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The Swiss Observer

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NEWS AT RANDOM

The Federal Council has promised to issue recommendations to the cantons to facilitate the naturalisation of what is described as "paper foreigners." They are nationals of other states who have abandoned all connection or sympathy with their country of origin or whose former nationality has been destroyed; they are all said to be sufficiently assimilated to deserve of Swiss citizenship. An effort is to be made to introduce some uniformity to take the place of the diversity of regulations which encouraged some of the communes to exploit the financial endowments of applicants. Most of the large towns favour a liberal policy in this connection but this desire is by no means general; in Zug, for instance, the local council refused to reduce the "fee" to Frs.1,500 for youngsters of the age of twenty who would have become liable for military service. From Liestal (Basel-Land) it is reported that over Frs.5,000 has been "quoted" to a German shoemaker who has lived there for a good many years.

There seems to be some doubt that the Finance Bill which imposes heavy additional taxation to defray the cost of the present mobilisation will be submitted to the people on June 2nd as originally anticipated. The measure is likely to invite an animated controversy which under existing conditions is not desirable. The Federal Council may therefore make use of its emergency powers.

An association has been formed in Locarno called "Locarno-Venezia" to create a direct link with the Adriatic by making use of the river waters via Milan.

In spite of official warnings gas masks are not popular in Zurich. Out of a population of over 300,000 only 1,653 civilians have made the investment; the normal price of the official respirator is Frs.16.—.

Dr. Max Jenny, an assistant judge in Schaffhausen, who was exposed in a local newspaper for his share in the "frontist" movement, summoned the editor of the paper for defamation of character. The court has rejected his plaint inflicting on him the cost of the proceedings including an indemnity to the editor for defending the action.

In August 1941 it will be 650 years that the Swiss Confederation has been founded. Preparations to suitably commemorate this historic date are already far advanced. The festival play is written by Cäsar von Arx (Olten) and the music set by J. B. Hilber (Lucerne). The festivities and patriotic manifestations will be staged in Schwyz, Brunnen, the Rütli and possibly at the Tellsplatte and in the "Hohle Gasse."

Thanks to a subsidy of Frs.150,000 by the adjoining cantons navigation on the Lac Léman has been saved; the regular summer service will be resumed some time this month.

A fire in the school building at Sarnen (Obwalden) destroyed the residential quarters of the caretaker and the teaching staff.

Hot water is to be rationed in Geneva. The town council decreed that wherever coal is being used for heating the supply has to be discontinued for two days. Central heating in all apartment houses and offices is shut off on Monday night and restored on Thursday morning.

An avalanche, the course of which he was sent out to ascertain, buried an army patrol, Sergeant Grandchamp, from Montreux. His company was engaged in exercises near the Windstrubel and as the danger of avalanches attracted the attention of the commandant, the patrol was sent ahead to direct the safe descent of his comrades. Grandchamp was an expert ski runner and familiar with the locality.

The "Bolau," the dreaded avalanche from the Riedergrat, descended with tremendous force over the tunnel of the railway, burying a large part of the road between Ebligen and Oberried and finally spending itself in the lake of Brienz.

Frau Elise Siegrist-Müller in Aarau, the oldest matron in our country, celebrated a few days ago her 105th anniversary in the best of health.

A spirited statement published in "Die Tat" over the name of National Councillor G. Duttweiler is reproduced in some of the English papers. The following version is taken from the "Sunday Times" (14.4.40):

"Obeying instructions to be 'neutral,' has not helped other neutral States. We know that the aggressor's promises are all scraps of paper. They mean nothing if so-called strategic considerations are at stake. The only question is; 'Does this or that attack pay?'"

"In future the Swiss Press will no longer be cautious, but call things by their real names. A

cowardly attack is a cowardly attack, and a breach of word is a breach of word.

"If Switzerland is attacked; the aggressors shall know that there will be rifle fire from every house and that it is a false calculation if they think they can 'take over' anything but smoking ruins."

THE PLIGHT OF THE SWISS HOTELS.

(*"Economist,"* 13.4.40).

The Swiss tourist industry is hard hit by the war, and a number of hotels are now in a hopeless situation. Owing to international unrest, the summer season was much less prosperous than the year before, and since the end of September the number of foreign tourists in Switzerland had dwindled to almost nothing. Most foreigners had returned home, and the Swiss authorities, with a view to checking espionage, made it extremely difficult for foreigners to come in.

The "Société Fiduciaire Suisse pour l'Hôtellerie," which was responsible for the financial reorganisation of Swiss hotels after the last war, made an inquiry into the situation of 664 hotels, representing 45,000 beds, or 25 per cent. of the available accommodation in Switzerland. These hotels are only open during the summer or winter season. The inquiry revealed that receipts during the 1939 summer season were 16½ million francs, against 22 millions in 1938, a drop of 25 per cent. Out of these 664 hotels, only 91 had assets exceeding their liabilities and were in a position to pay the interest on their mortgages. In most cases 70 per cent. of the running costs was not covered by receipts. The situation is therefore very serious, and it is felt that something ought to be done to lessen the debt burden of the hotels. Some hotels have been commandeered as military hospitals, at Interlaken, Montreux and Territet, and the financial situation of the hotels concerned is safe, at least for the time being. The question is whether the Government will be ready to grant a subsidy, as it did in 1920, to help the industry as a whole.

In 1938, the 5,700 Swiss hotels, totalling 110,200 beds, received 3,485,000 guests, of whom 1,426,000 came from abroad; in 1939, they had only 2,918,000 guests, 1,000,000 of them foreign. During the last winter season, the number of foreign tourists was hardly 10 per cent. of previous winters. The capital invested in the hotel industry is estimated at 2,034 million francs, and mortgages total 902 millions. According to the calculations made by the Association of Hotel Keepers, the average running costs represented in 1937 16.91 francs per night and per bed, while receipts were 19.29 francs; since then running costs have increased, and they are now from 18.70 to 23.40 francs per night and per bed according to the class of hotels. The Association is therefore of opinion that hotels should be allowed to raise their prices, especially as, since September last, the cost of living has increased by at least 5 per cent.

SWISS LEGATION LONDON.

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BUNDESRAATSREFORM?

VON DR. HERMANN BÜCHI.

Als ob wir in der Schweiz seit dem Ausbruch des neuen Krieges nicht genug schwere militärische, finanzielle, wirtschaftliche und soziale Aufgaben zu bewältigen hätten, stellt sich nun auch eine *rein politische* Frage: Das Problem der Umgestaltung der Landesregierung, des Bundesrates. Präziser gesagt, handelt es sich um die Frage der Erweiterung des Bundesratskollegiums von 7 auf 9 Mitglieder. Das Problem hat verschiedene Aspekte. Im Vordergrund steht aber heute — wie übrigens seit einer Reihe von Jahren — der parteipolitische, die Frage nämlich, *ob die Sozialisten in den Bundesrat einziehen sollen oder nicht*. Ja, man kann sagen, dass ohne diese Seite das Problem unaktuell und zum mindesten leicht lösbar wird. Somit lautet die Problemstellung im Grunde so: soll die bestehende Regierungskoalition der grossen bürgerlichen Parteien des Freisinns, der Katholisch-Konservativen und der Bauern, welche heute die 7 Mitglieder des Bundesrates stellen und ihre Politik stützen, durch Aufnahme der sozialistischen Oppositionspartei erweitert werden?

Stellt man die Frage so, dann erkennt man sofort, dass es eine Frage von ausserordentlicher Tragweite ist. Dabei ist zum vornherein darauf hinzuweisen, welche einzigartige politische und staatsrechtliche Stellung der schweizerische Bundesrat innehat. Mit dem politischen System anderer demokratischer Länder, etwa Frankreichs oder Englands, ist kein Vergleich möglich. Schief ist auch die oft angestellte Parallele mit den Regierungen unserer Kantone, in denen in der Tat Sozialisten sitzen und in einem Kanton sogar die Mehrheit haben. Im Bundesrat verkörpert sich gewissermassen der schweizerische Staatswille. In seiner Hand liegt vor allem die Führung der Aussenpolitik, die Handelspolitik eingeschlossen, aber auch Landesverteidigung, Finanz- und Wirtschaftspolitik. Dazu kommt jene Regierungsstabilität, die eine schweizerische Eigenart ist, kommt die Tatsache, dass der Bundesrat auch insofern die entscheidende oberste Behörde ist, als er keine Instanz

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