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The Swiss Observer

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TO OUR SUBSCRIBERS.

Our subscribers will have gathered for some time that the financial aspect of our publication has been a source of considerable anxiety to the Publisher. If we have carried on in a limited measure it was due to the hope or anticipation — justified we thought — that some positive encouragement would be forthcoming from our authorities in Berne. We certainly acknowledge their sympathetic attitude but it has become clear that the continuance of the "Swiss Observer" remains entirely dependent upon the practical support of our Colony. We have no intention of launching a general appeal but we believe that by increasing the subscription rate we shall survive the present difficulties. The price of the S.O. will in future be six pence per copy, i.e. 6/- for 12 issues and it is our intention to go to press monthly.



NEWS AT RANDOM

On June 4th Federal Councillor M. Pilet-Golaz spoke in the National Council on Switzerland's foreign relations. He began by saying that the general public looked upon news and foreign policy from their own individual point of view, but reminded the members of the Council that the Government had to take Switzerland's neutrality into consideration in all their decisions and to act thereon. M. Pilet-Golaz said that the situation was not as dark as some appeared to think, although he had to warn his listeners that food supplies would become increasingly difficult as it was likely that more and more parts of the world would become involved in the war. It was only to be expected that the peoples waging war or on the verge of war could not always fully understand Swiss feeling, but as a whole one could say that Swiss relations with foreign countries were correct and amicable and could be termed fairly good. America, for instance, who was inclined to look upon Europe as a whole, had always taken special heed of Switzerland's needs and Switzerland could only hope that this consideration would continue, even if and when circumstances changed completely.

M. Pilet-Golaz added that the British Empire, although involved in a struggle for life and death, had always shown much understanding for Switzerland.

The Head of the Political Department then spoke of our relations with France and of French attempts to overcome her defeat. He said that the traditional spirit of friendship between France and ourselves was still alive and difficulties, where they arose, must be

ascribed to certain new developments in France. With Italy, he added, we had just concluded a new economic agreement and during these negotiations our neighbour in the South had shown much understanding for our needs, as he had done from the beginning of the war. Switzerland's trade relations with Germany had always been considerable and continued to be of extreme importance. Summing up, M. Pilet-Golaz said that our relations with Germany were most correct.

At regular intervals, Switzerland had had delicate economic negotiations with Germany. This was easily explained because they were weighty to-day — weighty in the sense that on the shoulders of Germany there rested a great part of the European Continent, weighty in a sense for Switzerland, which, owing to its geographical position and its needs, required raw materials. The negotiations had always been speedily concluded, although the major partner to the contract was busy elsewhere on more important enterprises. A firm attitude must be taken against false and regrettable rumours, which mostly did not emanate from Swiss soil and must be refuted. Switzerland had always tried to maintain good relations and to maintain her traditional policy of independence, freedom and neutrality. Understanding between nations was no empty word. Switzerland must show that it could also be translated into deeds.

* * *

Switzerland's problem of access to the sea is naturally greatly occupying the minds of the Federal Council and from a report in the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, published on May 22nd, one gathers that the development of river traffic has again been recommended. The Federal Council has decided to get in touch with the French Government, suggesting that negotiations be resumed for the development of the Rhone shipping. Discussions on this subject date back to the year 1918, when France started to connect them with the regulation of the water level of the Lake of Geneva with a view to facilitating its own electric power output. This proved to be a serious handicap and the French-Swiss Commission which met last time in June 1939, was never able to make much progress. From the Swiss side the contention has been heard frequently that the French do not really care for the development of Rhone shipping, but it looks as if there would now be a better chance to bring about some agreement. The fall of the Genissiat is just now in the process of being developed and it should be possible to do this with some regard for shipping. It is expected that the consideration of a tunnel, connecting the Rhone with the lake of Geneva will become a serious proposition, all the more so since France has begun to show some interest in connecting Savoy with the Mediterranean by way of the Rhone. This plan