

Sundry news from Switzerland

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Defence measures will be taken immediately if the necessity arises. These measures will vary, depending on the character of the danger - whether it be a surprise attack, or a long-planned invasion, or whether the Swiss Army will have to bar transit to a foreign army.

Great events are likely to happen at any moment now. There can be no doubt about it. The danger that Switzerland might be closely influenced by these events increases more and more.

The watchfulness and preparedness of the army and people should not be relaxed in any circumstances. We are all ready for being called to arms at any moment.

Our people are prepared to pay the highest price - the lives of our sons - for national independence and freedom.

The fighting strength of the Swiss Army has continually increased. Our frontier and inland fortifications have reached considerable strength - £38,000,000 has been spent on their improvement.

Practically all the fortifications are ready to be manned, and those still building can be turned to immediate use.

Considerable areas have been fortified with trenches, ditches, walls and mines which can be exploded at a moment's notice.

During the first world war Switzerland produced only rifles, revolvers and machine guns, but today it has extended its own production to practically all arms including airplanes.

Switzerland has spent £87,000,000 on improving her arms.

Much attention has been given to the improvement of anti-tank and anti-air weapons.

The motorisation of the Swiss Army has progressed with great strides. Great underground stores have been constructed which are now housing immense quantities of food, fuel and other vital goods to enable the nation to live and fight within "the fortress of Switzerland" should it be besieged.

The Federal Council is continuously and carefully following external developments, and the extent of Swiss mobilisation will always be gauged to the events around us.

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SUNDRY NEWS FROM SWITZERLAND.

On March 16th, shortly after noon, two more waves of foreign aircrafts came across our territory. Swiss fighter squadrons took to the air and forced three American bombers to land at Dubendorf. A Liberator made a forced landing near Diepoldsau in the St.Gall Rhine Valley. A second Liberator fell into the Lake of Zug. One man of the crew was killed. Lastly, two four engine-bombers of the Americans crashed to the ground, one at Diessenhofen (Ct. of Thurgovie) and the other in the upper Toggenburg, Canton of St.Gall, near Wildhaus. All the members of the crews were safe and sound and have been interned.

Again on March 18, 13 American bombers made forced landings in Switzerland, while three others crashed to the ground. Most of the crews of the last three bailed out safely. All the planes were seized and the crews interned.

The development of the war in the air is followed with great attention by our authorities who have reinforced our precautionary measures. Thus the Federal Council issued on March 14th a new decree relative to protection against air raids. Landlords whose houses stand one against the other, must cut a passage through their basement party wall so that people caught in one air-shelter can more easily get into the other. The Confederation, the cantons and the local communities will grant subsidies for this. Moreover, anti-fire measures have been made more vigorous.

In January, a total of 16,005 unemployed have been registered in Switzerland. Compared with February 1943 when the figure amounted to 11,660 and especially in July last year when the number of unemployed reached the lowest level, namely, 4,400, a large increase is evident. At the end of February 1944, the number rose to over 17,000.

In the presence of an assembly convoked by the Society of Commerce and Industry of the City of Berne, Mr. Cottier, director of the Federal Transportation Office, talked on the problem of tourism after the war. He recalled that before the outbreak of hostilities, Swiss tourism gave the country an annual income of 600 million francs and that without this Switzerland's economic balance sheet would soon show a deficit. This is to say that our country would grow poorer from year to year should she just live from her own substance. Mr. Cottier also spoke of the universal need of rest and medical care after the war. Then, too, no doubt, a large number of children will want to come to Switzerland for their education. We must get ready, he pointed out, so that our equipment in this sphere shall meet the requirements of today. Therefore, among other things, our railroad system must be renovated and there should be provisions for improvement in national and international airtraffic facilities.

A meeting of representatives of transportation and the nation's economic interests was held in Zurich under the auspices of the ETH. The project drawn up by Professor Kurt Wiesinger of the Federal Polytechnical School was examined. This project proposes the creation of a system of railroads for Europe on which trains would run at a speed over 300 km. p.h.

The Confederation suggested the purchase of the Beaux-Cedres estate in a township near the City of Lausanne. This property will be used as an experimental farm for the cultivation of grain seeds. Beaux-Cedres will be attached to the Federal Experimental Station at Montcalme. The federal chambers will be asked to decide the matter in reply to a request for 280,000 francs credit for the purchase.

On Saturday afternoon, March 18th, Federal Councillor Nobs inaugurated the second part of a manifestation belonging to the Swiss workers' week of art and literature. This second part comprises an important exposition of art, literature, press achievements, etc. as well as objects pertaining to the theatre. In an allocution, Federal Councillor Nobs stated that art is a necessity of life, that it belongs to that minimum spiritual existence of men. It is not a monopoly of the few, and we must work so that everybody can profit from it.

Tobacco producers in the canton of the Ticino have just turned over their tobacco harvest to tobacco manufacturers. The district of Mendrisio furnished 4,000 hogsheads or hundred weights which represents for producers a gross income of 1,200,000 francs.

According to the official index, the cost of living in Switzerland at the end of February 1944 was 50.1% above the level of August 1939. The limit of a 50% increase in the cost of living has therefore been passed for the first time in the second world war. In the first world war, life in Switzerland after four years and six months had become not only 50% but 100% more expensive. The reason that this time the same thing has not occurred again is above all the merit of the work of the Swiss office of price control. The sense of responsibility and the self discipline of the Swiss business world has also greatly contributed to this achievement.

The voters of Arosa in the Grisons have accepted a credit of 51,300 francs for allocations to city employees to help them meet the increased cost of living.

The Berne Grand Council pursued its discussion of a decree which would provide subsidies for the construction of new lodgings. The state council proposed the granting of a credit of one million francs but the legislative assembly was of the opinion that no financial limit should be placed on this undertaking and let it be understood that the cantonal government will make an economical and cautious use of the credit at its disposal. The deputies then decided to

assign one million of the 35 millions voted by the people a month ago for the fight against unemployment in watchmaking centers. Another sum of 8 millions was to be used to provide work and for land improvement throughout the canton,

Damage caused by game in the Canton of Solothurn: Enormous masses of snow are covering parts of the Jura, making it almost impossible for the animals from the woods to find food. The rare case has even occurred that shy animals, like hare and deer, have ventured right up to the first houses of the villages to nibble on young trees and bushes. Considerable damage was done.

The International Bank of Reparations which has its headquarters in Basle has just issued its 13th annual report. This document points out that in carrying out its activity, the bank has respected the principle of strict neutrality as adopted in 1939. The report examines in a special chapter certain questions relative to the reconstruction of countries devastated by the war and to the development of export trade. The opinion is expressed in this report that it will be well to spread important public works very carefully over somewhat long periods and to hold in abeyance the less urgent projects for a time when after a vigorous resumption of economic activity there no doubt will follow a lull and perhaps a slack. Plans should be drawn up which can be adapted to circumstances.

HORNUSSEN - AN OLD SPORT OF THE BERNESE PEASANTS.

When the fields and Alpine pastures in Switzerland have been shorn of their last grass in early autumn the Hornussen or Hornet players, with wheelbarrow piled high with their paraphernalia, appear on the scene. The name of this pastime is derived from "hornet", the connection lying in the buzzing sound made by the wooden disc or puck as it comes flying through the air.

At one end of the pitch they erect a wooden or iron tee about a foot or eighteen inches high, with a guide rail gently sloping up to it from the ground behind. The field is now marked out - beginning a hundred yards from the tee. There are, of course, two teams, composed of men and youths of all ages, one side batting, the other fielding. The yuck, which is about $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches in diameter and one inch thick, is stuck on to the tee with a little clay, and now the first batter takes his stance. He wields an ash-wood club, ten or twelve feet long and surprisingly flexible, and with this he "addresses" the puck in the manner of a golfer. Then, suddenly, he swings the club around his head in a complete circle, and crack! - the puck is gone. Immediately the fielders come into action. They stand in single file some distance apart near the other end of the field, each being supplied with a large, flat wooden "shovel". With this they try to "kill" the puck before it reaches the ground. Should one of them succeed, or should the puck leave the fairway three times in succession the respective batter is "out"; otherwise he scores a point for his side. When the batting side is all out, the score for the innings is totalled up and the fielding side goes in.

A good batter can send the "hornet" a distance of from two to three hundred yards, and as it generally rises from twenty to thirty feet from the ground, the fielders have to be on the alert if they want to "kill" it. A great deal of judgment and timing is necessary in this operation. Sometimes the fielders have to run forwards, sometimes sprint backwards; they throw their "shovels" into the air, and the sharp crack as shovel-blade meets hornet in midair is greeted by much applause.

The Emmenthal, in the Bernese district is the traditional home of this ancient Swiss game. Since the beginning of the nineteenth century, however, it has slowly but surely become popular in other parts of Switzerland as well. There are several Hornet Clubs in Zurich, for instance, and in the Valaisan Löttschen Valley, the Prattigau and the Engadine it is played in various forms.