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The Lynmouth and Lynton Catastrophe

Monsieur E. Bernath, Swiss Chargé d'Affaires, has delivered personally the following letter addressed to the Prime Minister, at the Foreign Office :

18, Montagu Place, W.1.

August 19th, 1952.

Your Excellency,

The Swiss Government and the Swiss People have learnt with great sorrow and regret of the terrible and devastating floods in North Devon.

May I express on behalf of the Swiss Federal Council to Your Excellency and Her Majesty's Government their deep sympathy for this National Tragedy. They wish to convey at the same time to the bereaved families their sincerest condolences and their sympathy to all those who have suffered in this calamity.

I have the honour to be,

With the highest consideration,

Your Excellency's obedient Servant,

sig. E. BERNATH

Swiss Chargé d'Affaires a.i.

The Right Honourable

Winston Churchill, O.M., CH., M.P.,

Her Majesty's Prime Minister,

etc., etc., etc.,

Foreign Office,

S.W.1.

AN APPEAL TO THE COLONY.

When early last year the news reached us of the terrible avalanche disaster which occurred in the alpine regions of our country causing great damage and loss of life, our English friends at once showed their sympathy in the tragedy which had befallen our brethren at home. A great many letters were received by the Legation and by our office expressing sympathy with the victims.

As will be remembered an Appeal to the Swiss Colony was made through our paper for help and a considerable amount was collected. Amongst the donations to this Relief Fund were many small and some quite large contributions from our English friends, although no help was invited from them.

Now a terrible disaster has befallen this nation, with loss of many lives and causing serious material damage, and on behalf of the Swiss Colony in Great Britain, we express our deepest sympathy to the population of Lynmouth and Lynton.

Sorrow knows no boundaries, the misfortune of one member of the human family is the concern of all and to show our solidarity in a more tangible way, we have decided to launch an Appeal for financial help for those who have lost their homes and their bread winners. This Appeal has the full support of the Legation and donations can be sent to the Swiss Legation, 18, Montagu Place, London, W.1. (Cheques should be made out to the following order: Swiss Legation, "Flood's Fund"). Each contribution will be acknowledged.

We, therefore, invite the members of the Swiss Colony in Great Britain to generously support this Appeal, remembering that on a similar occasion, our English friends so kindly came to the aid of our people.

And, please, do not forget, who gives quickly, gives twice!

The Editor.

A RAILWAY JUBILEE.

The Swiss Railways are this year celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of their nationalisation. To mark this jubilee, the central administration in Berne have issued an attractive illustrated pamphlet which it is intended to distribute to every household throughout Switzerland with the object of making Swiss people familiar with the problems and the progress of one of their finest public services.

Here are a few of the interesting items set out in the pamphlet :

Since 1903, rail traffic has increased 144%, yet the corresponding increase in the staff is only 50%.

The trains are running faster. In 1902 the Lucerne-Chiasso express took five hours and ten minutes to cover the distance, today it does it in three hours twenty minutes.

The rolling stock is greatly improved. Third class

coaches are being upholstered, modern steel carriages have been built, the electrical engines are of the latest pattern, pneumatic wheels have been introduced where suitable.

Clean stations, modern equipment, gradual replacement of dangerous crossings by road bridges, constant attention to security, especially in the mountains and during the winter months, these are some of the features of the service.

The rates charged for transport have remained remarkably low in relation to the general increase in costs. Whereas since 1939 the cost of raw materials has increased 122% and the cost of living 71%, the average rise in the same period is no more than 20% for freight.

These are impressive figures for a State controlled undertaking. The Swiss people, indeed, have reason to be proud of the achievement attained by a public service which is second to none in all Europe in efficiency and progress.