5.5 million heads in 1939 to 3.03 millions. Due to a desire for self-sufficiency the owners of hens and rabbits have considerably increased. The whole tendency shows that the shrinking of stocks and import of foreign feeding stuffs will reduce breeding to a level consistent with the inland fodder production.

.....

Trainloads of children are rolling into our country from all parts of Europe. At the beginning of this month over 400 emaciated child refugees arrived in the Ticino from Yugo-Slavia; eleven hundred from northern France and the Paris region were received at Geneva. On the 16th July, 700 happy and recovered youngsters were returned to the occupied zone to make room for another batch of a thousand from the south of France.

.....

From January 1st this year to the end of May last no less than 12,103 new wireless licences were taken out, the total number to the latter date amounting to 692,409.

.....

Swiss Aluminium Exports: (Berne). Before the war about 80% of the Swiss aluminium output was exported abroad. In 1941 this percentage fell to 40%. The regression registered in the export of finished aluminium products is about the same.

.....

Switzerland's vegetable supply. (Berne.) Vegetables are becoming increasingly important components of Switzerland's wartime food supply and their sale has come under the ruling of a recently promulgated decree. A particular point of this decree is that only persons holding a greengrocer's licence may now sell vegetables.

.....

Potato crops in Switzerland. (Lausanne.) About 75,000 hectares of land in Switzerland have been planted with potatoes this year, which should yield an average crop of 1,300,000 tons. Of these it is estimated that 900,000 tons will be used as food, 200,000 tons as seedlings, while a further 200,000 tons will only be suitable for fodder. An average crop would not therefore yield sufficient for the production of potato flour for mixing with bread, which had been contemplated as a means to counteract the difficulties hampering the cereal supply.

.....

Viticulture in Switzerland during 1941. One and a half million litres of wine were produced in Switzerland during 1941, which is considered a good average. Foreign wine importations were not inferior to that of the last ten years.

.....

Swiss Federal Railway returns. (Berne.) During the first six months of 1942, 77 million passengers travelled on the Swiss Federal Railways, or 7 million more than during the corresponding period of 1941. As a result, passenger traffic returns rose from 73 to 80 million Swiss francs. On the other hand, goods traffic registered 10 million tons as compared with 11 million last year. Nevertheless, this decrease is almost entirely due to a low volume of traffic in February, when a general slowing down of international traffic was noted.



Electric heating apparatus in Switzerland, (Lausanne.) The sale of electric heating apparatus developed considerably in Switzerland last year. From 1937 to 1939 the average yearly sale was 130,000 units, but in 1941 it rose to about 250,000. The heating apparatus manufactured and used in Switzerland during 1941 represent a total energy of 391,000 Kw. as compared with 155,000 Kw. in former years.

.....

New Federal Taxes. (Berne.) National defence and war economy have laid a great financial burden on the Swiss Confederation. At the end of 1942 the war debt will amount to almost 4,600 million Swiss francs, about three times the expenditure caused by the mobilization during the last Great War. The Swiss Federal Government is therefore obliged to find new financial resources. It is thought that this will be found by a new National Defence Sacrifice capital levy, a re-imposition of the National Defence Tax paid on both capital and revenue and finally a higher Turnover Tax to which might also be added a Luxury Tax of 10%.

.....

SPEECH BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE CONFEDERATION OF SWITZERLAND,  
DR. PHILIPPE ETTER, ON THE OCCASION OF AUGUST 1ST.

The President said that on the 1st August last year, the 650th anniversary of the Federation was celebrated in an unforgettable manner, and Switzerland showed her readiness to remain loyal to the 'confederation of freedom'.

"This year", Dr. Etter said, "we celebrate the anniversary in a quiet, simple way. Federation Day is neither a holiday nor a day of rest. We are working to-day, for we know that our luck to be free citizens of a free nation must be earned by hard daily work. Every Swiss feels in his heart the sanctity of this anniversary. We know that, in this hour, hundreds of thousands of our countrymen in foreign lands and beyond the seas are thinking of the home country, united with us in spirit. To these I send, in the name of the whole country, heartfelt greetings from the Homeland. In a few weeks, three years will have elapsed since the beginning of the war. Since then the nations of the world have had to endure ordeals untold. There is no foreign suffering with which, in our hearts, we do not sympathise - no heroism, no sacrifice, no greatness to which we can deny our respect." He added that, in the midst of warring nations, Switzerland was following her humble task of keeping the light of love burning, and hoped that God would preserve Switzerland as the stronghold of freedom and peace. "We thank our army, which has honourably and loyally been carrying out its duty. In it is embodied the old martial strength of our people and its honest ever-watchful determination to remain independent." On Federation Day the unity between the nation and its army must be proved by deeds. He asked the nation to subscribe as much as it could to a National Contribution for old soldiers and their dependents and the 'Swiss Samaritan', or symbol of Christian charity.

"The longer the war goes on the more do its effects extend to our land. There are more and more difficulties in the way of imports and exports. The difficulty of supplying our land with food and raw materials are felt more acutely every day. I must not withhold from you that further possible developments fill us with grave concern for the future, but the greater the hardship we have to bear, the stronger and more stubborn must be our will to unity. The motto of the first founders of the Federation must be ours also: they swore 'to stand by and help each other'. Where, under the heavy weight of hardship, tension begins to grow, it must, at its very first sign, be surmounted by mutual goodwill, and give place to mutual understanding. We must all, employers and workers, realise how close are the ties which bind us to each other and the extent of our common interdependence. Each one of us must adjust his desires and actions to exigencies of common hardships. Our burden will be easier to bear if we try to distribute it equitably. Don't lend your ears to anyone who tries to sow dissension, despair or discontent in your midst. They cannot help you, but they do a disservice to the country by endangering the internal peace which is a necessary condition of our holding out. From the desire for freedom sprang our union; our will for union will preserve our freedom. Let us, therefore, go on, united through these anxious days; let us continue undaunted on the path of duty, through trial to security.

.....