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HELVETIA



Monthly Publication of the

SWISS BENEVOLENT SOCIETY
in New Zealand

Group New Zealand of the N.H.G.

WELLINGTON.
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Vol. 8, 10th Year.

SWITZERLAND WELCOMES PEACE IN EUROPE.

The news of the laying down of arms in Europe reached Switzerland on Monday 7th May at 6 o'clock in the evening, and there was an outburst of joy with demonstrations lasting all night. Arrangements for formal celebrations were made for the following day at 8 o'clock in the evening. The bells rang all over Switzerland and the President of the Confederation and two other Federal Councillors broadcast a message to the Swiss people. The keynote of the speeches was the thankfulness which every Swiss felt that the country had been spared the horrors of war, and that the nation had been allowed to continue to live in liberty and independence. He thanked the army for their faithful service and the nation as a whole for the true Swiss spirit which they had preserved at all times, and the discipline, unity and uncompromising willingness to defend themselves shown through all these years of war. He pointed out that our noblest duty now was to bring relief to the innocent victims of war abroad, as far as this is in our power, and to further the progress of social justice in our own country. He also warned us of the difficulties confronting us during the forthcoming period of transition, but expressed confidence that after having been able to overcome the difficulties with which war had confronted us, we would also master the difficulties which lie ahead.

In a very impressive order of the day General Guisan thanked the Swiss soldiers for their past services of which he was proud. He specially referred to the fact that upon different occasions during the war in Europe, our country had been acutely and gravely menaced.

In Wellington, most members of the small local Swiss community and the Consular staff gathered at the home of the Swiss Consul and Mrs. Schmid in the late afternoon of Tuesday, May 8th, to mark the occasion with a drink and a toast. In addition, the following cable was despatched on the same day to the Swiss Federal Council, in the name of all our compatriots in New Zealand:

"CE JOUR MEMORABLE QUI MARQUE LA SORTIE INTACTE DE NOTRE
CHERE PATRIE DE LA CONFLAGRATION EUROPEENNE MES COMPATRIOTES
EN NOUVELLE ZELANDE, MON PERSONNEL ET MOI-MEME EXPRIMENT
LEUR PROFONDE GRATITUDE ENVERS LE DESTIN AINSI QUE LEURS
REMERCIEMENTS ET FELICITATIONS AU GOUVERNEMENT, A L'ARMEE
ET AU PEUPLE SUISSE - SCHMID SWISS CONSUL"

We hope to be able to publish in our next issue some more details of the peace celebrations in Switzerland.

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REACTIONS IN SWITZERLAND TO THE DEATH OF PRESIDENT ROOSEVELT:

The news of President Roosevelt's sudden death caused a wave of consternation and sympathy in Switzerland. This feeling was expressed by the Swiss papers

of all political parties.

The Catholic "La Liberte" says: 'The distressing news has also been a hard blow to the neutral countries, for President Roosevelt has always been an idealist, a generous and noble man and a friend of justice and righteousness in general.'

The Radical paper "Bund" in Berne declares: 'The unexpected death of the American President is a hard blow to the whole world which is facing the end of war and a still unknown future. Considering the outstanding position of President Roosevelt in the foreign policy of his country, his death may be of a decisive influence on the establishment of peace after the war. The new President of the United States, Mr. Truman has a difficult task to take over.'

The Radical "Neue Zurcher Zeitung" writes: 'In his career President Roosevelt has not only surpassed all his predecessors in his country, but by his work he earned an uncontested place of honor among the greatest Presidents of the United States and among the leading statesmen of our century. Roosevelt has been the determined and mighty opponent of Hitler and the other dictators. Step by step he answered the Third Reich's conquest with concrete measures. Thanks to his farsightedness, the United States was able to present itself as a strong military power on the various battlefields shortly after its entry into war. This, in the framework of world policy is Franklin Delano Roosevelt's historical part. However to be able to understand and feel the full extent of the United Nations grief for the loss of one of their greatest Presidents, one must also consider the outstanding role Roosevelt had played in the field of social and economic reforms.'

The Conservative "Berner Tagblatt" states: 'Events of this 292nd week of the war are overshadowed by the tragic death of the American President. A world without Roosevelt is a world without a man who has had all the qualities of a really great statesman. The Americans mourn for a President who deserves to be mentioned in one breath with Abraham Lincoln and George Washington. But the Americans are not alone in their grief. In the eyes of the whole world, President Roosevelt was the champion of the great cause for which the United States has done so much, the cause of liberty. Unfortunately, he has not been able to see the victorious end of the war. Before he died, however, he knew that the just cause would win. He will be an everlasting example to all humanity.'

In the Conservative "Basler Nachrichten" we read: 'Now that war has assumed an almost breath taking speed in its development, the news of this great American's death strikes us more deeply than any event in the great storm around us. One thing, however, is certain, President Roosevelt's sudden and tragic death will not change anything in the final outcome of this war. The dice was cast a long time ago. However, it would be futile to break one's head about what will happen afterwards, now that this outstanding political personage has passed from among us.'

.....

SWITZERLAND OBSERVES DELIGHTFUL OLD CUSTOMS IN MAY:

Many of the nicest and most poetic old customs still in vogue in Switzerland are celebrated during the month of May. The "Singing-in of May" by the children is one of them and may be observed at its best in some villages of French speaking Switzerland. The first Sunday of May is usually the day when the youthful songbirds, carrying green branches or bouquets of flowers, parade through the streets, announcing the arrival of Spring with a glad song.

In early days it often was customary for a bridal couple to walk at the head of the procession. These young married people were regarded as a symbol of the fruitfulness of the New Year. In the canton of Neuchatel the boys were permitted to "sing-in" the month of May if the beech trees