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HOME NEWS

A committee of experts appointed by the Federal authorities to study existing practices of the individual use of national, cantonal and municipal coats of arms has unanimously decided to recommend Federal legislation with a view to making their unauthorised exhibition for business and trading purposes a punishable offence. An enquiry is to be instituted to ascertain how far Swiss emblems have been adopted by firms trading in foreign countries.

The population of the town of Berne to the end of December last is stated to be 110,880.

Though the holding of an anti-Fascist demonstration in the canton Ticino during the Easter holidays has been expressly prohibited by the Federal Council, the Communist Party continues to make arrangements for a great rally in Lugano and Bellinzona from all parts of Switzerland, as the organisers maintain that the Government cannot interfere with a peaceful assembly of citizens.

The final accounts of last year's Federal Gymnastic Festival closes with a surplus of about Frs. 24,000, the total takings being well over a million francs. The surplus will be distributed among the gymnastic societies of Lucerne.

The arrangements made by the local authorities to have the new railway station at Fribourg blessed by the bishop were frustrated at the last minute through the intervention of the Socialists.

The whole of the guarantee capital of Frs. 400,000 raised to finance the "Sassa" exhibition in Berne is being returned to the subscribers.

No less than 18 similar crimes have been admitted by the Zurich blacksmith Hugentobler, who has been caught soon after having rifled the local post office at Neumünster.

An unusual accident happened last week near Thun, when the occupants of a number of bobsleighs were squashed against a road bank, three of them, all young people, being killed on the spot. The bobsleighs, carrying in all about fifteen people, were roped to the back of a heavy lorry ascending an incline; at a curve of the slippery road the lorry skidded and receded for a short distance, with the fatal result stated.

The intense cold is believed to be the cause of the cracking last Friday night of a huge rock wall in the centre of Fribourg, behind the Notre Dame square. Neighbouring houses were damaged, one of them practically falling to pieces down the banks of the river; the latter house belonged to M. Cotting, a master tailor. All the inmates escaped into safety, with the exception of an elderly lady of independent means, Mlle Adele Zurich, from Lescos (Gruyère) who was buried in the débris.

NOTES AND GLEANINGS.

The Drug Traffic Scandal.

The proceedings at the meeting of the Opium Commission at Geneva have naturally received a great deal of publicity in the English Press, all the more as this country is not actively engaged in this nefarious traffic. Unkind things have been said about those few countries, including our own, which manufacture and sell these drugs for other than medicinal purposes as if the laws of those "guilty" states had been infringed. If the League committee is powerless to enforce and the individual states unable to control importation and consumption, these vague accusations serve no useful purpose; quite the contrary seems to have been the result, as this wide publicity has evidently encouraged the establishment of new factories and popularised a previously little known practice. The hopelessness of the position is well illustrated by the following short report from the *Daily Telegraph* (Jan. 31st):—

"There was a lively discussion at the public meeting of the Opium Commission in connection with the question whether firms manufacturing opium and other dangerous drugs who have been found to have supplied abnormal quantities of

these drugs for shipment should be reported to the Council of the League, in order that the latter should take steps to have them put on a 'black list.'

Sir Malcolm Delevingne (Great Britain) pressed for this policy, and wished to add the name of the chemical factory of Naarden, in Holland, which is known to be the receiver of enormous quantities of drugs.

A sensation was caused at the meeting by Senator Cavazzoni (Italy) asking a question: "What about the four tons of heroin mentioned by M. Bourgois (France) for which the French Government were asked for a transit permit through France?" "Would not M. Bourgois," asked Senator Cavazzoni, "tell the Commission from which factory and from what country this quantity, far greater than the legitimate requirements of the whole of Europe, had come?"

M. Bourgois, in reply, said he did not wish to give names in public regarding these four tons of heroin.

Senator Cavazzoni wanted to know what had become of those four tons of heroin.

M. Bourgois replied that when the French Government was asked for a permit for transit through France these drugs were still, as he put it, abroad. He gave it to be understood that the French Government refused the permit, and consequently he could not say what had happened to the four tons in question.

It appears now that Persia, who is a member of the League of Nations, and has actually a seat on the Council, has opened a factory for the manufacture of opium and other narcotics.

Turkey, as well as Russia, both not members of the League, appear to be also taking up this nefarious traffic, at the very time when an attempt is being made to carry out the Geneva Convention amongst the State members of the League.

More Fortifications.

The *Manchester Guardian* (Jan. 26th) publishes an instructive document from its Paris correspondent. It seems that the victors of the last war are straining their resources for increasing armaments on land and sea while all possible precautions are taken to leave the losers in a defenceless state. Whether the spirit of universal contentment and brotherhood which the League of Nations is supposed to foster is receiving any stimulus from such a policy is a matter better not dwelt upon. That this lofty ideal is as far from realisation as ever was forcibly brought home to us the other day. We had an exchange of views with an old friend of ours, a well known German business man now established again in London; during the period of the war he and his family enjoyed the hospitality of Switzerland. He referred to our "superficial unity" and *inter alia* we were told that Germany would always claim the German-speaking part of Switzerland, the latter being of "their blood, culture and outlook." To underline this bold assertion our Teutonic friend confided to us that during his stay in Lausanne he witnessed many occasions when Swiss from the Northern part of the country were debarred from entering local shops to do their shopping. We felt ashamed that our informant should still harbour such a distasteful impression of our country, but we hesitated to give him *our* impression of German unity when early in the war, at a prisoners' camp somewhere in Kent, Prussians and Bavarians exchanged courtesies in no unmistakeable spirit. The writer of the following article pays us the compliment of having a "well organised and powerful army" but we should like to be supplied with some information about our "solid system of fortifications."

"The fortification of the northern and eastern frontiers of France just now begun—certainly the vastest piece of military engineering and organisation ever undertaken in the history of mankind and comparable in the magnitude of its conception with the Great Wall of China—still continues to obsess the French mind.

What is now certain is that the purpose of this grandiose undertaking will not be purely military. The chain of modern fortress systems to be erected will be directed not so much to the delaying action, which is the traditional function of fortresses, but to maintaining an impenetrable shield before the great ironfields of the north-east that constitutes France's greatest military asset over Germany.

As a result of the Treaty of Versailles France is, next to the United States, the greatest iron and steel country of the world. She now possesses nearly a third of the mineral wealth of all Europe, whereas Germany hardly possesses

more than three per cent.—an advantage in favour of France so overwhelming that, to use the words of the semi-official *Temps*, "Germany is, as things stand, quite incapable of maintaining with her own resources a prolonged war." In addition to the military hegemony constituted by her vast army and her network of armed alliances France thus possesses in a unique degree the industry that above all others constitutes the ultimate munitions of war.

The trouble is, as 1914 proved and as any war might again prove, that this vast natural resource lies along the frontier line from Belgium to Metz. Pressure, however, from all sides has now assured that an adequate shield of fortifications will be erected in the coming years to protect all this region, and particularly the Longwy iron basin, the most important of all, producing as it does over 2,000,000 tons of steel annually.

But a special difficulty of extreme delicacy has arisen. Coterminous, or rather tangential to the Longwy Basin is the great iron and steel region of Luxembourg, which produces no less than 2,500,000 tons of steel a year. Supposing, then, Germany were to seize Luxembourg, France would at once lose a great part of her advantage.

At all costs, therefore, if Germany is to be kept a comparatively resourceless country in respect of steel and iron Luxembourg must somehow be brought into the French system of fortifications.

But how? After all, Luxembourg is an independent country. An agitation has already been started for including Luxembourg in the system of protection to be accorded to the neighbouring Longwy Basin. General Hirschauer, who is the chief authority on the fortification question, has already announced publicly that:

"It is essential to defend the iron basin and the steel industry of Luxembourg. It is not simply a question of having more iron at our disposal but of preventing the Germans from getting hold of it and so keeping them in a state of inferiority for the whole duration of a war. Consequently, it is for us a vital question. The defence of Luxembourg is a question to be tackled here and now."

The *Temps* adds its semi-official support to the agitation. It points out that, after all, the neutrality of Luxembourg is very imperfectly defined in the Versailles Treaty, not, it adds, that since 1914 neutrality means very much. In any case, the German occupation of Luxembourg in 1914 must not be repeated. "This is a disquieting matter," says the Quai d'Orsay organ, "that must occupy the attention of the military chiefs of the two Powers interested, France and Belgium."

The *Temps* points out that Switzerland, also a neutral country, has a well-organised and powerful army, and not only that, but a solid system of fortifications. "Why should not Luxembourg follow this Swiss example instead of resigning itself to a policy of holding up its head to the invader?"

Such a demand addressed by such an organ to an independent State has hardly any precedent, and for that reason alone has a peculiar significance."

The Anti-Fascist Parade.

Under this heading the *Manchester Guardian* (Jan. 28th) deals with the proposed demonstration of the Swiss Communists:—

"The Swiss Government has again been concerned with two questions concerning Swiss-Italian relations. The Swiss Communist Party a few weeks ago decided to organise a large anti-Fascist demonstration at Lugano, to be held at the end of March. The Swiss Government immediately entered into correspondence with the Government of the Tessino canton about the undesirability of anti-Fascist demonstrations in the neighbourhood of the Italian frontier.

Before the Government could take any decision, however, the *Giornale d'Italia* published a vehement article asserting that this new proof of Swiss hostility to Fascism raised the question whether Italy any longer could permit Switzerland to remain the centre of an international organisation which requires guarantees of a peaceful atmosphere during League conferences. This provocative article in the Italian paper, which identified the Swiss population with the small Communist Party, was generally condemned by public opinion, and may even have contributed to the Tessino Government's tardiness in forbidding the proposed anti-Fascist demonstration. The Swiss Government on Jan.