

Repatriation of Swiss from Japan, Siam and the Dutch East Indies

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REPATRIATION OF SWISS FROM JAPAN, SIAM AND THE DUTCH EAST INDIES.

Still the long, long trail of compatriots of ours, who are returning to their motherland, continues, after many years of hardship, sufferings and privations.

Since the beginning of the year about 170 Swiss nationals have arrived in various batches and on various dates in London on their way home to Switzerland, which they had left years ago full of enthusiasm and hope to start a new and lasting career.

The Swiss Minister in Tokio, accompanied by Madame Gorgé, Messieurs Bernath and Blailé, Secretaries of Legation, as well as eight members of the staff of the Legation's Special Division and their families, in all 24 persons, travelled from Yokohama to Hongkong on board of the battleship H.M.S. Anson and from Hongkong to the Clyde on board of H.M.S. Arbiter, an aircraft carrier. The whole journey was thus made under the care of the British navy. They were received on their arrival in London (Euston Station) by Mr. Mordasini, Vice-Consul, and Mr. Huber, from the Special Division of the Swiss Legation.

A large party numbering over one hundred men, women and children arrived on Sunday, January 13th, in Liverpool from Sumatra and Java, and were received by Mr. Mordasini and Mr. Huber. They arrived at Euston Station late on Sunday evening, and were billeted in four different houses. (26 and 33, Charles Street, Berkeley Square, 11, Chesterfield Hill, W.1, and 113, Cromwell Road, S.W.17.)

A further party of five persons arrived from Saigon and Bangkok (Siam) at Southampton where they were received and conducted to London by Mr. Huber, of the Swiss Legation, Special Division.

It might be of interest to the London Colony to read the names of some of the arrivals, many amongst them have, as we were told, relations or friends in this country, and we therefore publish at the end of this report a list of names which were passed on to us by courtesy of the Swiss Legation.

We have had an opportunity to interview a number of our compatriots, from various groups, and we are delighted to report that they were full of praise for the arrangements which had been made by the Swiss Legation in London, both at the various ports of their arrival, and in London during their transitory stay. One of the Party leaders assured our reporter, that everything worked like clock work, and with the least amount of inconvenience. It was no easy undertaking, when one considers the actual circumstances, shortage of accommodation, transport difficulties, food restrictions, etc., etc.

We were present at the arrival of one large group (104 persons) at Euston Station, and were thus able to witness the organisation. Buses and taxis were ready to dispatch men, women and children (some babies in arms) to their various lodging quarters, including a large number of personal luggage, in an amazingly short time.

We wish to put it on record, that the repatriation arrangements were under the special care of Mr. J. Huber, of the Swiss Legation, Special Division, and of Mr. R. Mordasini, Vice-Consul, Swiss Legation, and to them, including Mr. Bon, President of the City Swiss Club, who was able to be of assistance in finding adequate housing accommodation, we wish to ex-

press our thanks for their efficient and painstaking work, which, we are glad to say, has been gratefully acknowledged by our homecoming compatriots.

The Swiss Colony in London would have liked to arrange a reception for our countrymen; this, however, proved impossible as immediate arrangements had to be made for their journey home, and by the time this report appears, all and sundry will have left this country, either by planes or by railway.

It is very gratifying to report that a number of members of the Colony have very generously supplied, free of charge, such delicacies as pastry and cakes (Mr. W. Bachmann, Westend Fancy Bakery Ltd.), oranges and apples (Mr. Schorno (The Covent Garden Supply Co.), turkeys (Mr. J. A. Seiffert, Kidderminster), sausages (Mr. O. Bartholdi), sandwiches (Mr. Schmid, Glendower Hotel), chocolates and sweets (Mr. and Mrs. Huber), which made welcome additions to the fare and were gratefully received.

On the whole, the state of health of the various groups, who arrived, was satisfactory, but all bore traces of the hardships which they had had to endure during the Japanese occupation.

Without exception they complained bitterly about the inhuman treatment which they had received from the Japanese and also in many cases from the Indonesians; with comparatively few exceptions, they were not actually sent to concentration camps, but they were confined to their respective estates or houses, where they were closely watched, and their telephone lines tapped. Most of our countrymen were employed by the Shell concern or in charge of plantations.

There was no hospital treatment available; the Japanese authorities commandeered all hospital equipment and for months on end no medical aid was forthcoming. No arrangements were made as to food supplies, and they had to find food wherever they could. The slightest breaches of cumbersome and unreasonable rules were severely punished. Quite a common practice was to insert red hot needles under finger nails, or pump water, with the aid of a water hose, into their bodies. The Swiss Consul in Java, when protesting to the authorities about the treatment which some of his compatriots had to endure, was assaulted and knocked down by soldiers. Time after time it was pointed out to the Japanese that Switzerland was not at war with Japan, and that our country was the Protecting Power for the Japanese in the belligerent countries. No notice was taken of these assertions, in fact, even highly placed officers were unaware of the existence of such a country, called Switzerland.

When the Indonesian revolt started the British military authorities informed the white population to prepare for immediate evacuation, as they felt unable to guarantee their safety. All Swiss living either in Sumatra or Java were taken either by planes or ships to Singapore. There they were taken care of by the R.A.P.W.I. Organisation (Rescue of Allied Prisoners of War and Internees) and the International Red Cross. Every evacuee received a complete new winter outfit suitable for their return journey, and the American Red Cross supplied each female member of the party with a set of mending articles, which was highly appreciated. Even weekly pocket money was paid out (£10s. 0d. per week for adults and 10s. 0d. for children).

* * *

“ We have received nothing but kindness from the British ever since we left our homes and arrived in

England," our reporter was told. More than one member of the party said that the care they received from the British will never be forgotten.

A large contingent of troops belonging to the former Burma army was on board of H.M.S. "Devonshire" which took our countrymen from Singapore to England. All the officers on board voluntarily gave up their berths to the female members of the party, and the soldiers made great friends with the children. Thus the long and tedious journey was made as agreeable as possible for them.

We heartily join our compatriots in thanking the British authorities for the help and support they have extended to them.

When the Leader of one of the parties expressed his appreciation to the officer in charge, for all the help given to them, he was told that it was little they had done, in comparison with the great services the International Red Cross in Geneva has rendered to millions of their fellow men. A gratifying and generous remark in a time where services rendered are apt to be forgotten.

By the time this perhaps inadequate report will be read, our countrymen, who have lost everything, will have arrived in Switzerland. It is a sad homecoming; many are too old to start a new career; some are broken in health, others have lost courage to fight the bitter battle of life.

Let us hope that they will be received with kindness and generosity, which are traditions of our country for all who have suffered, so that, after years of privations and agonies they will be able to look forward to a brighter and happier future.

LIST OF ARRIVALS.

Anderegg, Hans, Wangen, Ct. Berne; Mr. and Mrs. von Arx, Otto, Robert, Olten; Mr. and Mrs. Amiguet, Alfred and two children, Gryon; Binsberger, von, Bertha, Elisabeth, Bassersdorf; Boesch, Ernst, Ebnat, Ct. St. Gall; Mrs. Boner, Clara and son, Sass, Ct. Grisons; Mrs. Brack, Elsa and three children, Effingen, Ct. Aargau; Mr. and Mrs. Berruex, Le Locle; Mr. and Mrs. Blumer, Eduard and one child, Engi, Ct. Zurich; Bischof, E. H., Matwil, Ct. Thurgau; Mrs. Dubois, Andrée and two children, Le Locle; Mr. and Mrs. Damman, Maximilian and two children, Zurich; Mr. and Mrs. Degen, Hans and one child, Basle; Mr. and Mrs. Elber, Rudolf and two children, Basle; Mr. and Mrs. Egli, Dueruten; Mr. and Mrs. Furer, Ernst and four children, Luterkofen; Girsperger, Max, Unter Stammheim, Ct. Zurich; Mr. and Mrs. Gutnecht, Maurice, Oberried, Ct. Fribourg; Mr. and Mrs. Haab, Heinrich and two children, Zurich; Mr. and Mrs. Hadorn, Hans and two children, Thun, Ct. Berne; Mrs. Hafner, Niklaus, Marguerite and two children, Balsthal; Haug, Rudolf, Geroldswil, Ct. Zurich; Heller, Annie, Thal, Ct. St. Gall; Mrs. Heusser, Paula, Ida and one child, Hinwil, Ct. Zurich; Hafner, Fritz, Balsthal, Ct. Solothurn; Mr. and Mrs. Iller, Emil and one child, Teufen, Ct. Appenzell; Keller, Gertrud, Basle; Mr. and Mrs. Kunz, Alfred and two children, Kilchberg, Ct. Zurich; Mr. and Mrs. Lenzlinger, Joseph, Albert, Mosnang, Ct. St. Gall; Luethi, Herbert, Luethi, Alice (two children in care of family Iller); Mr. and Mrs. Langhart, Friedrich and one child, Oberstammheim, Ct. Zurich; Mr. and Mrs. Liechti, Hans and three children, Murten, Ct. Fribourg; Mr. and Mrs. Maync-Bandi, Wolfgang and one child, Berne; Mr. and Mrs. Mohler, Wilhelm and two children; Mrs. de Petit, née Reichwein, Pauline, Alice and two children; Ritter, Alice, Lina, Basle; Ritter, Hedwig, Catherine, Basle; Mr. and Mrs. Rod, Emile, Leon, Démoret, Ct. Vaud; Mr. and Mrs. Rubin, Hans, Arnold and one child, Reichenbach, Ct. Berne; Mr. and Mrs. Renz, Otto, Allschwil; Mr. and Mrs. Ruegg and one child, Ruschlikon; Schlaich, Eduard, Paul, Basle; Mr. and Mrs. Schmidt, Herbert, Werner and two children, St. Gall; Schneider, Alice, Basle; Mr. and Mrs. Schumacher, Christian, Sargans, Ct. St. Gall; Schuster, Hans, St. Gall; Mr. and Mrs. Hans Sommer and two children, Elsau, Ct. Zurich; Mrs. Stamm, Martha and two children, Schleithem, Ct. Schaffhausen; Mr. and Mrs. Strehler, Max, Werner and one child, Seebach, Mr. and Mrs. Sutter, Ernst and two children, Kappel, Ct. St. Gall; Salle, Georg, Lichtenstein; Mr. and Mrs. Trentini and two children; Mrs. Wenzler, Hedwig, Frieda and two children, Heimenhausen, Ct. Berne; Mr. and Mrs. Wintsch, Jakob and three child-

ren, Illnau, Ct. Zurich; Wuthrich, Walter, Trub, Ct. Berne; Mr. and Mrs. Weidenmann, Markus, Winterthur; Mr. and Mrs. Weiss-Eymard, A. A. and one child, Bassersdorf, Ct. Zurich; Zeller, Rudolf, Ernst, Steffisburg, Ct. Berne; Zeller, Hans, Jakob, Steffisburg, Ct. Berne.

CHANGES AT THE SWISS BANK CORPORATION.

The Swiss Bank Corporation announces the retirement of Mr. S. Lorsignol, Manager of the London Office. Mr. Pierre de Wolff, hitherto a manager, becomes Chief Manager in London, while Mr. H. W. Comfort and Mr. Marc Spitzer, hitherto deputy-managers, become managers.

Mr. Samuel Lorsignol, whose retirement from the Swiss Bank Corporation in London is announced, has for many years been a respected figure in banking circles and is well-known to most members of the Swiss Colony. Mr. Lorsignol had early banking experience in London where at the Crédit Lyonnais he worked with Mr. Dapples and Mr. Sidney Jones, so that when he came to the Swiss Bank Corporation as a Manager in 1924 he was returning to familiar scenes. He came to London from Paris where he had spent a short time, but prior to that had achieved a name and a wide connection in the Argentine, to which country he went in 1912 as a manager of the Buenos Aires office of the Banque Française et Italienne pour l'Amérique du Sud which was formed at that time with his very active collaboration. Here he became the good friend of many of the Swiss citizens who had established themselves in Buenos Aires and formed many connections which have ripened into lifelong friendships.

During his years as a Manager of the Bank in Gresham Street, Mr. Lorsignol had won the respect and affection of very wide circles who have appreciated and benefited by his unflinching grasp of any problem submitted to him and his fearless and outspoken opinions on the financial and economic problems of the day.

As a result of the war, Mr. Lorsignol had "done a lot of overtime" under most strenuous conditions and now that he is at last free to relinquish the reins he has so long held, we unite with his colleagues and his staff in wishing him many years of health in which to enjoy his well-earned leisure.

UNIONE TICINESE

A THÉ DANSANT

will be held on

SUNDAY, 17th FEBRUARY, 1946,

at "THE DORCHESTER," PARK LANE, W.1,

from 4 to 10 p.m.

Tickets 7/6d. inclusive, obtainable from Mr. C. Berti, 83, Fetter Lane, E.C.4, Miss I. Abate, 17, Bryanston Mansions, York Street, W.1, or from any member of the Committee.

As number of tickets will be limited, early applications will be appreciated.