

Switzerland's active neutrality

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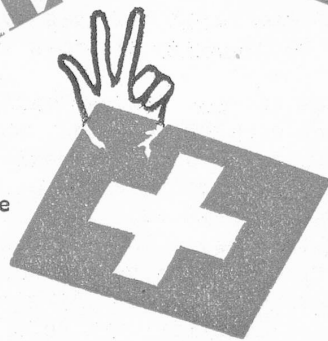
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ANNUAL SWISS REUNION AT KAPONGA.

The Annual Reunion of Swiss in Taranaki, which was held in the Kaponga Town Hall on the 25th July, 1946, was a complete success. It was combined with the farewell to Dr. W. Schmid, our late Consul and the welcome to his successor, Mr. E. Theiler.

The first part of the evening was a talkie picture of Switzerland which was very much appreciated. After this a presentation was made to the departing Consul, Dr. Schmid. Mr. J. Palmer, representing the Kaponga Town Board, said that everybody who came into contact with Dr. Schmid was very sorry to lose him. He then welcomed Mr. Theiler, the new Consul, to Taranaki, hoping that his stay in New Zealand would be a happy one. Mr. E.S. Rutherford of Stratford tendered apologies for the absence of Mr. E.B. Corbett, M.P., Mr. W. Sheat, M.P. and Mr. G. Meuli. The Rev. Father Butler, representing the Swiss Community of Taranaki then presented Dr. Schmid with a framed picture of Mt. Egmont and wished Dr. and Mrs. Schmid a safe trip home to Switzerland. Mr. F. Ehrler's little daughter presented the departing Consul and his successor with a buttonhole.

J.S.

After the presentation, supper was served and plenty of it, even including Swiss savalloys, black coffee etc. To serve 450 people was quite a big undertaking for the ladies in charge. They were Mrs. J. Kaiser, Mrs. J. Chamberlain, Mrs. J. Meier, Mrs. C. Schuler, Mrs. J. Steiner, Mrs. W. Risi. After supper, dancing started in full swing to the homely tunes of the Swiss Orchestra consisting of the following compatriots; Messrs. F. Imhoff, A. Meier, A. Engelberger, Fischlin, P. Zimmermann and Mrs. Schneller. This last part of the programme lasted until 7 a.m. No wonder that many of the audience wished to know the date of the next gathering.

Mr. C. Chamberlain as M.C. had quite a busy time. Great credit for the success of this function is due to the organisers, Messrs. W. Risi, J. Kaiser and J. Steiner, Secretary.

Monte Carlo waltzes were won by Mrs. R. Hiestand and Mr. J. Notter, Mr. and Mrs. J. Dettling.

There were also games of Swiss cards (good old JASS).

SWITZERLAND'S ACTIVE NEUTRALITY.

Lausanne - It is a point worthy of mention that, during the second World War as in the first, Switzerland has played a very important role in her capacity of Protective Power; her work as such has been greatly appreciated

by the different governments of the world and goes to prove that a neutral state can render great service to humanity in times of international conflict.

From the very outbreak of war, Switzerland's acceptance to represent foreign interests in belligerent countries called for the creation of a special organization in order to carry out this work. In Berne, the Swiss Federal capital, a new department called the Foreign Interests Section of the Federal Political Department was constituted. In Berne, 153 officials were employed in this department, while over 1,000 civil servants were at work in different foreign capitals. Special departments were created at the Swiss Legations in London, Berlin, Rome, Washington, Vichy and Buenos Aires; in Berne, over 40,000 cases were filed. Statistics will help to understand more clearly how actively this wartime diplomatic service carried on its work: in 1943, for instance, the correspondence for this Department alone amounted to 150,000 memos and letters and 17,000 cables, most of the latter being in cipher. By the end of 1944, foreign powers had paid Switzerland no less than 236 million Swiss francs to cover costs of administration and to pay for the repatriation and welfare of their nationals; 186 millions of this large sum was spent on assistance given to foreign citizens.

Switzerland's task as a Protective Power covered a very wide field of activity. Apart from diplomatic and consular work of a general nature, Switzerland had to watch over the application of the Geneva Conventions and of all agreements passed in favor of the Jews. The protection of officials (exchange of diplomatic missions), of foreign nationals, of foreign Government and private property, were all tasks which fell to the Foreign Interests Department and sometimes proved no easy ones to fulfil. Switzerland's help in consular work was particularly valuable, as it included legal assistance, the establishment of protective passports, the legalization of thousands of documents and intervention in all matters bearing upon civilian law.

The organization of repatriation and exchanges was another heavy task. Finally, Switzerland's activity as a Protective Power in relation to the application of the Geneva Conventions was very far-reaching. But one of the greatest tasks of all was the inspection of Prisoner of War camps.

As the number of prisoners increased, so the number of inspectors attached to the different Legations of Switzerland had to be increased. In 1944, the inspectors of the Swiss Legation in Germany made 42 tours and visited about 150 camps, military hospitals and prisoners, as well as most of the 1900 Labor Camps annexed to the Base Camps for Anglo-Saxon prisoners. The repatriation and exchange of the seriously wounded was also organized and carried out under Swiss supervision.

The treatment undergone by the Jews wherever the Nazi regime held sway aroused indignation in the United Kingdom and the United States. Switzerland, therefore, acting in her capacity of Protective Power for these two States was called upon to intervene most actively in this matter.

This very brief survey of Switzerland's work during the war will show how important a part a neutral country can play in wartime and how it can help the belligerent nations. The fact that there has been a Protective Power has made it possible for international relations to be maintained and, however limited they may have been, this in itself proved invaluable from every point of view.

SWISS INTENSIFY EFFORTS FOR WORLD TRADE AT BASLE FAIR.

Official figures published immediately after the Basle fair which closed last week show that the number of buyers attracted to Switzerland far exceeded all expectations. Buyers came from twentyfour European and thirtytwo overseas countries, a Wireless to The New York Times May 19 from Berne reveals.

Altogether 4,270 foreign buyers recorded their special wants but the total number of Swiss business men at the fair was substantially greater. The total number of fair entry tickets sold numbered 425,605, against 360,624 a year ago.