

Correspondence

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fats, rice, tea and coffee is approaching a crisis. On March 14th the rations for April were published. No more potatoes can be added to bread the ration for which is again reduced; also reduced is the fat ration. Coupons for jam and marmalade are suppressed altogether and chocolates are also in short supply. There is no change in the meat ration.

The Federal decree restricting the consumption of gas has released protests in all parts of Switzerland.

The cultivation of land is to be hastened forward to the utmost. The Government has issued a decree making various categories of Swiss and foreign residents liable to join the "green" army; this is what "The Times" reports from its correspondent on February 28th:

"This is what is now called the 'green army,' whose help is urgently needed by farmers. Owing to the adverse autumn weather and the extremely cold winter, work on the land is abnormally delayed, and so far one-third of the cultivated area has not been sown. Agriculture is therefore needing some 200,000 hands, instead of 120,000 last year, so as to assure the country's life, the more as no production deficit can be offset by importations.

Rapid organization of the "green army" is regarded as a question of life and death among the Swiss people, and volunteers are flowing in without waiting for the enforcement of the decree."

The Swiss Industries Fair at Basle will be held from April 14th to 24th which suggests a good deal of courage and optimism on the part of the organisers. Obviously we can afford to ignore foreign buyers!

Humanitarian

A first convoy of 80 Swiss and their families who have lost their property in consequence of the bombing of Berlin and Baltic towns arrived after a protracted journey via Konstanz, in Kreuzlingen on February 10th. Pending their adoption by relatives or their places of origin, the refugees were lodged in local school buildings or with private families.

The second medical mission of the Swiss Red Cross left for Hangleur and St. Ghislain in Belgium on February 20th under the direction of Capt. Dr. Olivet; it comprises four doctors, six sisters and an orderly and will distribute 150 tons of milk products among destitute juveniles.

Prof. Max Huber will again, temporarily, occupy the presidential fauteuil of the International Red Cross Committee during the absence of Prof. C. J. Burckhardt, our new minister at Paris — which seems to imply that diplomatic appointments nowadays are not expected to be of long duration.

It is interesting to note from a statement in the House of Commons that, in order to remove sick or weak prisoners from German camps, the British Government has placed at the disposal of the International Red Cross Committee several hundred lorries with sufficient petrol, oil, tyres and spare parts.

The continuous air raids on our northern frontier is causing a steady influx of refugees, both military and civilian and of various nationalities; they are

seizing the chance of relaxed police vigilance and are crossing the Rhine at several convenient spots. The patrolling guards on the Swiss side have been doubled without effect; a cynic suggests that boards might be hung out along the Swiss banks notifying that there was standing room only.

At the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the creation of the Swiss Telegraph Agency at Berne, Federal Councillor Kobelt asserted that in a democratic state the people had the right to be consulted on all public questions, which could only be done by a regular daily news service.

Avalanches have caused considerable damage during the last few weeks. In the early afternoon of March 8th the neighbourhood of Andermatt was visited, the military barracks were cut in two, nine soldiers were killed, two are missing and two wounded. In the canton St. Gall two stables were carried away. As one avalanche was rolling towards a chalet the father with five children managed to escape but the mother was injured and the maid killed. In the canton Uri three road workers lost their lives in a snow drift.

The head master of Rossall School in an address at Fleetwood suggests eight years' free training for youth of the axis countries and recommends amongst other places Switzerland as an appropriate quarter; we suggest that he should go there for eight weeks schooling first.

Several English papers are already rejoicing over the early arrival of Swiss alarm clocks; in the opinion of our editor, however, they and the aeroplane are the most malicious and malevolent inventions of the present generation.

CORRESPONDENCE.

*Légation de Suisse en Grande-Bretagne,
18, Montagu Place,
Bryanston Square, W.1.
March 7th, 1945.*

To The Editor,
THE SWISS OBSERVER,

You will remember that in the September issue 1944 of the SWISS OBSERVER you published the following editorial note under an article on Swiss military tax:

"N.B.—The above complaint is nearly as old as Methuselah, but it may be stated that since the outbreak of the present war the home authorities have exempted any Swiss in this country serving in the English forces from payment of future military taxes, though such service without the explicit sanction of the Swiss Government is not permissible under our Constitution.—(Ed. — S.O.)"

I would just like to point out to you that this is somewhat misleading, since only Swiss with dual nationality are exempt from military obligations in Switzerland — and consequently from military tax — if they join up in this country. We should be very grateful if you could draw attention to this fact in one of your next issues to obviate the possibility of any misunderstanding.

Yours sincerely,
ERIC KESSLER.