

# News at random

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# The Swiss Observer

FOUNDED BY MR. P. F. BOHRINGER.

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## NEWS AT RANDOM

### Federal

During a Federal Council Meeting, the Head of the Federal Political Department, M. Pilet-Golaz, declared that there had never been any opposition in the Council to the setting up of a Swiss Mercantile Navy. Present times, however, demanded the establishment of a definite right, internationally recognised, for Swiss shipping. This had been obtained and Swiss shipping was secure. It would be too early to decide now what had to be done after the war. He also stated that there were no Swiss citizens among the Cologne raid victims.

\* \* \*

Switzerland's foreign trade figures for May show imports to a total value of 211,000,000 Swiss Francs and exports 126,000,000 Swiss Francs. These figures of course, give us no indication of the volume of goods, but one may be justified in saying that Swiss foreign trade has slightly improved, compared with the preceding month and at least maintained its level compared with May 1941. Swiss industry continues to meet considerable difficulties as regards supplies of raw materials. Imports have tangibly diminished during the first few months of the year and it would seem highly desirable that the situation should improve as soon as possible. One considerable obstacle in the way of the country's supplies is transport. This difficulty, Switzerland tries to remedy as best she can; for instance, by the Merchant Fleet which, for over a year, has been sailing under the Swiss flag. The Federal Government has also organised a lorry transport service through Spain, thus reinforcing the Lisbon-Genoa sea route. The Swiss Federal railways have announced that to facilitate supplies, they have sent abroad 26 steam locomotives in order to assure the running of the goods trains destined for Switzerland.

\* \* \*

The Federal Council a few days ago has decided to float a loan of 375 million francs. 150 millions will be issued as cash bonds maturing after 7 years, bearing 2½% interest, a further 150 millions of Confederation bonds maturing after 10 years at 3¼% and 75 millions at 3½% of a duration of 30 years, which, however, will be repayable by drawings after the eleventh year. It

is expected that the required sum will be heavily over-subscribed.

\* \* \*

The catholic peoples party of Switzerland has recently deposited with the Federal Chancellery a peoples' initiative which was signed by 171,000 voters and which demands measures to be taken by the state for the protection of the family.

\* \* \*

Based on the returns from the municipalities the Federal statistical department was able to establish the gratifying fact that the surplus of births in Switzerland was almost doubled in the year from 1940 to 1941, namely from 13,356 to 25,574. All the cantons with the only exception of Uri are able to show an increase, but there are still three cantons in which a surplus of deaths exists. They are Appenzell A.Rh., Neuchâtel and Geneva, although it has decreased considerably since 1940. The surprising fact is that the increase in the surplus of births is greater in the towns than in the country districts. In towns of 10,000 and more inhabitants it amounted in 1940 to 1,648, in the last year, however, it grew to 4,958, in the country districts it increased from 11,708 to 19,616.

The cause of this development is firstly a surprisingly strong decline in deaths. The mortality receded from 50,759 to 47,234 or a round 3,500. Obviously a little fasting and a little shivering was not unhealthy. The economic conditions further assisted this much desired improvement. The equalisation arrangements of salaries and wages gave the families of serving soldiers the material backing. The rationing of provisions was for the larger families of considerable advantage, and the favourable conditions of wages enabled many young couples to marry. Further a different perspective towards child and family has undoubtedly taken place caused by an enlightenment of the people by eminent scientists who drew attention to the danger of a drop in the birth rate.

## CITY SWISS CLUB.

Messieurs les Membres sont avisés que

### L'ASSEMBLEE MENSUELLE

aura lieu Mardi, le 7 Juillet à 6 p.m. au Brown's Hotel Dover Street, (near Green Park Tube Station).

#### ORDRE DU JOUR :

Procès-verbal.	Démissions.
Admissions.	Divers.

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

Le Comité.

Minister Dr. Paul Werner, head of the section for the protection of Foreign interests at the Swiss Legation in Berlin, died following an operation at the age of 53 years. Dr. Werner who was at one time Minister Plenipotentiary in Belgrade was charged with looking after the interests of a number of States which are at war with Germany. Dr. Fedscher, deputy chief of the Swiss political department, at Berne, has been appointed to take his place.

\* \* \*

To intensify the interest in national history a competition will be started in the autumn amongst the scholars of the Swiss grammar schools, modern and professional schools, both public and private. The scholars of over 16 years of age are to treat a subject in the country's history between the years 1803 to 1848.

\* \* \*

The last cost of living figures published show a 40 per cent. rise at the end of last May, compared with the pre-war period. However, in view of the shortage and the rationing of commodities, it is estimated that the real increase, — that borne by the population — is only 20 per cent. This figure has been taken as the basis for a proposed increase of salaries, thus enabling workers and employees to face the new economic conditions. Wholesale prices, on the other hand, have increased by 95 per cent. since the war. Of course, this increase varies a good deal from one commodity to another: 50 per cent. for milk, butter, aluminium, rayon or hay, but 400 per cent. for products like cocoa and petrol. In conclusion, it may be noted that the Swiss Federal Government has sanctioned a project for collective labour contracts which was submitted both by employers and workers from the northern part of Switzerland. The new contracts, the main clauses of which relate to the rise of the prices, will apply to over 10,000 Swiss workmen.

\* \* \*

The Commission for Economic Research declared that as far as agriculture is concerned, the situation can be looked upon as very favourable. Apart from barley and rye, no other cereals suffered from winter conditions, and though preparations for spring sowing have been held up by snow, this did not interfere seriously with the work.

\* \* \*

The efforts to increase agricultural output in Switzerland continue. Owing to the impossibility of importing sufficient food from abroad Swiss soil has to increase production in order to avert famine. On 5th June, an important Conference took place and the measures were discussed which are to be taken in order to realise the fifth stage of the agricultural expansion plan of which the aim is 100,000 hectares of newly-filled land. At the same time, the Federal Government has issued an order, compelling young people of between 16 and 20 to spend a period on the land assisting overworked peasants. It is estimated that the hay harvest, now being gathered, will be of medium size this year owing to hail and drought in a good many places. The expansion of ploughland at the expense of pasture, combined with the limitations imposed upon livestock, have, of course, had a detrimental influence on milk production which, in April this year, was estimated to be 15 to 20 per cent. below that of April 1939.

\* \* \*

The increased planting of cereals, potatoes and vegetables represents for the farmer an addition of work, which in many instances can hardly be coped

with, owing to the mobilisation of the labourers. A decree by the Federal Council made work in agriculture compulsory and thereby stopped the flight from the land, as the agricultural labourer had to remain in his employment. In addition unemployed building and industrial workers from the towns were sent into the country. These supplementary workers are joined by numerous voluntary helpers. Over 500 students of both sexes from the universities of Berne and Basle have assisted the farmers during their holidays. During the summer holidays the contingent of the "farmers-students" will even be greater. In preparation is also an arrangement by which about 60,000 apprentices in industry and trade at the ages of 16 to 20 will assist the farmers for a fortnight during harvest. Apprenticeship and holiday agreements of these young people will, however, not be affected by this extra work.

\* \* \*

Milk supplies have gone down by 10 per cent. owing to a decrease in the number of milking cows, as well as the supplies of cheese and butter. Owing to reduction of cattle, meat has been rationed and slaughterings have been less numerous than 12 months before, especially as regards pigs.

\* \* \*

People who are not conversant with Swiss customs would have been surprised had they looked into the council chamber of the National Council at the opening of the summer session. There were amongst the Councillors in their dark coats a number of them in the uniform of private soldiers and officers, amongst them the Adjutant General of the Swiss Army with the rank of "Divisionär." The President of the Council, however, was in the uniform of a private in the fortress artillery and he had to ask for leave from his commanding officer like any other soldier to attend the session which lasted a fortnight.

Unusual but truly Swiss is also the fact that the citizen of the canton of Zurich elected two Bernese to the highest cantonal honours. Heinrich Schnyder, son of a small farmers' family in Diessenbach, was elected to the cantonal Government and Dr. Fritz Wahlen who did great work in furthering agricultural production was elected as National Councillor. Both belong to what is called "Ausland Schweizer" as both have been abroad for many years. In addition to that we may mention that the town President of Zurich Ernest Nobs is also a Bernese, who prior of turning journalist and politician was a country schoolmaster.

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**Cantonal**

The first of a long series of preparations has begun at the end of May by which Geneva will represent its two thousand years old history. Actually the name of the town appears for the first time in the year 58 B.C. when Julius Cæsar met the Gauls in battle and destroyed the bridge over the Rhone in order to prevent enemy incursions. By exhibitions, artistic and sports arrangements of all kinds and by patriotic celebrations, the old town will demonstrate its vicissitudinous existence right up to the present day.

\* \* \*

Albert Pictet (liberal) has been elected States Councillor for Geneva in place of the late Frédéric Martin.

\* \* \*

Houses in Neuchâtel may not be painted in loud colours. In future the particular colour fancied by the builder or proprietor must be submitted to — and approved by — the local police.

\* \* \*

A novel agreement has been concluded between the cantons of Vaud and Zurich whereby scholars of the one canton, after completion of the compulsory primary schooling, can visit for a year free of charge the corresponding school of the other canton. This exchange of scholars has as objective to bring together German and French speaking Swiss already early in life. The last year at school in a canton speaking a different language not only gives the young people an opportunity to learn that language properly, but also open their eyes and minds for appreciating the viewpoint of the Confedérate on the other side of the language frontier.

\* \* \*

A lively campaign preceded the election of the Grand Council in Berne, as the opposition of the young-farmers (Jungbauern) party and the new group of the party of the independents, which is directed and financed from headquarters in Zurich, considered that the proper moment had arrived to assert themselves. As at the same time and in consequence of the increased population an enlarged Grand Council of 194 as compared to the old one of 184 had to be elected, it was difficult to estimate the chances of each party. The result, however, proved that the Bernese are not so easily caught by the world reformers, but remain loyal to established institution. The farmers traders and citizen parties gained the day by increasing their numbers from 64 to 75. The socialists kept their number of 55 mandates, the liberals dropped from 28 to 27, the young-farmers lost 5 of their 22 representatives, the catholic peoples party increased by one to 12 and the free-economists (Freiwirtschaftler) doubled their number to two, whilst the independents by a tremendous effort added three further seats to their only one they had up to now, whereas two representatives remain as before who do not belong to any party.

\* \* \*

The shortage of flats in Berne, which was aggravated by the extension of the federal Administration and the various war economy departments, has necessitated a removal of several branches of the administration to other Swiss towns. Geneva, Neuchâtel, Montreux and lately St. Gall are housing federal departments. On May 1st the Military Insurance and the Textile control departments opened in St. Gall, where the officials from Berne were heartily welcomed.

The Bernese cantonal police department has endeavoured for a long time to stop the ever increasing thefts of bicycles. A careful registration of cycles numbering well over 300,000 in the canton of Berne would require a large and costly machinery of control which nobody wants. On the other hand the number of stolen bicycles which amounted last year to 2,700 (of which, however, 66% were again recovered by the police) demand an organised remedy. As the simplest and cheapest preventive of these thefts there exists a plan to introduce a control number plate in two parts. The lower part of the plate would be fixed to the mud-guard over the front wheel, whilst the top part is removable. When leaving the cycle in the street or anywhere, all that is to be done is to remove the top part. Anyone riding a bike without the top part of the number plate gives himself away as a cycle thief, unless he can produce the corresponding top part.

\* \* \*

In those parts of the canton of Berne where this year the cockchafer (Maikäfer) is active (there are also swarm years for Basle and Uri) the owners of land are compelled to collect these pests. About four litres per acre of land have to be delivered up alive at the collecting stations. In Berne, Münsingen, Zurich, Basle and Geneva there are institutions where these beetles are killed, quickly dried and ground into powder which mixed with other fodder proved a very nutrient feed particularly for pigs. It is calculated to obtain 200-300,000 kg. of cockchafer meal, which is about equal in nutritious value to fish meal.

\* \* \*

A somewhat unusual course has been adopted by the churchgoers of Langental (Berne) who by a large majority refused to confirm in his office Pastor Albert Lüscher who for the last twelve years had been administering to their spiritual wants.

\* \* \*

The school authorities of Zurich have addressed an appeal to the parents asking them to encourage their children to disport themselves barefooted; not only would this economise leather but it is strongly recommended by the medical profession in the interest of health (!).

\* \* \*

On the aerodrome at Dübendorf near Zurich a monument was unveiled on May 9th in honour of the Swiss aviator Walter Mittelholzer. Upon a high column is placed a beautifully modelled falcon with wings erect as if ready to fly off towards the mountains. Mittelholzer who possessed international records and wrote several books on aviation which brought him highest recognition, met with an accident on a mountain tour some five years ago.

\* \* \*

A notable exception to the general stagnation in the hotel industry emerges from the official figures published for the canton Ticino. During last year about 40,000 more guests compared with 1940 have stayed at the 614 establishments of which 126 were hotels. Needless to add this welcome increase is mainly due to the fact that our nationals find it practically impossible to spend a holiday elsewhere.

\* \* \*

The exceptional success of this year's Basle Fair in April last is amply confirmed by the fact that the

Swiss Federal Railways had to run 254 extra trains (against 205 last year) to cope with the additional traffic. The Basle tramways also benefited to the tune of about Frs.60,000, the takings on one particular Sunday showing the record figure of Frs. 69,059. It is also stated with satisfaction that contrary to former years' experiences not one single case of pick-pocket has been reported.

\* \* \*

The greatly enhanced attachment to the native soil which has been intensified in the last few critical years has revived the old established custom in the canton of Baselland to beat the bans on Ascension-day. With drums and banners, with foliage and flower garlands, on foot or on horseback the citizen young and old of the various parishes go along the boundary of the commune in order to impress upon each individual and in an unforgettable manner the precincts of their immediate home.

\* \* \*

Damage exceeding half a million francs was caused by a conflagration which practically destroyed the "Tonwerk" and "Zementfabrik" Laufen (Baselland).

\* \* \*

The members of the Regierungsrat of Glaris are to have a substantial increase in their emoluments: the Landammann (President) is to draw Frs.4,500 a year and the councillors Frs.3,500 each; in addition the members will be entitled to an allowance of Frs.12 whenever they attend a council meeting.

\* \* \*

A protestant church, one of the smallest in our country, has been consecrated in Küsnacht (Schwyz): it has room for a hundred people.

\* \* \*

A new writing style is now being taught in the schools of the canton Schwyz. It is designed by the artist Tommamichel and contains neither fine nor shadowed lines a ball-pointed nib being used. As the supply of writing material is becoming difficult a more extended use of the slate is recommended.

### Army

Since the beginning of 1940 thousands of Swiss women are in the service of the army, militarily organised and suitably trained. They execute their tasks with soldier-like discipline and patriotic fervour, which has secured them the grateful admiration of the troops as well as that of the civil population. At the present moment new recruiting of women volunteers is proceeding which is showing pleasing results. The women and young girls who are fit for auxiliary service are trained during the summer at a lengthy introductory course prior to being assigned to the various branches.

\* \* \*

The recruiting of a further 6,000 women volunteers which is at present taking place affords a good opportunity of stating what the women and young girls of the country are doing and have already done in the interest of the army. Since the creation of the women's auxiliary service (Frauenhilfsdienst) thousands of women are occupied at staff headquarters, in air observation posts, in military laundries and mending centres, camp kitchens, soldiers resting rooms, telephone exchanges, military sanitary institutions,

even in detachments with war dogs and carrier pigeons. The installation of these women volunteers have enabled the granting of innumerable requests for leave for soldiers, and should at some time or other the serious actuality arrive, then every rifle will have to be in the front line, whereas behind the front the well trained F.H.D. volunteers will take the place of the soldiers.

\* \* \*

In many homes in Switzerland there hangs still from grandfather's days a Vetterli rifle, which was one of the first achievements of Swiss fire arms technic. The rifle bears the name of its inventor Frederick Vetterli, who died 50 years ago. This expert gunsmith from Wagenhausen in the canton of Thurgau travelled a great deal abroad to gain experience, including London. In 1867 his rifle was introduced into the Swiss army. It was the first repeating rifle and the best fire arm of that time. Only much later did the other states introduce a repeating rifle into their armies.

\* \* \*

The clothing and equipment of a Swiss recruit is costing mother Helvetia a tidy penny. Without equipment and training the recruit of to-day costs according to the arm to which he belongs between frs.385 and frs.458. The cheapest is the infantry recruit and the most expensive one the cyclist, but both are costing frs.100 more now than pre-war.

### Economical

A new graduated rationing scheme will come into force on the 1st of July; an element of discrimination is introduced and its application seems by no means simple as the local authorities will have to establish or confirm the individual status. Children and expectant mothers are placed in a separate category and the grown-ups are divided into four groups. In the first group are people of both sexes only occasionally employed on physical labour; they receive the ration book as at present. The second group embraces people of both sexes whose employment demands a constant and strenuous deployment of their physical forces; they are entitled to a super card in addition to the ordinary ration book. The "heavy" workers of both sexes who have to give of their best form the third group and are given two super cards. The fourth group is limited to workers in certain trades who are toiling under abnormal conditions; so far they also receive two super cards. The super cards entitle the holder to additional rations of vegetables, fats, oils, cheese and meat.

\* \* \*

The price of the goods obtainable for the complete ration card of May if fully used amounts to frs.23.69. The cash value under the same assumption of a worker in a heavy industry who receives some extra allowances amounts to frs.28.04, whereas a child's card is calculated at frs. 13.35. The provisions which are rationed represent about half of the necessary monthly requirements. Several of the most important provisions are up to the present not rationed such as milk, bread, potatoes, vegetables and fruit. The rationed goods have increased in price since the beginning of the war by 70%, 10% more than the average price of all the provisions. This sharp increase is explained by the fact that they are mostly imported goods.

The Department of War Industry and Labour announces: The Fuel Offices of the various Cantons have been permitted to issue a first supply of heating fuel for next winter to large-scale consumers, i.e., 25 per cent. of the total needs to hospitals and factories, and 20 per cent. to offices. The supply situation does not permit a forecast of next winter's quotas for other consumers, e.g., for the heating of homes. At the moment it is still very uncertain what the supply situation will be like. The fuel offices have, however, been permitted to allow advance purchases of brickettes, prepared partly from unrationed inland coal and partly from rationed coal. Such purchases will be included in the registered requirements of rationed fuel.

\* \* \*

At the general meeting of the "Association Bernoise du Commerce et de l'Industrie," M. Rossi, Vice-President of the Swiss National Bank, gave a general survey of Switzerland's economic position. Swiss production has since the outbreak of war, undergone thorough changes in industrial and substituted articles (articles de remplacement) in particular, changes necessary to protect the country. One must rejoice in their success, and bear in mind that after the war a readaptation will be necessary. He went on to state that in the first three months of 1942, exports attained 65.5 per cent. of imports, exactly as in 1938 in the same period. But it should be remembered that the higher cost of imports is 110 per cent., while exports have only gone up 60 per cent. On the total 461,000,000frs. which represent the amount paid for imports in these first three months, 240,000,000 represent simply the increase in prices. M. Rossi further pointed out that though under the circumstances prices have been increased, wages cannot keep up the same pace, as this would necessarily entail an increase in the cost of living.

Scarcity of goods and the rationing system have resulted in an increase in prices, which is, however, only half as high for every family as the official index-figure indicates. The increase in wages recommended by the authorities to employers, takes into account the extra cost of living, and seems to be a satisfactory solution of this problem.

\* \* \*

The great demand for workpeople in agriculture, in the building trade and for buildings of national interest has resulted in lowering the number of totally unemployed to a figure not known so low for a very long time. Without employment were 3,800 men and 2,000 women a total of 5,800, but for these also is every hope of finding work in the near future, even if it is not in their actual trade or occupation, as some branches of industry had to reduce their working time owing to lack of raw materials.

\* \* \*

At the end of 1941 the situation in the metal and machinery industry was still satisfactory, being about the same as a year before, and the number of workers employed having scarcely varied. In certain quarters a shortage of skilled workmen is noted. Nevertheless, the supply question is becoming more and more difficult, so that prospects are uncertain. As foreign trade to-day is essentially based on the compensation system, Swiss industry can hardly export without receiving necessary raw materials in exchange.

The engineering works Brown Boveri & Co., in Baden, have built a road vehicle which represents a combination of diesel automobile and electric trolley bus. The first of these cars have been put into service in Basle with excellent results. When there is overhead current the car is used as a trolley bus, on the other section as diesel-electro bus. The change-over from one system to the other is done by the movement of a single lever.

\* \* \*

Already during the last world war a number of brown coal (lignite) and anthracite mines were being worked, but were closed down again as with the armistice a better foreign coal was obtainable in sufficient quantities. The present scarcity has now again revived this branch of mining. At the moment 7 lignite mines in different parts are worked and in the Valais 12 anthracite mines are in operation. In the latter, 1,500 men are occupied and another 300-1,000 could find work there if they were not required somewhere else more urgently. The monthly output is about 1,500 tons of lignite and 7,500 tons of anthracite. Indefatigable efforts have made it possible for the Valais anthracite to burn equally well as foreign egg-brickettes. The coal is thoroughly cleaned from all stone by machinery so that the ash content is reduced from 20 — 40% to 15%. The finely crushed anthracite can be used for coal dust furnaces or is compressed into egg shape for household use. Our country will be glad of this home-produced coal in the coming winter.

\* \* \*

Some time ago a citizen of Biel (Bienne) Carl Leuthold, obtained from the Government of the canton Valais a concession to exploit deposits of gold, copper and nickel which he discovered in the neighbourhood of Zinal. Leuthold found these deposits by means of a method perfected by himself using a pendulum. The breaking-up and crushing machines were already ordered and everything was ready to start work on the gold-mine when an apoplexy of the heart ended the life of the discoverer. The secret of the pendulum and of the deposits went with him into the grave.

### Traffic

At the end of September, 1940, the country had about 300 motor lorries which were driven by home-produced fuel, but such rapid progress was made in the change-over to these materials that by the end of that year already 11,000 and to-day over 13,000 vehicles are registered which are driven without either benzine or heavy oils. This is about 10% of the nation's car park. About 5,000 lorries are driven by charcoal, 4,000 by wood, and 4,000 by acetylene. Further a few hundred vehicles use accumulated electricity. The installation for wood saccharification in the canton of Grisons will shortly go into production, which will then produce several indigenous driving materials.

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In order to facilitate supplies of raw material and food, the Confederation organised some time ago a road transport service from the Portuguese to the French frontiers across Spanish territory. This service has lately been handicapped by a shortage of fuel; nevertheless, the operating company announced recently that the necessary steps will be taken to maintain this service, and that it should be possible to use substitute fuels. From August 16th to December 31st, 1941, Swiss lorries made 255 journeys and transported 2,500 tons of goods. It is reported from Switzerland that the Swiss Government has agreed that the 200 covered railway wagons which are used exclusively for transporting imports from Portugal and Spain to the French frontier in transit for Switzerland should be repaired and maintained at Swiss expense in order to help the Spanish railways.

\* \* \*

For a long time large amounts of imported goods were lying in several docks of Spain, Portugal and Italy, which were paid for by Switzerland, but owing to transport difficulties could not be brought into the country. Now 100,000 tons of this merchandise has been taken by sea to Genoa from whence it is sent to Switzerland by rail. About 3,000 tons are being transported on Swiss lorries through Portugal, Spain to the French frontier, from whence they will continue the journey by rail. At the present moment the Swiss authorities are in negotiations with the blockading countries to obtain more shipping space for imports and exports. Only a guarantee is required not to requisition the shipping which has been chartered by Switzerland. A concession was already obtained by negotiations before the war from Great Britain, France and the U.S.A. on the one hand and Germany and Italy on the other, but it was only for 114,000 tons. This tonnage, however, is much too low for the necessary provisions required by the country, but it must be gratefully recognised that up to the present moment not one of the ships which sails under the Swiss flag has either been torpedoed or even requisitioned.

\* \* \*

Owing to the strain of war demands on the Axis railways, the Swiss authorities have been forced to send 27 steam locomotives and several thousand goods wagons to Germany in order to bring back imports to Switzerland.

\* \* \*

Through the Swiss Legation in Stockholm, a Basle shipping firm is reported to have bought a Finnish vessel, *Elsa S.*, of 3,000 tons.

\* \* \*

To further the idea of a ships canal from the lake of Geneva to the lake of Neuchâtel, the young people of the western part of Switzerland volunteered last year to dig a part of the future waterway. This year the youths of Geneva are doing a similar symbolical piece of work by building a 1,000 metre long road which will be part of a road connecting the future docks of the Rhône in Geneva with the goods station. Up to now already 1,000 cubic metres of building materials have been obtained by voluntary gifts and offers of 2,000 working days have been obtained. Even members of the cantonal Government, the cantonal and town parliament have undertaken to spend a whole day as road workers. Two large builders' firms have

placed their entire personnel for a day free of charge at the disposal of the undertaking. Besides contributions of money from all parts of the country, applications from young volunteers from the whole of the western part of Switzerland are received, 600 from the canton Vaud alone. In this manner the "road of Youth" is not only a symbol but a practical reality.

### Humanitarian

The Federal Council has decided to put a sum of 3 million francs at the disposal of the International Red Cross Committee, which consists entirely of Swiss citizens and which conducts its world-embracing work from Geneva. At the beginning of the war the Committee received an advance of frs.200,000 from the Federal Council. Since then the Committee was self-supporting, partly thanks to collections made on its behalf in Switzerland and partly from contributions from Foreign states and Red Cross Societies. The new Federal contribution will enable the Red Cross to continue its constantly increasing activities in total independence.

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The great plan to take care of 10,000 children from belligerent countries for three months is progressing step by step towards realization. Again 1,000 children from France and Belgium and 700 from unoccupied France arrived a few days ago in Geneva, from where they were distributed to families and homes all over the country. In order to feed and clothe these little guests, without, however, to use up the already diminishing store of provisions, the section of the Red Cross for assistance to children, has organised a collection of coupons for provisions, textile, boots and soap. All post offices, banks, branches of the Red Cross, even pillar boxes are placed at the disposal of this collection. Not only are coupons accepted which have currency at present, but even coupons of previous periods which have not been used by their owners are welcomed. By the surrender of these coupons the Swiss people are proving that they are prepared to share what little is left to them with the children of those people who have suffered through the war.

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Recently a fund was opened at the University in Berne to create biologic-medical scholarships, which promise to be of the greatest importance to Swiss science. A number of firms in the chemical and provision industry have subscribed a basic capital of frs. 120,000, in addition they have guaranteed 17 annual scholarships of frs.5,000 each, so that the foundation has an annual amount of frs.85,000 plus the interest on the capital at its disposal. The recipients will be chosen by the professors and lecturers at the various universities. The selected students will thus be enabled to put their all into their studies and to disseminate their knowledge, free from economic worries.

In the endeavour to promote the biologic-medical science in the most rational manner, all the medical and veterinary-medical faculties of the various universities of Switzerland have combined in a working committee for the co-ordination of the various medical sciences. Similar committees are to be started for other branches of this science in order to collect, simplify and intensify the research.

The postbag during March of the Geneva office of the International Red Cross has reached a record figure of over 1,200,000 letters and postcards.

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The foundation "Schweizerhilfe" which has for its object the assistance of the children of "Swiss abroad" obtained also this year such ample means that they are in a position to increase the monthly parcels of provisions which are sent to children of Swiss living abroad from 700 to 1,600. These consignments are sent foremost to France, Belgium and Italy, and in an ever growing number to the Balkan countries. For holidays for these children about 2,700 free stations have been offered to the foundation, but only about 1,000 could be made use of, as most of the children are going to relations or to people who have invited them when they stayed with them on a previous holiday. Many of these foster parents have, however, offered to accept children from Switzerland who are in need of a change of air, so that about 1,200 free stations could be filled in this manner. The countries from which these children are coming through the good offices of the Swiss Consuls are Germany with 600, occupied France 800, from Marseille 250, Toulouse 100, Nice 150, Lyons 500, from Italy 100-150, Belgium 200 and Holland 40.

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That the "Help the Children's Work" (Kinderhilfswerk) of the Red Cross is very popular is proved by the collection which was made during the Industries Fair in Basle, where a collecting jar was placed at the entrance in which roughly frs.17,500 mostly in small coins was collected.

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This year's first of August collection will be devoted to further the professional education of our young generation.

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The well-known engineering works Escher Wyss in Zurich has found a very pleasing form to assist in the "offensive of life." The management has decided to present to all employees the complete outfit for the first child. Each married couple has without further ado the right to this gift which is delivered free and which consists of a cradle-pram, napkins, binders, flannels, chemises and jackets, in short everything that is required by a new arrival into this world.

At a contest arranged by the Bernese shorthand writers a blind lady competitor distinguished herself by excellent results. Miss Ella Wegmüller, who has been blind since birth, wrote 160 syllables per minute in German and French and 100 syllables in English. The tireless zeal of the blind shorthand writer is a shining example to many a normal person.

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Three generations of one family are active members of the male-choir "Frohsinn" in Heiden (Appenzell). Grandfather, father and son, each bearing the christian name of Hans. By his age of more than 80 years the grandfather proves that singing keeps one young.

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Another new epidemic has broken out in our country, happily not a dangerous one. It is telephoneyitis or in other words the pleasure of telephon-

ing. The administration has established the fact that during last year more than 366 million telephone conversations took place. The largest number emanated from Zurich with over 83 millions, whereas Basle with 42 and Berne with 40 millions following far behind. Of the 55 exchanges which each had over a million conversations, 9 are situated in the canton of Zurich. Thus the centre of the "epidemic" is localised.

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Colonel Emil Messmer, the late Director of the "Swiss Metal Works" in Thun, died recently at Geneva at the age of 67 years. As foundry engineer he was active for many years in western Europe, Canada and in the U.S.A. Besides his usual occupation he was greatly interested in aviation and was with Colonel Schaeck when in the Gordon Bennett balloon race of 1908 their balloon was for 73 hours in the air, 43 of which were over the North sea. To this day this record has not been surpassed. For 18 years Colonel Messmer was Central President of the Aero Club of Switzerland and for a long time was Vice-President of the Fédération Aéronautique Internationale.

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One of the best known and impressing Swiss sculptors, James Vibert, died at the age of 70 years in Geneva. He was the creator of the three mighty Confederates which are in the main hall of the Federal Parliament Building in Berne. His greatest monumental work at which he worked for 26 years is "L'Effort humain" which was placed in the park of the International Labour Office in Geneva. Vibert was originally an artist-locksmith and became a pupil of the great French sculptor Rodin. (The group of the three Confederates is reproduced on the new black on green 50 cts. postage stamp).

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Dr. Joseph Andermatt, one of the judges at the Federal Tribunal, died in Lausanne at the age of 71 after a protracted illness. He studied law in Fribourg, Basle and Zurich, and at the early age of 27 was elected a Kantonsrat in his home canton, Zug, which he also represented in the States Council until in 1930 he took up his appointment at our supreme court.

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Frau Sophie Hämmerli-Marti, the popular and gifted story-writer, died in Zurich at the age of 75. Some of her poetry and tales written in the dialect of the canton Aargau have become folklore.

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In some places heavy snowfall was recorded in the night of May 1st and in the following nights the temperature dropped to several degrees below freezing point, causing severe damage to crops. The middle of the Valais seems to have suffered the most by these frosts as the apricots and strawberries in the plain of the Rhone show considerable damage. The most exposed vineyards were heated by numerous small Mazout stoves, but the fuel being scarce, damage by continued frost could hardly be prevented.

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The housekeeper of the police station at Berne has not been slow to discover the potentialities of his magisterial office. Right under the eyes of the omnipresent law he carried on a prosperous and manifold trade on the premises which included a distillery (Schnappsbrennerei).