

Switzerland in war-time

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SWITZERLAND IN WAR-TIME.

This interesting article is taken from the "Daily Dispatch," Manchester, March 26th, and was supplied by a Berne correspondent; the part dealing with food rationing should prove instructive.

Plain living and costly living has been the lot of most Swiss during the five-and-a-half years of war.

On the surface, Switzerland's scrupulously clean, intact towns look highly prosperous, with their neatly dressed population and well-filled shop windows exhibiting a wide range of jewellery, fur coats, gold watches and expensive cameras. But such luxuries are quite beyond the pocket of the average middle-class Swiss, who has the greatest difficulty in making both ends meet.

Salary increases have never overtaken the rise in the cost of living, which was already high before the war and is now almost 50 per cent. above that of 1939. Nevertheless, the Swiss are always ready to spend money on worthwhile entertainments. Concerts, theatres and cinemas are crowded.

The country's official neutrality has never prevented most Swiss privately expressing lively sympathy for the Allies, especially Britain, even in the most critical time in 1940 when the Swiss themselves expected invasion.

Mr. Churchill is easily the most popular Allied statesman here.

Despite the former close relations with German publishers, the bookshops here never sold Nazi literature. Instead, there has been a flourishing market for translations of British and American books.

Though spared the loss of life and destruction, the Swiss have experienced a wide range of war-time restrictions.

The most drastic blow dealt to the Swiss public recently was the severe reduction in the gas ration introduced on February 14th as the result of the virtual stoppage of coal imports from Germany.

A household of four persons now receives only 17 cubic metres of gas monthly, and cannot have more than one hot meal daily and must dispense with baths. A single person receives only eight cubic metres monthly, and is obliged to take most meals in restaurants, which also had their gas supplies cut 50 per cent.

Private motor-cars disappeared from the streets shortly after the war began, and petrol is strictly rationed even for necessary services.

Food rations are smaller than in Britain.

The monthly food card contains at present (all in grammes; 100 grammes equals about a quarter of a pound); Sugar or jam, 500; jam or honey, 250; chocolate, 100; sweets, 100; macaroni, spaghetti, 250; wheat flour, maize or millet, 400; oats or millet, 200; cheese, 300; butter, 300; butter, cooking fat or one decilitre of oil, 100; cooking fat or one half decilitre oil, 50; bacon or lard, 100; meat, 850; coffee, 100; tea or chocolate or coffee surrogate, 100; eleven litres of milk and two eggs.

The bread ration, 250 grammes daily, will be reduced to 210 in April. A food card can be exchanged for 200 meal coupons, of which two have to be given up for each meal taken in a restaurant.

The cheapest foods are bread and potatoes. Owing to the Government subsidy bread, which is mostly black containing ten per cent. potato flour, costs only 50

centimes per kilo (one kilo equals 2.2 pounds). Potatoes cost about 40 centimes per kilo.

The 1944 textile card contained 40 points; this year's only 20, unless the blank coupons are released later. A man's suit requires 30 to 34 points, an overcoat 15 to 30, according to the amount of pure wool contained in it. The cloth at present being manufactured here contains 50 per cent. artificial fibre. British cloth is eagerly sought after, and tailors still possessing genuine tweeds advertise them, placing Union Jacks on the samples in their windows.

One Geneva tailor who had made reserves before the war sold them last year for 500,000 francs (£30,000). (100 francs equals £6). A suit made to measure costs from 300 francs to 450 for British cloth. Ready-made suits cost from 150 to 250 francs.

A woman's woollen overcoat costs from 200 francs upward, a hat 50 francs, an artificial silk dress 90 francs. The much-favoured "American sets," consisting of an Angora jacket and pullover, costs 95 francs upward.

The 1944 shoe card contained 60 points, of which 45 are required for a pair of shoes, and 65 for mountain boots. A pair of men's or women's walking shoes costs 45 to 65 francs.

Rents differ, according to the town, from 350 francs a month for a four-room flat in Zurich or Berne to 200 in Geneva.

Swiss F.A. have invited England to send a national team to play a match at Zurich this summer in commemoration of the jubilee of the Swiss F.A., and the F.A. have agreed, subject to facilities being available.

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