

News at random

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would in any case no longer be possible in Switzerland. However, he said, the Railways would profit, and already passenger traffic figures showed a rise. He said that those who were still determined to travel independently would have to take to bicycles!

He alluded to the excellent social spirit which had been shown once more by employers in helping to absorb the many demobilised soldiers.

Professor Lätt stated that the Fund for the assistance of repatriated Swiss citizens had now reached Frs.950,000 and would without doubt reach the million mark.

This year's collection on August 1st was to be on behalf of the soldiers and of the Red Cross.

On the subject of the military service exemption tax for Swiss citizens abroad, Professor Lätt said that he thought it would now become even more unpopular in view of the fact that only those who have done 50 days military service in the respective year are to be exempted. However, he went on, the man who does not pay such taxes willingly in these days, particularly in view of the expenses incurred by mobilisation, should be somewhat ashamed of himself.

Though officially operating, the postal service between this country and Switzerland has not produced any correspondence or papers; the latest newspapers in our possession are dated June 16th and they reached us about a fortnight ago. On the other hand we have been reliably informed that letters posted here on July 15th were delivered in Switzerland on July 29th. This may partly explain the fact that our country has practically gone out of the news as far as the English press is concerned. One particular item has found publicity though it is difficult to draw a line between fact and fiction or propaganda; it refers to supposed demands made on the Confederation by the German Government. The topic has probably arisen through the peculiar position created by the latest developments in the theatre of war. So far our country enjoyed special facilities at the Italian port of Genoa for unloading and transporting the oversea imports which were shipped across the Atlantic in the Greek freighters chartered by our Government for this purpose. It is doubtful whether the Italian authorities will allow these indispensable goods to pass through their territory without a *quid pro quo* and

whether the British Ministry of Economic Warfare permit such passage without very stringent guarantees that such goods do not remain in Italy or are subsequently re-exported. The first reference appeared in the "*Evening Standard*," July 29th, and reads as follows:—

The New York Herald-Tribune publishes a report to-day that Germany has addressed requests to Switzerland for access to that country's reserves of food, grain and oil, and gold.

The requests are described by the correspondent as tantamount to an ultimatum.

The Swiss, it is said, are expected to accept, but they are notifying the British Government of the requests, since part of the stocks were imported with British consent.

Switzerland's determination to oppose any outside attack and any defeatism inside the country was stressed by General Guisan, the Swiss Commander-in-Chief, in a speech yesterday, says Reuter from Berne.

General Guisan was addressing the leaders of the Swiss Army at Ruetli, the historic plain where the Swiss Confederation was founded in 1291.

He also made a statement on Switzerland's military activity since the beginning of the war.

This report is denied in "*The Daily Telegraph*," July 30th, which stated:—

Swiss officials in Berne yesterday denied a report that Germany had demanded, in terms tantamount to an ultimatum, access to Switzerland's reserves of food, grain, oil and gold.

The report, quoted by the B.U.P., appeared in the New York Herald-Tribune, and came from its London correspondent, who stated that the Swiss were expected to accede to the German demand, but that the Swiss authorities were notifying the British Government, since part of the stocks were imported with British consent.

Following the denial by Swiss officials, the Swiss army authorities have instructed Swiss newspapers not to publish the New York report.

And also in the "*Manchester Guardian*," July 30th:—

A report that Germany has made far-reaching demands upon Switzerland for access to the Confederation's supplies of food and oil and to her gold stocks is denied in Berne, and there is no reason to doubt the accuracy of the denial.

On the other hand, Switzerland, which is surrounded by the Axis, is undoubtedly under strong political and economic pressure. Germany is certainly trying to obtain control of Swiss production so that it shall serve her purpose. It is also true that Germany wishes to abolish genuine Swiss independence, and at the very least to "co-ordinate" Switzerland in all essential respects with the Third Reich. Switzerland is the last tiny island of genuine democracy on the Continent, and for that reason alone, apart from the Hitlerian form of Pan-Germanism or Nazi war needs, the free Swiss people are in danger.

This has induced the "*Sheffield Telegraph*," July 30th, to publish a somewhat startling statement

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prophesying that the Swiss will have to live on cheese during the coming winter:—

Last night I wrote about shipments of food and materials to Switzerland through Genoa. To-day came a report, afterwards denied, that Hitler had called on the Swiss to hand over these imports and their gold as well.

That he has made such a demand already is unlikely. He does not wish to let the Germans of the Reich perceive that he is short of anything so soon. But he can ask and take from the Swiss when he chooses. Switzerland is in dire straits. Axis armies beset her all round. She has no exports and no tourists, and next winter she will have little to eat, save cheese, and will come near to starvation.

Worse still are the following few lines which appeared in the "Daily Sketch," July 25th, in the column "Talk of the Town":—

A distinguished Swiss with whom I lunched told me he had heard this week that Nazis are openly patrolling Swiss cities and exerting economic pressure on banks and business houses.

* * *

More sensible if less excitable is an article in the "Manchester Evening News," July 26th, reminding us of the good and silent work of the monks of the Gt. St. Bernard Hospice:—

As a result of a storm in the Swiss Alps, the St. Bernard Road over the pass of that name is blocked by a landslide between the vallages of Le Brocard and Borneaud.

There are two St. Bernard Passes over the main chain of the Alps, both traversed by motor-roads.

The Great St. Bernard (8,111 feet) leads from Martigny in the Rhone valley to Aosta in Italy. The Hospice on the pass was founded by St. Bernard of Menthon, who lived in the eleventh century, and since the early thirteenth century it has been in charge of a community of Austin canons, the mother-house being at Martigny.

In former days the servants of the canons and the famous dogs saved many lives, especially those of Italian workmen.

But St. Bernard, the founder of the Hospice, did not keep a St. Bernard dog, nor did he found the kennel of the breed.

The keeping of dogs at the Hospice is a more or less recent innovation, for it was only after 1800, when Napoleon led his army over the pass which had only a bridle road then, that the monks became interested in breeding dogs. Travellers who visited Switzerland before that year, who described the country and Hospice in detail, do not mention dogs at all.

There are many stories of the use made at the Hospice of these great dogs.

A woman who visited the Hospice in 1827 describes the dogs kept there by the monks as large, fawn-coloured, spotted with white, and tells how they went out with the monks. Articles the monks wished to take with them were carried round the necks of the dogs.

On one dog was attached a cask of wine and a container of bread, while on the other was a bundle of clothing.

The Little St. Bernard leads from Bourg St. Maurice, in the Isere valley, to Aosta, but is much less frequented by travellers than its neighbour.

In Roman times the military arrangement of the German provinces made necessary the construction of a road over the Great St. Bernard Pass, and it is mentioned as existing in A.D. 69. Remains of it, cut in the rock, still exist near the lake at the top of the pass.

On the plain at the top of the pass is the temple of Jupiter, remains of which were excavated in 1890, though objects connected with it had long ago been found. Other buildings, probably belonging to the post station at the top of the pass, were also discovered. Many of the objects found then and in previous years, including many votive tablets, are in the museum at the Hospice of the Great St. Bernard.

* * *

Some foreign journalists were invited by the Aldershot Command for an inspection — according to the "Camberley News," July 26th — and obtained first-hand information concerning this country's war effort. Amongst them were Dr. Hans Egli and Dr. Gottfried Keller (we suppose the latter appellation is a misprint) and on leaving they are reported to have expressed "Their high appreciation of the keenness and intelligence of the soldiers."



OUR LOST PILOTS.

(From left to right).

Capt. EUG. FRYMANN crashed at Entfelden while superintending flying exercises; he resided at Dübendorf and was one of the instructors.

Lieut. RUDOLF HOMBERGER contracted fatal wounds during an engagement with German aircraft; he managed to land with his machine at Bienne.

Lieut. GÜRTLER, Basle, and

Lieut. MEULI, born in the Grisons but residing in Geneva, were observer and pilot respectively on patrol duty when their machine was engaged by German aircraft.