

Switzerland's help as a neutral

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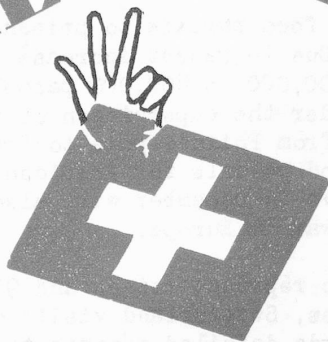
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SWITZERLAND'S HELP AS A NEUTRAL.

(Copied from the Swiss-American Journal, New York, 5 January, 1944.)

We note that Switzerland's role as a neutral finds more and more supporters in the United States and elsewhere. The following remarks by U.S. Senator Hill, contained in the U.S. "Congressional Record" of December 17, are a tribute to Switzerland and should help to clarify her position.

"The chief humanitarian activities of Switzerland performed in its capacity as a neutral by its diplomatic representatives and through the intermediary of the International Red Cross Committee of Geneva are briefly summed up below.

The International Red Cross Committee of Geneva has been founded in Switzerland and is composed entirely of Swiss members. Two-thirds of the funds necessary for the work of the International Red Cross are furnished by the Swiss Government and the Swiss people. The offices of the International Red Cross Committee cover a space of 1,650,000 square feet. Of the 3,500 employees in Geneva, two-thirds are voluntary workers without salary.

The Swiss diplomatic service represents the interests of 31 belligerent nations. It may also be stated that Switzerland represents the United States in all, and Great Britain in most countries with which they are at war.

1. Switzerland handles the lists of prisoners of war and civilian internees in order to identify each individual. In numerous cases Switzerland handles the exchange of civilian internees and of the wounded or sick prisoners of war.

Fifteen million cards are filed at the International Red Cross Committee in Geneva. Each card bears the names and the particulars of a prisoner of war or a civilian internee.

Seven thousand to 15,000 letters and telegrams concerning prisoners of war and civilian internees are handled every day by the International Red Cross Committee at Geneva.

2. Switzerland transmits news, messages, and inquiries about all the prisoners of war and civilian internees the world over.

More than 10,000,000 messages of prisoners of war have been sent by their families through the intermediary of the International Red Cross Committee of Geneva.

Since the start of the war, 55,000,000 pieces of mail have been received or sent through the International Red Cross at Geneva.

3. Switzerland transmits food parcels to prisoners of war at an average of 450,000 parcels per month. Due to recent increase in shipments the average must approach approximately 700,000 to 800,000 parcels monthly. The parcels are shipped on Swiss boats under the supervision of Swiss delegates in belligerent countries. On a recent trip from Philadelphia to France the Swiss boat S.S. "Lugano" carried 1,000,000 food parcels for American and Allied prisoners of war. Another Swiss boat due to leave in December will also carry over 1,250,000 food parcels for the prisoners of war in Europe.

4. Through its diplomatic representatives and 97 International Red Cross representatives in 47 countries, Switzerland visits camps of prisoners of war and civilian internees and sends detailed reports to the belligerents. Through these activities Switzerland is checking in every camp, where she represents foreign interests, whether prisoners of war are treated in conformity with the Convention of Geneva of 1929.

5. As a neutral country surrounded by nations at war, Switzerland has received thousands of refugees, and sends to the populations of France, Holland, Greece, Belgium, and other countries food and medical supplies.

During recent events more than 30,000 Italian soldiers and more than 5,000 Italian Jews passed the Swiss border and took refuge in Switzerland. The thousands of refugees in Switzerland, a country which is slightly over 4,000,000 inhabitants, presents a serious problem.

6. Switzerland extends relief to civilians who are not interned but reside in enemy territories. This is the case of thousands of American and British nationals who reside in Shanghai, Hongkong, Manila, etc.

It should be remembered that all the humanitarian activities of Switzerland, including the work of the International Red Cross Committee, are made possible only by the traditionally recognized neutrality of the Government of Switzerland."

NEUTRALITY POLICY REAFFIRMED.

"Our policy of neutrality is immutable. It remains unchanging toward all belligerents without consideration of their war aims or their chances of success. There is nothing conditional about the neutrality of Switzerland; it is absolute. There will be nothing symbolic about it - it will be backed up by force of arms if necessary."

In these words Federal Councillor Karl Kobelt, chief of the Federal Defence Department recently reiterated the energetic stand of Switzerland. "We cannot allow the horrors and miseries of war to hinder us in the accomplishment of duties incumbent on the country in the maintenance of its neutrality. And we will act. We are ready to resist any attack against our independence with the utmost energy, and there can never be and must never be any doubt but that we will categorically reject any demand for passage through Switzerland by troops of a foreign country. Should an attempt be made to force such a passage, we will resist with arms."

THE SWISS FEDERAL COUNCIL FOR 1944.

As already reported in our February issue, the election of the Swiss Federal Council has brought only one change, as Federal Councillor Nobs has taken the place of the former Federal Councillor Wetter. On January the 4th the Federal Council held its first meeting of the New Year. The first item of business was the distribution of the governmental responsibilities amongst the seven members. This was done without the least difficulty and in the simplest way possible. The six re-elected councillors keep all their departments and Mr. Nobs was given the department of finance, which Mr. Wetter had been carrying before his resignation.