

Sundry news from Switzerland

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SUNDRY NEWS FROM SWITZERLAND

Statistics are available regarding the amount of Switzerland's Easter traffic by rail. The Federal Railways operated 372 special trains which was a few less than last year. Receipts on the other hand were larger than last year. The most favored regions were the Ticino, Lake Lucerne, Lake Geneva and the Bernese Oberland.

The present shortage of coal in Switzerland is now having its repercussion on the whole of our industry. Heavier restrictions have also been imposed on the Swiss textile industry by the Federal War Office for Industry and Labor. From now on our textile enterprises will no longer be able to satisfy immediately all demands from the Swiss trade and public.

Switzerland is preparing to name her Minister to Rome. In turn, Italy will shortly appoint a representative in Berne. As a result of military and political events the two countries only had Charge d'Affaires in the two capitals.

It is announced in Berne that the new French Ambassador to Switzerland Mr. Henri Hoppenot has arrived in the Federal Capital. This is the third time during his diplomatic career that M. Hoppenot is in office in Berne. He was there as Embassy attache in 1917, and from 1931 to 1933 as Embassy counsellor.

About the Franco-Swiss financial agreement signed in Berne on March 22, 1945, the following points have now been revealed: The two countries are granting each other payment facilities up to a total of 250 million Swiss francs or the equivalent in French francs. The agreement has been concluded for three years and after that can be prolonged tacitly every year. It includes not only France but also Algiers, the French Colonies, countries under French protectorate or mandate, as well as Syria and Lebanon. The payment facilities will above all be used for commercial purposes and for the regulation of services.

According to the report of the Federal Political Department which has just been approved by the Federal Council, 164 Swiss citizens have lost their lives in air raids in Europe during the past year. A number of other compatriots have become the victims of other war events. In France, 30 Swiss citizens have been put to death either by German troops or elements pretending to be members of the French forces of liberation. Damage suffered by Swiss citizens abroad is enormous. The program of reparations will be one of the main questions after the war. The Federal Council is doing its best to receive the same indemnities for our compatriots as the foreign states are paying to their own nationals. For the time being, however, Swiss citizens only receive indemnities in Germany and Great Britain, whereby the reparations in Germany are practically only of a theoretical character.

The Federal Health Office reports that the state of health of the Swiss people has remained satisfactory in 1944. This is undoubtedly due to the fact that so far the greatest part of our population has not suffered from undernourishment or has not been forced to live on inferior food. Nevertheless, there have been slight influenza epidemics of 54,660 cases. In 1939, a similar epidemic brought 54,749 cases while the years 1940 to 1943 were free of epidemics. The number of cases of tuberculosis has decreased from 4,374 to 4,304 last year.

The two delegates of the International Committee of the Red Cross who organized the distribution of the foodstuffs in Holland, shipped by the S/S "Henri Dunant" have just returned to Switzerland. The goods which were unloaded in the North of the country are shipped by canal boats to the three

Western provinces. In this territory live nearly 3.5 million inhabitants. An additional ration of bread amounting to some 800 grams weekly will be given to them. Children under four years as well as sick people will receive special rations of flour, rice and oat meal. The Swiss people residing in Holland will also benefit by these extra rations. Thanks to the efforts of Sweden and Switzerland this relief work can go forward until some time in the middle of June. The food situation is so critical in Holland that plans must be made to develop further the shipments of help.

This spring, the International Committee of the Red Cross will organize a touring exhibition showing the fate and life of prisoners of war, the way these men are bearing their hard lot behind barbed wires and the postwar problems which will result from this captivity. The exhibition will open in Zurich on May 5th, and in the course of the summer will visit about 20 towns in Switzerland.

In view of the old rolling stock of the Berne trolley cars the City Council has asked the Communal Council for a credit of 2,850,000 francs for the purchase of 15 new electric street cars.

The Federal Council approved the 1944 Federal accounts. The ordinary account closes with a deficit of 165.7 million francs, while the deficit of the extraordinary war account amounts to 1032 million francs. At the end of 1944, the debt of the Confederation totalled 6750 million francs.

The closing of the Swiss frontier in the north has brought a suspension of postal traffic with Germany, both local and transit. The public is requested not to mail anything for the moment to Germany, and to certain countries, which formerly required the crossing of Germany. The resumption of traffic, which apparently is not for the immediate future, will be announced in due course.

The members of the Japanese Legation to the Vichy Government, who were residing at Sigmaringen and fled before the advancing French troops, are at present at St.Gall. They will remain in that city temporarily, i.e. until further arrangements regarding them can be made.

A group of Dutch people, who with thousands of other refugees have crossed over into our country and have been cared for, have sent us an expression of their gratitude. "The hearty reception and the good care we enjoyed when passing through your country", the message says, "shall never be forgotten. We thank the Swiss people, whom we have really learned to know in one day. Our special thanks go to the Swiss Red Cross and to the Swiss army, both of whom looked after us."

About four months ago the "Swiss Gift for War Victims" was set in operation and during that time this organization has spent more than 18 million francs for relief purposes. So far relief actions have been organized for Belgium, Holland and France. The actions have mostly been carried out in the form of distributing food and industrial products. Eight hundred and thirty freight cars have been employed to transport a total of 9800 tons of food. Among the industrial products supplied by the Swiss gifts, there are clothes, textiles, wallpaper, tools, tractors and other industrial and agricultural implements. Nine Swiss medical missions are at work in those countries.

The entire flotilla of German boats on the Lake of Constance has come over to the Swiss shores for internment. Nine steamships generally stationed at Lindau have entered Swiss waters after an agreement with Swiss customs officers. They will remain in the four principal Swiss ports on Lake Constance until the entire German shore of the lake has been occupied by the Allies. Then they will return to their home ports. The ships came over to the Swiss side in order to avoid useless destruction by the Germans or by bombing attacks. Their crews have returned to Lindau.

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