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The Swiss Observer

FOUNDED BY MR. P. F. BOEHRINGER.

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LONDON, JANUARY 25th, 1941.

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TO OUR SUBSCRIBERS.

Once again after a prolonged interval we make our bow to our indulgent subscribers. The interruption was due — as most of our friends are aware — to aerial visitations, no less than on four separate occasions, which played havoc with the printing plant of the publisher. The damage has now been temporarily repaired which will make it possible to carry on the printing works in a modest way, D.V. The heavy loss incurred added to the deficiency in vital advertising revenue would have meant the death blow to the S.O. were it not for the patriotic spirited action of a member of the Colony who shoulders the cost of this and the next issue which latter we hope to issue some time next month. We trust by that time to succeed in making such financial arrangements as will insure a regular publication.

We wish to offer humble apologies to the many subscribers who have written to us wondering at the sudden stoppage. It was impossible to answer all the letters — some of them were only disentangled weeks afterwards in the floating debris.



NEWS AT RANDOM

At the beginning of September the Federal Council authorised the Federal corn administration to deliver two hundred waggons of corn from reserves to Millers, against the undertaking that they should not raise the price of bread and flour by more than two francs per one hundred kilos. The measure was intended to help small millers who have been unable to constitute reserves. As from September 15th the price of bread was raised by two centimes per kilo loaf.

On the 30th August the Bund stated that no corn had been imported into Switzerland since the 10th June and that, owing to increased transport charges, the price of the latest imported corn had risen by fifteen francs to forty francs. Till then, thanks to reserves, it had been possible to avoid an increase in corn prices and the release of further reserves will ease the rise which inevitably must come. The price of bread is still lower in Switzerland than in other countries and below the 1914/18 price level.

The decree forbidding the sale of new bread has not lowered consumption to the extent anticipated.

* * *

On the 3rd September the Bund announced that the Canton of Berne has approved a labour creation

programme totalling seventy-five million francs. The report of the cantonal council states that the commission proceeded on the principle that it is undesirable to create emergency work and that it is preferable to create opportunities for employment in existing or projected industrial, agricultural, transport and touristic undertakings where possible, and it is only in the absence of these that unessential public works are being considered. The projects include arterial and alpine roads and bridges, regulating of rivers, rebuilding of public buildings and public utility undertakings, reclamation and drainage of agricultural land and forests.

* * *

Further news is now available about the proposals made by the Union of Swiss Peasants at the beginning of September in a memorandum addressed to the Federal Department for Public Economy. The memorandum urges further rationalising of agriculture which would lead to increased production and wider employment. It points to labour shortage on the land and to the urgent need for reforming living conditions of the Swiss farm worker, notably continuity of employment throughout the year, cheaper dwellings, allotments and better social legislation. It is emphasised that there is need for creating further small holdings, but that an essential condition for this is that production be made worth while. Memorandum stresses discrepancy between costs and prices and that while a self-supporting policy is impossible, Switzerland might produce much that is now imported. It is estimated that the agricultural area might be increased by 250,000 acres and the 404,000 persons at present employed on agricultural work would be increased by another 50,000. The memorandum adds that Swiss agriculture spends 480,000,000 francs

CITY SWISS CLUB.

Messieurs les membres sont avisés que

la REUNION MENSUELLE

aura lieu Samedi, le 1er Février à 12.45 p.m. au Brown's Hotel, Dover Street, (near Green Park Tube Station).

ORDRE DU JOUR:

Procès-verbal. | Démissions.
Admissions. | Divers.

Conférence par
Mons. Giradet, Conseiller de Légation
sur la situation économique en Suisse.

Dejeuner à 1.0 h. précises. Les participants sont priés de bien vouloir s'inscrire au plus tôt auprès de Mons. H. Bingguely, 167 Clapham Road, S.W.9 (Téléphone: Reliance 4150).

Le Comité.

yearly on buildings, repairs and machinery and that an increase in agricultural workers would create industrial opportunities.

* * *

There is much talk in Central Switzerland of the construction of a roadway on the left side of the Vierwaldstättersee being counted amongst labour creation projects. It is estimated that it would cost Frs. 15,000,000. The proposition is favoured by the cantons of Lucerne, Nidwald and Uri, whereas Obwald would prefer the route to pass through the Titlis massif. Canton Schwytz fears the competition of such a route. It is said in Federal Palace circles that Federal Councillor Etter has little sympathy for such a proposition, so at least writes a correspondent from Uri to the Bund. However, it is judged that the creation of an artery Lucerne-Hergiswil-Stans-Beckenried-Seelisberg-Bauen joined to the Gothard route would be of great touristic and economic interest.

* * *

Direct telephonic communications between Switzerland and Japan were opened on September 27th when the Director of the Swiss Posts and Telegraphs spoke to the Swiss Minister in Tokyo.

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On the 31st August in Langendorf near Solothurn, Dr. Rudolf Probst passed away at the age of 86. Apart from the practice of his profession as a doctor, he had devoted his time to geological and botanical studies and was an authority on the Jura flora. He was made Honorary Member of the English Society of Botany, in recognition of his works thereon.

* * *

The "Statistical News" published by the Authorities of the town of Zürich contain quite a number of interesting details about the movements of the population, immigration, births, deaths and so on.

One learns from the latest issue that between 1934 and 1938 Zürich increased its population by 16,486 inhabitants, Lausanne by 7463, Winterthur by 4615, Berne by 2973 and Lucerne by 2951. Lausanne therefore appears to be the town with the biggest proportional increase.

On the other hand, Geneva, La Chaux-de-Fonds and St. Gall have lost, during the same period, 3,214, 1,456 and 571 inhabitants respectively. During the year 1939 the population of Zürich increased by 7384, i.e. 22.1 per thousand, and Lausanne 23 per thousand. In Zürich the number of deaths exceeds the number of births by 443. Lausanne is in about the same position. Zürich represents an interesting case with regard to the distribution of the sexes. Of its 337,164 inhabitants, at the end of 1939, 182,234 were women and 154,930 men. That is to say there were 1,176 women per 1,000 men. The number of weddings is, however, comparatively high, but in 707 cases the brides came from other localities and in 563 instances (one in every six) from abroad. The last figure is considered somewhat alarming in view of the efforts in progress to maintain the integrity of our national character. The "Journal de Genève" ads that the inclination of the German Swiss to marry women of other countries has nevertheless often produced very happy results.

Another figure of some interest is revealed, namely that the city of Zwingli contains more than

200,000 Catholics and has therefore become the biggest Catholic town in Switzerland.

* * *

Friday, November 8th, brought news of the resignation of Federal Councillor Minger, Head of the Military Department, and of Federal Councillor Baumann, Head of the Justice Department. Both Federal Councillors handed in their resignation as from the end of the current year.

Federal Councillor Minger, speaking on the subject of his resignation at the traditional Soirée for Members of the Federal Council, declared that it had been his intention to resign last year, hence the purchase of the estate in Schuepfen. The outbreak of the war and illness of his representative in the Council, M. Oprecht, forced him to delay his decision and to continue at his post for another year. Now, however, he was going back to his farming. Federal Councillor Minger reiterated that neither internal nor external politics had had any bearing on his resignation. He finished by stressing the firm determination of Switzerland to defend her neutrality.

* * *

During the night of the 6th November Swiss territory was again violated by 'planes which flew in over the Jura and continued on their course in a southeasterly direction. Anti-aircraft guns came into action and the 'planes turned back before crossing the Alps. The Swiss Legation in London have been instructed to protest against the violation of Swiss territory which has occurred despite assurances that Switzerland's neutrality would be respected.

The Army Command made the following announcements on November 6th:

- 1) It has been decided to institute a general "black-out" throughout Switzerland. This order is to come into force on November 7th.
- 2) As from the 7th November and until further notice "Black-out" will begin at 10 p.m. and will last until dawn.
- 3) It is to be left to the discretion of the borough officials to decide whether "Black-out" is to be made before 10 p.m.
- 4) In the case of a warning, public services will be allowed only sufficient light to ensure safety.
- 5) The above steps are being taken in accordance with the defence measures of the Army. Military penalties are applicable to these measures.

The Army Command added that normal lighting regulations had remained in force in Switzerland on the assumption that her neutrality would be respected and safeguarded. However, as it had been found that the lights had served as a guide to foreign 'planes, "Black-out" measures were now being taken with a full understanding of the dangers which they involve for Switzerland.

The Management of the Railways and Transport Communications states that in the interest of the public, trains and road vehicles will have to be blacked-out. In many places the "blacking-out" of railway stations will have to begin before 10 p.m. as it cannot be done everywhere simultaneously. The Management emphasised that the public could do much to prevent delays by adopting a disciplined attitude towards this new measure.

Swiss territory was again violated during the night of the 8th November. English 'planes flew in

over the Jura and continued on their way towards the south-east. Some A.A. detachments opened fire and several of the planes turned back.

A petition by the National Council was read in the presence of Federal Councillor Baumann, advocating suspension of naturalisation for a period of five years, cases of foreign persons born and educated in Switzerland to be excepted.

The Swiss Minister, M. Broye, has been received by the Spanish Minister of Foreign Affairs.

The Ministry for War, Industry and Labour has announced that cards for textiles are already being distributed in the various cantons. The distribution of these cards will probably be completed within the next few days, but they will not be valid until so declared by the Federal Department for Public Economy.

Furthermore, the Ministry announces that although coal supplies are coming in according to schedule, there will not be enough coal to supply Switzerland's requirements and the people are urgently requested to economise, and thus to ensure the supply of coal for 1941/42.

The Federal Council has made a decree whereby shops and stores can be closed under an emergency legislation in the event of panic buying. Transgression or overriding of this law is liable to entail heavy penalties. This decision does not constitute valid grounds for the annulling of existing contracts.

The annual shooting held on the Ruetli boasted a record number of visitors this year. Federal Councillor Minger, Colonel-Divisionaire Tissot and the President of the Swiss Shooting Association were present. Federal Councillor Minger, in a speech held in "Bärndütsch" underlined Switzerland's military preparedness and declared himself in favour of the military preparation plan for Switzerland's youth, upon which a vote will be taken at the beginning of December.

Federal Councillor Celio was present at the showing of the official film of the "Landesausstellung" and the documentary film "Das Winzerjahr," which latter was produced by the Transport Association on the subject of the Swiss grape harvest.

Federal Councillor Minger attended the presentation of the official film of the cadets, entitled "Jeune Suisse, la Patrie t'appelle."

The Swiss Catholic party made a resolution when it met at Lausanne on November 11th, approving the continuation of the policy of Swiss neutrality pursued until now. The party confirmed its determination to combat all Swiss parties hostile to christianity and declared itself in favour of protection for the family and monetary assistance for large families.

At a meeting in Lausanne on November 11th, the Socialist party decided to organise public meetings in the French-speaking part of Switzerland. Questions to be settled will be: Rise in prices, Unemployment, etc. The Socialist party affirmed its confidence in the fate of Switzerland.

The Farmer's party in the Waadt has declared its willingness to co-operate with any party whose aims are on a national footing. At the same time it

is stressed that the creation of new parties tends rather to harm than to further national unity.

A Swiss Delegation was sent to Belgrade to negotiate a new trade agreement with Yugoslavia. Discussions started on October 31st.

The Army Command announced that three trains bearing sick and wounded French prisoners of war crossed Switzerland. The trains reached Geneva via Berne or Neuchâtel. Provisions were supplied through the generosity of the Red Cross in Berne, Neuchâtel and Zürich.

The "Raeto-Romanische Gesellschaft" assembled in Berne. At this meeting Professor Fuort read a report in connection with the translation of the Federal laws into Romansch.

A draft decree urging the construction of bicycle paths has been drawn up in view of the fact that the number of bicycles on the road has augmented from 90,000 in 1924 to 270,000 for the years 1938/39. The funds required for this will be obtained by taxing bicycles and cars.

The Federal Council has decided to take on a loan of Frs. 125,000,000 at the rate of 3½% for a period of 10 years in order to consolidate the floating debts of the Confederation. Value at date of issue is 99.40%.

On November 16th, the new French Ambassador, Count de la Baume arrived in Berne. On Friday, 21st November, Count de la Baume presented his credentials to the Swiss Government.

On November 15th, commemorating the 625th anniversary of the Battle at Morgarten on November 15th, 1315, General Guisan, Commander in Chief of the Swiss Army, stressed in his speech that on this occasion several hundred confederates had routed cavalymen who outnumbered them both in equipment and strength. This victory had been due, not only to the personal bravery of each individual, but also to the nature of the Swiss country. The Central range of the Alps offered the best protection. "Now as then," he continued, "we were watching from our eyrie." In 1915 all Switzerland — civil population and army — had commemorated this memorable battle, to-day too it should be paid due tribute.

News from Basel informed us on November 15th that the Birs had flooded its banks. More floods have been registered than for many years. Oberwil is surrounded by water on three sides and various roadways cannot be used by traffic.

At a conference dealing with Switzerland's trade relations with foreign powers on the 16th November, the Swiss Chamber of Commerce stressed the fact that the strictest economy must be observed in the utilisation of raw materials and foodstuffs. The Chamber of Commerce then went on to discuss Federal Finances and Levies. In view of the importance of the tax on Turnover, the Chamber would like to see this introduced as soon as possible.

The Board of Swiss Milk Producers have decreed that stricter measures are to be taken with regard

to butter rationing. Hotels, Hospitals, Hostels, etc., are to receive an increase in their ration allowance.

In their morning session on November 19th, the Federal Council drew up an Agenda for the December session of Parliament. 90 questions are mentioned thereon; new items are not to be included.

It was also announced on November 19th, that the negotiations which had been taking place between Yugoslavia and Switzerland during the last weeks regarding goods and payment exchange in both countries, had been brought to a conclusion in the form of an agreement which comes into force immediately and will remain valid until June 30th, 1941. The agreement does not contain any marked alteration of the one hitherto existing, but is rather an extension thereof. According to this agreement, Switzerland is to receive more eggs, potatoes and dairy produce as well as more wood and coal.

In Zürich a gathering of 350 representatives of Youth Associations from various Cantons met to discuss the problem of spare time occupation of the young people, especially of Saturday afternoons.

In agreement with the Federal Council and in view of the experiences made to date, the Army Command has decided to terminate the black-out at 6 a.m. each morning as from November 26th.

The Conservative Party in St. Gall has recommended freedom of vote on the subject of preparatory military instruction for Swiss youth.

The Socialist Party in Geneva, affiliated with the Swiss Socialist Party, has decided to vote in favour of military service preparation on December 1st.

The Socialist Party in St. Gall has chosen a candidate in the case of Eastern Switzerland being called upon to present a candidate for the Federal Council.

In a report made on the 21st November, the Swiss Committee of Economic Research stressed that Switzerland in common with the rest of the world was experiencing the penalty of war. Naturally this would necessitate the fostering of agriculture and the forcing of imports of raw material and foodstuffs. The situation demanded sacrifices by way of taxes — the only means of covering the huge military expenses. Due note was also taken of the Federal Law regarding the protection of home workers.

On December 10th, 1940 the Federal Council assembled to vote for the successors of Federal Councillors Minger and Baumann respectively. The Council opened at 8.30 and long before this crowds had gathered outside the House. The Hall was packed at the beginning of the Session. All the seven Federal Councillors were present, 148 National Councillors and 43 "Ständeräte," thus only four members of the Assembly were absent.

After reading out and accepting Messrs. Minger and Baumann's resignations, the National President thanked them for their services.

M. Eduard v. Steiger, of the Peasant and Citizens Party, was chosen as successor to M. Minger. He

gained 130 out of 226 possible votes. Other Candidates were the Socialist Bratschi, who gained 56 votes, the Independent Wahlen — 13 votes, Feldmann — 12 votes and Stucki — 7 votes.

M. v. Steiger, who was born in June 1881, comes of an old Bernese family. After studying Law at the Universities of Geneva and Leipzig, he carried on in a practice of his own in Berne. He was a member of the Conservative Party which later amalgamated with the Bourgeois Party. He also belonged to the Bernese Bürgerrat body and the Cantonal Council. He was at one time President of the "Schweizerische Alt-Zofinger Verein."

The succession of Federal Councillor Baumann took up rather more time as the vote was carried only after five rounds of voting. The candidates were Messrs. Kobelt, Critin, Du Pasquier, Huber and Burckhardt. In the fifth round Dr. Karl Kobelt of St. Gall carried the vote.

Dr. Kobelt was born on the 1st August, 1891, and was for some time active as Ingenieur in the "Eidgenössische Wasserwirtschaftsamt." In 1933 he joined the Government of St. Gall. He is a member of the General Staff having the rank of Colonel.

The voting once concluded, the oath was then taken by the newly elected Federal Councillors and the assembly went on to vote for a Federal President and Vice-President.

Dr. Wetter, who is in charge of the Federal Finances, was elected President. He is 63 years of age. Dr. Etter was elected Vice-President.

The President of the Federal Court of Justice in Lausanne is M. Léon Robert, hitherto Vice-President. M. Hans Steiner is Vice-President.

At a recent meeting of the farmers of Uri, Schwyz, Unterwalden and Lucerne, held in Zug, a resolution was passed that they would defend the freedom of Switzerland and do their utmost to supply the country with the agricultural products she needs.

The Federal Council has approved a plan giving further assistance to the aged and infirm, orphans and unemployed.

The Federal Police in collaboration with the Cantonal Police have recently made searches amongst members of the Communist Party, which was dissolved by order of the Federal Council some time ago. Many books as well as a large amount of Communist propaganda were seized on these occasions. In spite of its dissolution last August, it was found that the party had continued its work by illegal means. Searches were also carried out by the Authorities at the offices and amongst members of the pro-Nazi movement in Zürich, Geneva and Berne. In the same way the offices of the "Jeunesse Suisse" were searched. From material seized, it was established that this movement had about 2,000 members in the German-speaking part of Switzerland. The houses of all such persons are being watched by the Police.

The "Grand Conseil d'Etat Genevois" has decided to exclude four Communist deputies, recently elected and who form part of the Léon Nicole group, from participation in the Government. This decision is based on the Federal Order that the party be dissolved.

Appenzell Auser Rhoden has accepted an increase in salary of 7% for Cantonal employees. A sum of Frs. Sw. 20,000,000 has been voted in order to assist the weavers of this Canton. The money will be furnished partly by the Canton, and interested Boroughs, and partly by the Bonus resulting from the Devaluation of 1936 (Reserve funds kept in the Banque Nationale.)

* * *

The Director of the Bernese "Liedertafel" Dr. Fritz Brun has retired. Dr. Brun, who was Director of this Organisation for over 30 years will leave the Swiss Capital for the Ticino where he will devote himself to composing.

M. Henri Martin has been nominated Chargé d'Affaires in Lisbon, whence M. Charles Redard has been transferred to Sofia where he will take over the direction of the Legation. M. Alfred Claparede has been recalled from Sofia by the Political Department in Berne.

* * *

It has been decided that a special tax be imposed on persons leaving Switzerland to live abroad, as this causes a reduction in the monetary income of the canton and especially in the redemption of debts. The tax is to vary from 5 to 12% according to the incomes of the persons concerned. Two-thirds of the contribution will go to the state and one-third to the canton charged with imposing the levy.

* * *

On the 4th January, 1941, Gonzague de Reynolds' "Cité sur la Montagne" was presented in Geneva. The profits were credited to the national funds-account. General Guisan and the Conseiller d'Etat of Geneva, as well as the Executive Councillor were present and after the production General Guisan and the Councillor expressed their thanks to the organisers and producer.

* * *

Canton Basle-Town has agreed to build 500 Shelters against Air attacks.

* * *

The Aluminium Company Ltd., who formerly had its establishment in Schaffhouse and now has moved to Lausanne has given a sum of Frs.300,000 to the Hospital of Schaffhouse.

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In Geneva a draft bill was discussed on the 8th January, regarding modifications to apply to discussions and debates in the Genevan Council. According to this bill speeches may not take more than 15 minutes.

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A new Ski-Club has been opened in Pontresina; it has already 500 members. At the opening of the Club, M. Kobelt, Federal Councillor, made a speech.

* * *

On the 14th January a train crashed into an empty railway carriage just outside the Station of Schwyz. The passenger service was uninterrupted and just after midnight the line was free. The driver of the train was injured.

* * *

The Council of Basle has deliberated on a new Land-Policy. Speculations in land are to be prohi-

bited and the ground is to be so divided that a maximum area of arable land is obtained.

* * *

The freezing-up of the smaller lakes in Switzerland has now extended to the larger ones, among others, the Lake of Neuchâtel is frozen at Marin.

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At this year's Xmas auction held in aid of Soldiers, more than 275,000 parcels were sold and also many historical cards.

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On the Klausen, between Unterscheid and the mountain pass two men were caught in a avalanche. One was able to free himself and call for help. After a short while rescuers were able to dig out the second man, who was still breathing faintly. He died later, however, owing to wounds. The man was the 22 year old plumber, Jakob Bohrer.

* * *

The Regierungsrat of Canton Schwyz has decided to place the potatoes at the disposal of poor farmers and to help those whose land lies more than 800m. over sea-level.

GLEANINGS FROM THE ENGLISH PAPERS.

Very little reliable news from Switzerland finds its way into the English press. Aircraft flying over our country is a regular item; both belligerents seem to share in the trespass and our A.A. batteries spend plenty of ammunition in futile firing. Basle has suffered some damage from a stray bomb.

* * *

Though what is called the "National" movement has been liquidated in Switzerland the sponsors continue to propagate their views from abroad. The "Daily Herald," January 13th, reproduces the following Reuter message:

A storm of indignation has blown up in Switzerland, following publication of an article by the Swiss author, Jakob Schaffner, in the German weekly "Das Reich."

In it the author recommends the abandonment by Switzerland of her neutrality and her attachment to the German Reich.

Schaffner lives in Germany, while retaining his Swiss nationality.

M. Feldmann, a member of the National Council, writing in the "Neue Berner Zeitung," condemns Schaffner's "arrogance" in openly discussing in a foreign publication questions of Swiss policy.

The Swiss "National Zeitung" says it has never known so incomprehensible an interpretation of Swiss neutrality as that Schaffner outlines.

* * *

Another Swiss resident in Germany who is in the limelight is the subject of a narrative in "Cavalcade," January 11th; it makes good reading if taken with a grain of salt. Here it is:

Spunky little Switzerland is sparring up to the Nazi bully in defence of one of its native-born sons.