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NEWS AT RANDOM

Between August 28th and September 4th there have been two more violations of Swiss territory. The Army Command announced on September 2nd that in the previous night foreign 'planes had again been sighted flying over Swiss territory. The trespass occurred in the western part of Switzerland; in St. Gall too an alarm was given, lasting from 12 p.m. to 1 a.m. In Au, St. Gall, bombs were dropped on open country. Anti-aircraft guns went into action. Enquiries as to the nationality of the airmen are being instituted.

During the following night Swiss neutrality was again violated by 'planes flying over Switzerland. They flew over Geneva and left again in the direction Geneva—Chiasso; they also flew over Nyon. Anti-aircraft fire was in evidence. The way in which the flights were carried out and the course taken by the 'planes point to a further breach of neutrality by British airmen, said the Swiss Radio on September 3rd. The 'planes were flying at a height of about 4,500m.

On the 3rd September the President of the Confederation reported to the Federal Council on the various breaches of Swiss neutrality. He was able to give his colleagues a compte-rendu of the several demarches undertaken by himself and the Swiss Minister in London. He informed the Federal Council that the British Legation had promised an early answer to his protest.

The Federal Council has granted a credit of Frs. 1,000,000 for the erection of barracks for Internees.

* * * * *

The "Times" published an article on the economic situation in Switzerland last Tuesday of which we give a résumé:—

From a Correspondent Lately in Switzerland.

Every minor European State has its peculiar war-time problems, even if not at war, but the position of Switzerland within the blockade is unique.

A new commercial express transport service by lorry was recently opened between Switzerland and

Portugal. The first of these lorries arrived in Lisbon after four days on the road and shipped a consignment of goods by the American Export Line to the United States. On the return journey they will carry a quantity of merchandise brought by the same ship from America. This new feature in European war-time trade routes brings into relief the peculiar position of Switzerland since the entry of Italy into the war and the collapse of France.

In fact, Switzerland is now suffering under the blockade equally with the belligerent Powers themselves. She is almost completely cut off from her foreign oversea markets, as well as from many of her sources of supply. The new transport service will do something to relieve Swiss difficulties. It should be stated at once that both the inward and outward traffic has the good will of the British authorities. Nevertheless, the position of Switzerland is an unhappy one. She finds herself almost entirely at the mercy of Germany, who, if she cared, could deprive her of most of the commodities she requires.

The German-Swiss clearing agreement expired in June last. Since that date commercial relations between the two countries have been put on a completely different footing.

Switzerland wants the coal, and the only country which can provide it is Germany. In return for this coal Switzerland is surrendering great quantities of her reserve stocks.

Apart from petrol, the main German concern is fats and cheeses. It is possible that they may try to provide the Swiss with the necessary feeding-stuffs from Hungary and Rumania, as they are stated to be doing in the case of Denmark and Holland, so as to keep the Swiss dairy industry going.

The Germans may find it in their interests to make use of the Swiss railway equipment industry to make up their own glaring deficiencies.

Switzerland is in a critical situation economically. The demobilization of her Army presents a formidable unemployment problem. It is further aggravated by the difficulties of her watch-making industry, which provided chiefly for English and American markets, and by the disappearance of her profitable tourist traffic, which again was supported largely by the Anglo-Saxon world. Schemes of public work are in abeyance.

Switzerland is not solely a German preserve. The Italians have interests in the south. They have shown a helpful attitude towards Swiss economic difficulties. Before the Italian entry into the war they assisted in the shipment of petrol and other commodities to Switzerland. They would continue to do so now if the British blockade permitted.