

N.Z. soldier of Swiss origin writes about his visit to Switzerland

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The task of the Swiss authorities, it is stated, was not facilitated by the difference of language, nor by the lack of order and discipline shown by the internees. It is admitted, too, that the Russian internees were not subject to special treatment, that they got the same treatment as the other refugees whatever their nationality. Four Russians died, two of them as a result of an inappropriate usage of firearms on the part of the Swiss guards and two others in connection with an incident falling under common law. On the other hand, two Swiss citizens were killed. Both delegations have expressed their regret for these incidents.

Lastly the Russians signed a statement in which they expressed their satisfaction in which they found the camps and the splendid organization of the repatriation works. The work of repatriation went off smoothly and without undue delay.

In the conclusion of the protocol both delegations made it clear that they had negotiated in a spirit of concord and mutual comprehension.

Normally this test should put an end to the misunderstanding that arose between the two countries concerning the treatment of internees in Switzerland. The Swiss government has already expressed its satisfaction on this point, so far the Moscow government has not made its viewpoint known. Very possibly it will not issue any official statement on the matter. This will be more clear, when it can be seen, if the negotiations, by setting aside obstacles, which hedged up our way were really a prelude to earlier contacts between the two countries, contacts, which would come in the natural order of things and which we for our part desire.

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N. Z. SOLDIER OF SWISS ORIGIN WRITES ABOUT HIS VISIT TO SWITZERLAND.

The Swiss Consulate has received a letter from a N. Z. soldier of Swiss origin serving with the N. Z. Forces in Italy, whom they assisted to get permission to visit Switzerland. Part of this letter is quoted below and we are sure it will make interesting reading for our members.

"... and believe me it was the greatest experience of my life. The army gave us a week's travelling time each way as transport in Italy is slow owing to the damage to roadways and railroads. We spent 34 days in Switzerland and we had beautiful weather, warm, with brilliant sunshine on all except 4 days. We covered almost the whole of the country. We purchased a railway ticket for 5 weeks which cost us £15 and with the few extra trips (private mountain railways) the fares cost us something like £20. Hotels and meals were dear but were good. Everywhere we went we got a great reception, for many reasons, because we were New Zealanders and soldiers, and because we were able to speak like they themselves. While at Interlaken I met a Gentleman by the name of Alphons Horning who tells me he was in New Zealand in 1939 and wishes to be remembered to you all. He is a chemist and comes from Bern. Almost every where we went, and on every train we got on, there was someone who knew somebody in New Zealand and as a result I have some 50 or 60 letters to write to various families in New Zealand telling them of some of our strange experiences. We spent 5 days in Luzerne from where we went to Stans, Burgenstock, Rigi-Kulm, went up the Jungfrau joch and down through Grindelwald; also stopped at Zermatt and made the Gornergrat trip, over the Furka, and saw the Rhoneglacier, on to Andermatt, Pontresina, Alp Grum, St. Moritz, Davos, Chur, Klosters; of the towns we saw St. Gall, Romanshorn, Schaffhausen, Winterthur, Berne, Zurich, Zug, Solothurn, Lausanne, Geneva, Iverdon, Bienne, and many other interesting and pretty places. The lakes and mountains are really the prettiest I have seen, and the people made me feel prouder than ever than I am of Swiss origin; the great fortifications, the well trained and well equipped soldiers, always ready and determined to defend their country to the last man should Germany have tried to pass through, the kind treatment to the many escaped prisoners and hundreds of homeless children from Holland, Denmark and France, the reception given American and other Allied soldiers is only one way in which the Swiss people showed their appreciation of the Allied Nations sincerity to make this world a better place to live in. I was one of the proudest soldiers that left Switzerland. I was proud to think that my people came from such a beautiful, spotlessly clean and well organised country and I blessed my people everyday for having taught me their native language, because I

felt it added so much more to making my leave so pleasant as it was, in that I was able to converse with them in their own language. I could write pages of the warm hospitality shown to us everywhere by everyone. Once again I wish to thank you in arranging my leave from the other side. I feel without your assistance, we would have been deprived of spending one month of the most pleasant and memorable days of my life, a grand conclusion to my army career, in the most delightful spot in the whole world."

MR. ERNEST DICKENMANN IS LEAVING NEW ZEALAND BEGINNING DECEMBER.

Members will regret to learn that Mr. E. Dickenmann, who was attached to the Swiss Consulate in Wellington since the beginning of 1942, will leave New Zealand early in December to rejoin the firm in Bangkok, Siam, where he had a position prior to his coming to New Zealand.

He came to New Zealand late in 1941 for a few months holiday in a temperate climate. Soon after his arrival, war with Japan broke out, and he was, of course, unable to return to Bangkok. In view of the extension of the activities of the Swiss Consulate in Wellington, he was welcome as a member of its staff. He has made many friends here, among the Swiss community as well as among New Zealanders. He also took an active part in the running of the Swiss Benevolent Society, especially in the publishing of the monthly Bulletin "HELVETIA".

I am sure I express the sentiments of all the members of the Swiss Benevolent Society in wishing Mr. E. Dickenmann "Godspeed" on his journey to Siam and good luck in the future.

Dr. Water Schmid.

Dear Friends,

As you will see from the above notice which Dr. Schmid kindly inserted, I shall be leaving New Zealand shortly to take up my former position with the Swiss firm of Diethelm & Co. Ltd. in Bangkok, Siam.

When I came here, just four years ago for a short holiday, I never dreamed that I would be able to spend four full years in this pleasant country which reminded me in many ways of Switzerland. During my stay here I was able to see most of the South and North Islands, and wherever I met some of our compatriots I always received a hearty welcome and felt truly at home amongst them. I also made very many friends amongst New Zealanders and it is therefore with mixed feelings that I leave this country but very happy memories will go with me.

It is very unfortunate that I cannot fulfil the promise I gave to some fellow countrymen to visit them once more before leaving, but shipping accommodation has suddenly become available which makes this impossible.

I would like to thank all my friends most sincerely for their kindness to me during my stay in New Zealand. I wish every one of them the very best of luck, every success to the Swiss Benevolent Society, and I hope that one day I may have the opportunity to revisit New Zealand and renew all these friendships.

Very sincerely yours,

Ernst Dickenmann.