

Sundry news from Switzerland

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SUNDRY NEWS FROM SWITZERLAND:

SWISS CO-OPERATION IN RECONSTRUCTION. The Swiss programme of relief and reconstruction of war-stricken European countries includes: - the organisation of medical groups to fight epidemics abroad; help for bombed-out families in the purchase of necessities; hospital care in Switzerland for child war victims; relief for children in foreign lands; the organisation of repatriation convoys in transit through Switzerland.

The money to finance the work has still to be collected, but the Swiss Government is expected to contribute up to 100 million francs in cash or kind to the fund which the Swiss people are building up. There is to be a nation-wide collection and every person in Switzerland will be called upon to make a substantial gift as a thanksoffering for having been spared the horrors of war.

DIPLOMATIC: The Swiss radio on November 4th reported that the Swiss Government has recognised the Provisional National French Government.

TRADE BETWEEN NEW ZEALAND AND SWITZERLAND: According to cable information received from the competent Swiss authorities, the changed conditions of the war in Europe have resulted in the general opening of export facilities to New Zealand.

HUMANITARIAN: Swiss Relief for Foreign Children. Between September 15 and October 15 over 10,000 French children crossed the border into Switzerland where they are receiving hospitality in safe areas. Their ages varied from 2 months to 18 years and the majority of them were placed with Swiss families who will look after them during their stay. 23,500 Swiss families have offered to take in a little refugee.

The City of Zurich has donated 50,000 Swiss francs to help the children of the French town of Lyon. (Swiss radio October 29.)

13,000 Italian partisans and many children have fled into Switzerland from the Val d'Ossola. (Swiss radio October 21 and 29.)

When he was in Marseilles, General de Gaulle said "I cherish a great admiration for Switzerland and I am deeply grateful to her for all she has done for the French children".

Swiss help for stricken neighbours across the borders. 100,000 tons of grain and other foodstuffs on route to Switzerland from Spain and Portugal, have recently been diverted by the Swiss authorities to the South of France, to help remedy the difficult food situation there.

On several occasions in the immediate past, Switzerland has gone to the help of the innocent victims of war just across her frontiers. Neighbouring towns and villages are quite often deprived temporarily of food and other necessities, and through the local Swiss Red Cross many tons of food, chiefly canned milk and potatoes, have been sent across to neighbours in distress. Medicines, clothing, and household equipment have also been supplied in cases of need.

After the French part of St. Gingolph, a border town on Lake Geneva, was destroyed by the German army of occupation as a reprisal measure, while the Swiss inhabitants of the other half of the town, just across the river, looked helplessly on, an assistance committee was set up on the Swiss side to help the homeless survivors and to rebuild the little French village. 90,000 Swiss francs have been subscribed.

Following the destruction of Valleiry, a French frontier town near Geneva, during the fighting between the Free French troops and the Germans, a relief committee was set up in Switzerland to raise money and gifts of clothing, foodstuffs, etc. As a result 5 large truckloads of furniture, sewing machines and clothing crossed the frontier at Geneva for Valleiry, and at the same time the committee handed to the French Mayor of the town one million French francs to be distributed amongst the neediest people of the district.

A relief committee has been set up at Brig in Switzerland to help the 60,000 inhabitants of the Val d'Ossola, which is on the Italian side of the international Simplon tunnel.

A tragic accident happened in the Lucerne Bay of the Lake of the Four Cantons. A wedding party from Escholzmatt consisting of some 40 persons had been celebrating the union of a young couple from St. Niklausen near Horn. In the darkness of the night, 33 persons of the party sailed home to Lucerne in a hired motor boat. The boat ran into another vessel and sank. Twenty persons were drowned; their bodies have been found. The bridegroom, Mr. Studer-Portmann tried in vain to rescue his young wife from the water grave. National Councillor Studer too has lost both his wife and daughter. Among the victims of this accident, there were also parents of many children, for instance, a couple with five children. Never before, has such a dreadful accident happened on the Lake. The city and the Canton of Lucerne, especially the Commune of Escholzmatt, the home of the victims, are deeply filled with grief about the catastrophe.

The Swiss Press comments on Swiss affairs (by Max Reber). At the end of the fall session of the Federal Chambers, George Perrin writes in the Lausanne paper, "La Revue" under 'Qualities as a Statesman' of our new Socialist Federal Councillor, Mr. Nobs, head of the Federal Department of Finances, "Mr. Wottor's successor in the Federal Finances Department has proved that the politician was right who said, a Jacobin who becomes minister must not forcibly become a Jacobin minister. Among the manifold wishes and demands, postulates and motions, Mr. Nobs has been able to choose what is really worthwhile, leaving out the unnecessary and the exaggerated, handling the rest with a right word of conciliation. Our new financial wizard has known rapidly to differentiate between reality and theory. The words he addressed to the Parliament proved to us that he is going to dedicate his efforts to the national cause and not only to the interests of his party. He is not blindly following illusions, and is taking great care not to create any in other people. He has realized that a financial reform cannot be brought about by a brutal triumph of one system over the other, but that only the road of understanding and mutual concession will lead to a successful end. In the future, Mr. Nobs will have to count with all the obstacles and difficulties of the ordinary procedure and will have to pass the approval of the public vote."

During Allied air operations of October 7th, an attack was aimed at the dam of the German power station of Kembs some 3.2 km northwest of the Swiss frontier of Kleinhüningen near Basle. The result noted was the serious effect on the Swiss Rhine river navigation so that at 5.50 p.m., the port master of the Swiss Rhine port of Kleinhüningen summoned the entire ship and harbor personnel. The damage done to the dam of Kembs resulted in a rapid sinking of the water level in the Swiss port of Kleinhüningen. It had been necessary to bring all the ships of the lower harbor regions which are depending on the Kembs dam to independent deeper waters.

These days the united aid work of the International Committee of the Red Cross has organized a collection of toys in all Switzerland. The toys will be given to all those children who have suffered most under the horrors of this war. The collection is the result of a decision of the International Committee to offer also a little pleasure to all the children under its care, and whom it supplies with clothes and food. It was announced especially that all the toys should be given in good condition in order to make the joy of the little recipients more complete.

The second plenary meeting of the commission of experts for refugee questions was held in Berne. In his function as head of the Federal Department of Justice and Police, Federal Councillor de Steiger made the following statement:

'Switzerland aims her efforts at the creation of the best possible conditions for the refugees and internees on her territory in the framework of discipline and order and of international convention. Civilian refugees and internees shall leave our country with the feeling that we have done our best to render their stay as bearable as possible, a stay which is perhaps not always voluntary. Most of the internees are behaving correctly. The single cases where this has not been so, shall not change Switzerland's whole-hearted readiness to help all refugees and internees. On the contrary, let us state that on both sides there is a lot of goodwill.'

During the session, it was announced that of the 35,000 internees in Switzerland

33,000 are actually engaged in work. It was learned with great interest that the food ration for the internees will be adjusted to the rations of the Swiss population.

With regard to the so-called political refugees, it was said that only 80 of them are at the moment in Switzerland.

The Dutch government has concluded a credit agreement in London with a Swiss group of banks for reconstruction purposes after the war.

The Italian paper "La Ricostruzione" which is Mr. Bonami's journal, has devoted an article to the coming resumption of economic relations between Italy and Switzerland. This paper remarked, among other things, that Swiss industries which are remarkably well equipped, will be able once the war is over to furnish the peninsula with a large number of products that are particularly needed there. The article also praises the Swiss foreign policy, and concludes that the new democratic Italy will find pride in counting the Swiss Confederation among its friends.

Prof. Max Huber, President of the International Red Cross Committee, has been elected a citizen of honor in Geneva. It was in 1938 that Prof. Huber succeeded Gustave Adore as head of the Red Cross.

Last week has been a black week for the Swiss Federal Railways with a landslide on the Gotthard Line and the three railway accidents at Maroggia, Clarens-Montreux and Solothurn. Already the week before a similar accident had occurred at Schupfen. The damages, above all at Maroggia and Clarens are considerable. At Clarens, the accident also unfortunately claimed a large number of badly injured.

The Swiss Red Cross addressed the following appeal to the Swiss people: 'Give all men's clothes which you can spare to the Red Cross in order to allow us to clothe the refugees. The Red Cross also needs thousands of woolen blankets for the refugee camps.'

Since September 22nd last, small and large convoys of children from the region of Belfort in France have continued to arrive in Basle. Some of the children were accompanied by their mothers or older sisters. The number of people having entered Switzerland by Boncourt was, by October 24th, 9,650. All these refugees have been placed with Swiss families in the interior of Switzerland. These last days, the number of arrivals has not been more than 50 to 60 a day.

On the occasion of the 70th Birthday of General Guisan, the Federal Council has expressed the gratitude of the country and its best wishes to the Commander of our army. A delegation of the Swiss Officers' Society also brought congratulations. The General was given by this Society a manuscript of a work in which 20 authors expressed their opinion on the question "citizen and soldier". This work will be published shortly under the same title.

At Neuchatel the delegates of the employers and employees organizations of the watch industry were assembled to examine various requests and claims of the workers. The workers demanded six paid holidays, longer vacations and higher increased cost of living bonuses. Their postulate also concerned the employment of women in the watch industry. As the discussions did not lead to decisive results, a further meeting will be arranged before long.

Engineers are studying the possibility of utilizing water streams in the Muota Valley for the production of electric power. Should it be possible to put the Glattalp and the surrounding region under water, it is estimated that 16 million kw could be produced winter and summer alike.