

Swiss news summary

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"Look ahead, Werner, not back"

(Words of Stauffacher's wife in Schiller's "William Tell")

After the Committee of the Swiss Benevolent Society had shifted to Wellington, the question now arose: "What are we going to do here way up north in order not to lose too much contact?". A prominent and active member of the Waikato recently suggested to put up and elect sub-committees, where expedient, as for instance, in Auckland, Waikato, Taranaki and probably other places. Such local committees should have full power to act, subject only to final consideration by the Central Committee at Wellington. The idea deserves consideration. When many of us met for the first time early last August, it was generally felt, that the monthly paper alone is not sufficient to keep the interest in the Society on a reasonable standard among all members. Local sub-committees, as proposed, would have to keep in contact with local members, and possibly other local countrymen of ours, and from time to time, arrange local meetings and social gatherings. Particularly social gatherings, three or four times a year, are what is really needed. This need grows the more the younger generation grows up. They do not know the native country of their fathers, and it is up to us to acquaint them with Switzerland, from so many different points of view. This need is the greater the longer the present war lasts, and no fresh influx of countrymen from Switzerland can be expected. The big success of the past First of August gatherings certainly encourages us roughly to go along the same lines. I should like members of the different districts to think the matter over and to express their opinion in the paper, so that definite proposals may be forthcoming in the near future.

A Thames Valley Member.

SWISS NEWS SUMMARY.

At the 650th Anniversary of the Swiss Confederation on the Ruetli President Dr. Wetter said that Swiss people today must protect freedom and independence in foreign relations and honour and justice within the country. That was the reason for Switzerland's compulsory military service. Her neutrality demanded great self discipline from her people, so that the outer world should never doubt its will for neutrality. Switzerland, he said, was a democratic country by tradition; democracy in Switzerland was no foreign growth. Though today democracy had apparently lost much of its prestige in the world, yet Swiss democracy should not be confused with the form of Government in any other country.

The King and our People.

H.M. The King sent the following telegram to the President of the Swiss Confederation: -

"I desire to convey to you my warm congratulations on the auspicious occasion of the 650th anniversary of the Swiss Confederation, and my best wishes for the continued peace and prosperity of the Swiss people in the future. The Swiss Confederation, founded by the free choice of its members, whose independence has been so valiantly defended by the Swiss people throughout the centuries, has long been a vital part of European civilization. The ideals of freedom and harmony between different races so successfully embodied in the Swiss Confederation are fully shared by the peoples of the British Commonwealth, and I am confident that this community of ideals has contributed powerfully to the ties of sympathy so long existing between the Swiss and British peoples.

George R.I."

to which the following reply was received: -

"In the name of the Federal Council I warmly thank your Majesty for the very friendly message by which, on the occasion of the 650th Anniversary of the Confederation, you were good enough to give us a new pledge of the sentiments of understanding and sympathy which animate the peoples of the

British Commonwealth towards Switzerland. I assure your Majesty that Switzerland is the more gratified in that she cherishes like sentiments for Great Britain, and I beg you to accept the cordial good wishes which we feel for your personal happiness and that of your peoples."

100,000 Badges in commemoration of the 1st of August were distributed to the various Swiss banks by the Federal Mint. They bore a picture of three Swiss patriots of different centuries on the one side and on the reverse side the sentence from the Federal Charter 1291 "Sie versprachen, sich gegenseitig Hilfe zu leisten" was reproduced in Latin. (Bero).

On the 10th August the Swiss Minister of War made a speech in Berne at the display of the Swiss Sports Club (Turnverein). He thanked the participants for the work they have done and stated that the pre-military education of Swiss youth continued to remain the task of the schools and sports institutions. This situation is very difficult because of the present economic difficulties arising from the whole state of the world. The Army had to be partly demobilised, the Minister continued, not only to provide labour in the economic field and in agriculture but also in the interests of general economy. The determination of the Swiss to defend the independence of their country causes the people and the Government to keep their arms and not to lay them down under any circumstances.

Owing to the increasing shortage of fuel, Switzerland is to extend her electricity supply by the building of a huge hydroelectric plant at Rapperswyl, and another plant to halve the waters of the Rhine and the Rhone.

The new Trade Agreement between Switzerland and Germany has been completed. It has been announced officially that the Swiss Government will accord monetary advances to exporters to encourage exports to Germany.

These advances, says the Zürich correspondent of the Daily Telegraph, are limited by a proviso that Germany's outstanding debt may not increase to more than £23,000,000 above the level previously observed which is not revealed. Further advances are projected next year.

The advances will eventually be liquidated by goods imports. Switzerland is to receive from Germany 200,000 tons of coal a month to the end of 1942, that is a third more monthly than hitherto. She is also to receive 13,500 tons of iron a month plus special deliveries for carrying out German orders in Swiss factories.

The Turkish Government has definitely renounced prolongation of the trade and payment agreement of May 1940 with Switzerland which ended on 31st July. To protect Swiss export and other demands on Turkey the Federal Council passed a decree for the temporary arrangement of payments between Switzerland and Turkey pending a new economic agreement. This temporary regulation will merely be valid until a new agreement is in force. The Federal Council's decrees of April 1938 concerning payments between Switzerland and Turkey and that of May 1940 concerning the application of the earlier decree are no longer valid.

A Grant of Sw.Frs. 900,000 has been made by the Federal Dept. of Economics to the Uhrenindustrie A.G. for the purchase of watches. The grant is from the money provided for fostering export industries.

On August 13th it was announced that Professor Karl Burckhardt and Eduard Haller of the International Red Cross in Geneva visited the President of the German Red Cross and stayed for several days in Berlin. The question of the treatment of prisoners of war, which has gained particular importance owing to the war in the East, was examined. The two Swiss delegates visited a prisoners' camp, where some thousand Russian prisoners are kept.

Towards the end of 1940 over 300 children of families immigrated into Switzerland during 1938 had received help from the Swiss Benevolent Fund for refugee children. Furthermore 135 children of political refugees during 1939 were receiving assistance. Some of these were receiving either part or whole upkeep, whilst many were being provided with clothing, additional nourishment and medicines as well as schooling etc. Many of those living in homes were provided for by this institution and about 57 of these refugees are living at the cost of friends or relatives. During the school holidays about 63 children were received by families in various parts of Switzerland and in spite of increasing difficulties, about 46 children, many of them refugees from Germany, were able to leave Switzerland in 1940. They left our Country mentally and physically restored and not without regrets.

It is to be deplored that the receipts of the Benevolent Society show a decrease in funds of Frs. 263.452 in 1939 to Frs. 197.903 in 1940.

The Zürich section for Refugees has also provided about 52 children emigrated from Austria and Germany with money and clothes. The home opened for these refugees has now been closed as its 43 inmates have been able to enter state schools where they fit into the normal routine without difficulty. Children whose parents have been deported or are temporarily in camps are being looked after financially and the expenses of children in the care of foster-parents and at boarding schools are being covered from these funds.(N.Z.Z.)

Armand Dufaux, the well known pioneer in Swiss Aviation, died on July 17th in Geneva. He was born in Paris 13th January 1888, son of the painter Frederic Dufaux, and from 1900 on he devoted himself to the theoretical and practical study of aviation problems. Together with his brother Henri he built the first 100 HP-Flying engine. He also built the first successful Swiss aeroplane, the "Rumpfdoppeldecker" in 1910 and was the first Swiss to fly the lake of Geneva, from Villeneuve to Geneva in 55 minutes, thereby winning the price of Frs. 5000 offered by the firm Perrod-Duval.(N.Z.Z.)

The new sanatorium in Tessin "Sanatorio Popolare Cantonale" is finished. Originally it was the "Sanatorio del Cottardo" started by Dr. Massi in 1900. At the beginning the sanatorium flourished but already in the first decade of its existence the venture began to fail. Then in 1919 the Canton of Tessin bought up the whole concern for half a million Francs and after building a few annexes, which were most urgently required, it was opened in 1921 as the Sanatorio Popolare Cantonale. These alterations cost the Canton Frs. 200,000 and a further Frs. 600,000 have been spent on the building since 1939.

The normal charge for patients is Frs. 5 per person but anyone unable to pay this sum is granted a reduction of up to Frs. 3. The sanatorium contains 130 beds and has a staff of 30 in attendance. Situated about one hour's journey below Airolo at an altitude of 1170 m. its climate is exceedingly mild (N.Z.Z.)

Observations of Glacier movements have shown that during the past year 15 out of the 100 glaciers under observation have grown as against 14 in 1939, 6 have remained stationary as against 5 last year and 79 have decreased as against 81 in 1939.

London, 26th August, 1941.

COLLECTION FOR SWISS SOLDIERS.

Since our last publication in the April 1941 issue the following substantial contributions have been made towards the Swiss Soldiers' Relief Fund,

Financial contributions: £6.10.0 from three anonymous donors.

From the beginning of 1941, until the 15th of October 1941, the amount of £12.18.0 was received by the Swiss Consulate at Wellington and