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# The Swiss Observer

FOUNDED BY MR. P. F. BOEHRINGER.

**The Official Organ of the Swiss Colony in Great Britain.**

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## NEWS AT RANDOM

### Federal

On November 12th, the Director General of Postal, Telegraph and Telephone communications announced the following details with regard to postal traffic with foreign countries: "Due to a partial interruption of communication with France, the sending of mail of all kinds via France to Spain, Portugal, Britain and Ireland and overseas countries has been suspended until further notice. Post to Spain, Portugal, and their colonies as well as to other non-belligerent countries, Eire, Argentina and Chile, will be held up at the frontier post offices. Since it is uncertain, owing to the new situation in France, whether and when postal traffic via that country can be resumed to the previous extent, letters to belligerent countries will be returned to the senders. There will be no change in the sending of packages to Portugal, Britain, Ireland and overseas countries via Genoa."

Nothing definite has since transpired and it is generally believed that the dislocation due to the unforeseen army movements in "unoccupied" France will be remedied thus restoring, though on a reduced scale, the previous postal service via France, Spain and Lisbon. The Swiss airmail to and from this country may be diverted to the Lisbon-Stuttgart route at which latter place a censorship has been in operation for some time. So far no official statement has been issued by the British Post Office which accepts the mails same as before.

The temporary consequences of this dislocation will not affect the economic outlook of Switzerland. Imports, mostly raw materials, have always had to pass the two blockades and have been routed via Genoa. The situation, so far as they are concerned, is unchanged by the occupation of the southern French coast by the Germans. At the most it will mean that travellers, such as business men, wishing to leave Switzerland will have to obtain visas from the Germans instead of the French for the journey to Spain, and the Germans are likely to impose stricter conditions.

The budget for 1943 which has just been passed by the Federal Council foresees ordinary expenditure of frs.481.2 millions and receipts of frs.384.7 millions, a deficit of 98.5 millions. Included in these figures are

redemption and repayments to the amount of 31.8 millions, but not the extraordinary expenditure for the defence of the country, which by the end of next year will have reached 5 milliards.

Equally unfavourable appears the budget for the Federal Railways. Although a surplus of 94.3 millions is expected, the large amounts for interests, writing off, upkeep, etc., will balance the Profit and Loss account with a deficit of 53.5 millions.

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Just before the opening of the autumn session of the Federal Parliament and during the arrival of the members of the two houses, the band of a battalion serenaded before the Federal Palace. When the conductor reported himself and the band to the Federal President, Mr. Etter said to him, "If your battalion shoots as well as your band has played, then we all can be satisfied." "That is quite in order," replied the band sergeant and with a smart right about turn marched off.

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A decision of great interest has been taken recently by the Court of Appeal in the case of the appeals for pardons for the three people recently sentenced to death for high treason. The Federal Assembly is the only Court of Appeal against the death sentence and since the present cases are without precedent in Switzerland, there are no known laws of procedure for dealing with the appeal. The Bureau of Federal Prosecutors had now issued a ruling that the Federal Assembly must consider an appeal against death sentences in secret Session. The absolute majority will decide the issue. The United Federal Assembly met in Extraordinary Session on November 9th.

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We referred in our last issue to the punitive measures the Federal Council enacted against illegal crossing of the frontiers; measures not addressed solely to foreign refugees coming into Switzerland, but also applicable to Swiss citizens who secretly and without

## CITY SWISS CLUB.

Messieurs les Membres sont avisés que

### L'ASSEMBLEE MENSUELLE

aura lieu Samedi, le 5 Décembre à 1 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.

permission go abroad. Lately something has been heard about military sentences which have had to be passed on such Swiss citizens. The new Federal Decree, apart from forbidding any crossing of the frontier makes preparations for such crossing, and any assistance rendered towards such an end, subject to punishment. Contraventions are subject to the jurisdiction of the military courts which have been forced lately to increase the severity of the sentences which vary from three days to three years, or a fine of up to 20,000frs. That more severe measures were required is shown by the fact that the stream of foreigners illegally crossing the frontier has not diminished. On the contrary between 23rd September — day of debate in the National Council — and 4th October, i.e., 11 days, 2,200 refugees have illegally crossed the frontier and had to be stopped inside the country. In several parts of the country special interception camps have been set up under military control. The figure of 9,600 refugees, announced in the National Council has thus risen considerably since. In order to deal with the problem the Department of Justice and Police has appointed a special Refugee Commissioner who spends most of his time in the frontier area, visits the camps and is in close contact with the military and civil authorities. The difficult problem as to what attitude Switzerland is to take up towards these foreigners does thus not seem to have been satisfactorily solved, and although public excitement has calmed down, the appointment of the Commissioner shows that the Federal Council continues to keep a watchful eye on this vexed question.

\* \* \*

The final figures of the census of 1st December, 1941, have now been published and declared valid by the Federal Assembly. Accordingly Switzerland had on that day a population of 4,265,703 inhabitants as against 4,066,400 in 1940. In spite of a general increase of population, some of the cantons show a retrogression. Neuchâtel records a decrease of 6,524, Auserrhoden 4221, Glaris 882, Innerrhoden 605, and St. Gall 161. Politically the change causes alterations in the number of representatives in the National Council. Zurich gains 3 more mandates, Berne two, Baselstadt, Vaud and Valais one each, a total of eight, whereas Neuchâtel is losing one. The National Council will therefore consist in future of 194 members. The increase in the population will also affect some of the Federal financial contributions, as for instance the Federal subsidy to the cantons for primary education is based on the number of the respective population.

\* \* \*

Since taxes, once passed by the Federal Council, cannot be altered, it has been suggested that special committees be established to deal with taxation problems. The first committee is now working on the new tax regulations, and its findings will be submitted to the Federal Council. The new decrees will come into force in January, and there will be time for necessary amendments. There is to be a 50 per cent. increase in the Armament Tax and the Armament Contribution (Wehropfer) is to be reimposed. Public opinion is, however, in favour of more regard being given to families. The land tax is to be doubled, but the tax-free area is to be extended. The "Verrechnungssteuer" Tax will probably not come into force.

\* \* \*

By a decree of the Federal Council a luxury tax was introduced on November 1st, almost over night.

In drawing up the list of luxury goods the Federal Council has decided only to include such goods as have nothing to do with the necessaries of life. Precious stones, gold and silver wares, hand worked carpets, alcoholic sparkling wines, furs, photographic and projector apparatus are all subject to a tax of 10% on the selling price. Gramophones, records and radio accessories bear a tax of 5%. The annual revenue is expected to amount to 10 million francs, but well-informed circles expect that the duty will soon be extended to other goods.

\* \* \*

The Federal Council has decided to strengthen the Swiss Legation in Washington by sending a Commercial Attaché. He will not be a Civil Servant but a business man.

### Cantonal

The Committee of the State Council charged with examining the Initiative of the Canton of Neuchâtel regarding the introduction of old age pensions as also the proposal of the Canton of Geneva to change the compensation fund rules in order to give old age assistance, has decided to adjourn the question pending the report of the Federal Council on the popular initiative concerning the introduction of old age pensions and other social reforms.

\* \* \*

By a unanimous decision of the Federal Assembly, an annual subsidy of 225,000frs. has been granted to the canton of Ticino in order to advance its cultural and linguistic characteristics. Up to now the canton obtained a subsidy of frs.60,000.— which through the economy program of the confederation was reduced to frs.45,000. The canton of Grisons in future will receive an annual subsidy of frs.20,000 for the same purpose for the valleys which are speaking the Italian language and frs.10,000 for those using the romansh.

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After two years of reconstruction, the municipal offices of the town of Berne (Rathaus) has been officially opened on the last day of October. The cost for the reconstruction amounted to 2.5 million francs. The original building was erected in 1406 to 1416 after a great fire, in a massive gothic style. During the following centuries it was several times rebuilt and in many parts the style actually was ruined. Now the building is restored to its former glory. During the rebuilding a number of beautiful old sculptures were brought to light and it was found that halls of imposing size were turned into small rooms by partitioning. The able architect Mr. Martin Risch from Zurich has restored the building to its old noble appearance. Replacements which were necessary have been made by clever artisans who executed them in the spirit of the old masters, so that they fit beautifully into the old framework. To-day, like in the days of old, Berne can again boast of possessing the most beautiful town hall in the whole of Switzerland.

\* \* \*

The budget for the town of Berne closes with a deficit of 4.2 millions, but experience has shown that the town authorities calculate the budget on an extremely conservative basis; for many years the accounts of the town of Berne have turned out considerably better than what the estimates anticipated.



In Basle 14 schools are being closed for reasons of fuel economy and the pupils distributed among other schools. The gymnasia of all schools will remain unheated. When really cold weather sets in pupils will be taken for walks, excursions and ski tours. Christmas holidays will be extended from two to three weeks.

\* \* \*

Geneva, more than any other town in Switzerland, is favoured by being remembered in the wills of its citizens and friends. In the course of centuries the town has received a whole array of beautiful estates and in its museums the art treasures willed by private people are very numerous. Recently Colonel Guillaume Favre in his will left to the town his rich collection of paintings which amongst others comprised 22 paintings by Dutch and Flemish Masters. There were several works by Rubens, Ruysdael and Peter Neef as well as other artists of the 17th and 18th century.

\* \* \*

The quarters of the Technicum at Le Locle have been renovated and the inauguration took place on Sunday, 1st November. The work cost 2 million francs and the communes have contributed subsidies to the extent of frs.150,000.

\* \* \*

Many cases of foot and mouth disease having occurred last year in the canton of Ticino, the cattle in the neighbourhood of the affected meadows and stables were treated with a vaccine by Waldmann and Köbe. By this procedure the diseased herds were completely localised and it was possible in the space of four weeks to eradicate the epidemic completely. This protecting lymph proved itself effective not only with cattle but also with small cattle like pigs, sheep and goats, and is totally harmless.

\* \* \*

Since 1938 when for the first time the so-called Waldmann's inoculation against foot and mouth disease was used in the canton of Valais over 19,000 litres of vaccine have been used for the vaccination of half a million cattle and small cattle. The treatment is a complete success.

\* \* \*

The rat catcher of Buchs in the St. Gall Rhine valley caught about 46,000 field mice and moles this summer. Recently he destroyed 550 field mice in two days, 300 of these in one piece of ground.

**Economical**

The year 1942 has in general produced a good harvest. The area under cultivation of cereals was increased by 18,000 ha. to 192,000 ha. The harvest which was gathered in favourable weather should give a considerably better result than last year. Potatoes were planted on 75,000 ha., 30,000 ha. more than pre-war. The provisioning of the country with potatoes is therefore assured and if necessary potato flour will be available to be mixed with flour for bread-making. Vegetables also were obtained in sufficient quantities, the planted area of 21,000 ha. being 13,000 ha. more than before, showing a production of about 60,000 truck loads. The meat ration was lately considerably increased after a stock for three months had been accumulated, which will enable the bridging over of the transition period when the feeding of cattle in the spring will be changed over from dry to green fodder. Less favourable is the position regarding milk. Owing to the reduction of grass land, stocks of cattle had to be greatly

reduced and arrangements are being made to assure an equal distribution of milk during the winter months. But the position in respect of imported products is worse. Blockade and counter-blockade are making the position constantly more difficult as the available stocks are gradually decreasing.

\* \* \*

Recently the Federal Council has for the third time granted a credit of 50 million francs for the improvement of the soil and the provision of new arable land. With the first two credits 2,200 projects will have been carried out by 1946, embracing 44,000 ha. of drainage, 68,000 ha. of ground property equalisation, 2,600 ha. of forest clearing and 2,300 ha. of other improvements costing about 220 million francs. The Federal grant amounts to about 40% of the total costs. With the new credit a further 10,000 ha. of forest clearing as well as Alp and pasture clearance will be undertaken.

\* \* \*

The latest figures of the development of Swiss foreign trade have been published. It is interesting to learn that more than 38,000 ten-ton wagons are at present coming in. That is about half the average monthly import figures for 1939, but for this quantity of goods we have to pay 13 million frs. more than for double the quantity in 1939. This is a factor which will always cause a certain increase in prices in spite of all efforts of the Federal Government to keep the level steady. The decrease in imports has another unpleasant consequence: the customs revenue decreases correspondingly. In September revenue from this source amounted to 12 million francs, compared with 14.4 million in the same month last year and while this seems rather small only 140 million for the whole of the current year are anticipated, the 1939 revenue from this source was exactly twice this amount. The state of the Federal finances is further aggravated by the extraordinary financial burden of the war budget. The exports position is a little better, their value having risen by one third from August to September, the latter month's figure being even somewhat higher than for the corresponding month last year. This pleasant fact is to be attributed to the increase in the export of goods of high value.

\* \* \*

In the first nine months of 1942, there has been a considerable increase in the prices of imported goods; 1,200 million frs. were paid in 1939 for approximately 600,000 ten-ton railway trucks. This year 300 million frs. more had to be paid, although the goods imported amounted to only half those imported in 1939. Thus,

*Xmas Greetings*

Following last year's practice we propose to publish in our December issue a collective greeting. Those of our readers and friends wishing to be included should forward name and address to our office, not later than Friday, December 11th, together with remittance for 5/-.



on an average, a truck load of imported goods cost 2,000 frs. in 1939, 3,000 frs. in 1940, 4,100 in 1941 and 4,700 this year. There is a corresponding rise in the cost of living.

\* \* \*

The accounts of the Federal Alcohol Administration closed at the end of June with a surplus of 13 million francs, which will enable it to pay to the cantons a dividend of frs.1.25 per head of population, a fact which for some years did not occur. This surplus was obtained although the sale of drinkable alcohol was greatly restricted. As a result of this restriction and the increased price, the consumption of spirit has retrogressed by more than half of the one time consumption. A further politico-economic gain for the new alcohol law can be registered by making possible the conservation of fruit and potatoes without distilling. These are assets which to-day are of double value.

\* \* \*

Professor E. Baumann, head of the Institute for low current technic at the Federal Technical Academy in Zurich, has invented a procedure whereby it is possible to increase the exploitation of the existing telephone cable net. Whereas up to now certain apparatus and connections permitted three conversations at the same time over two pairs of wires, the development of the technic of the carrier frequency by Prof. Baumann allows a transmission at the same time of 12 conversations on one pair of wires. This method has been successfully used for some time between Zurich and Olten. If a cable contains 12 pairs of wires, 144 conversations can take place without interference at the same time. As at present the manufacture of cables is almost at a standstill owing to lack of materials the invention is of the utmost importance as through it the existing cable net will be sufficient for many years to come without having to be extended.

\* \* \*

The Swiss Insurance Company against hail damage never had been called upon to pay out such heavy compensation during the 62 years of its existence than what it had to pay out during the last summer. In all over 39,000 cases of hail damage were reported for which 10.25 million francs were paid in compensation. The premiums receipts for the 120,000 policies amounted to 6.7 million francs, yet the Company can, without endangering its assets pay the amounts due, thanks to re-insurance and its very strong reserves. As a whole the year 1942 was the worst year for hail within living memory and hailstorms were experienced in districts which had been considered as being immune from this visitation.

\* \* \*

The want of rubber tyres and inner tubes which is felt in the flourishing bicycle industry has induced numerous inventors to produce ersatz tyres. Unfortunately all these inventions proved of very little use. To prevent cyclists from disappointments, the cycle industry in Bienne has opened a test station, where all these inventions are tested for their suitability or otherwise and the results of these tests are made public.

\* \* \*

In order to combat the black market in small quantities of goods, the Bernese cantonal central office for war economy has ordered the application of draconic measures. In future a stricter supervision of the traffic by the police is to be instituted. This will mean a luggage control of the traveller.

A new non-stop clock is described in the "Irish Times" (Oct. 28th); we have been unable to discover its birth-place nor the name of the producer, but this is what our contemporary discloses: "A Swiss clock which has just arrived in Britain is not only one of the most ingenious ever made, but makes scientific history by achieving perpetual motion. Once set going it is never wound up; it just keeps on and on recording the time until it dies of old age. The clock is propelled by variations of temperature and barometric pressure. The motor consists of a drum, on the interior of which is assembled a flexible metallic bellows. The space between the bellows and the outer drum casing is hermetically sealed, and contains ether chlorine in gas form. With the slightest increase in temperature some of the gas liquifies and the interior pressure of the bellows is lowered. A compression spring is actuated with a rise in temperature, pressure of the bellows is increased, which gives an accordion-like action to the motor. So slow is the running of the works that friction is eliminated, and no oil is required.

### Army

For the first time since the Federal Constitution of 1848 has been in force has a military court pronounced the death sentence by shooting for espionage. Three soldiers, two quarter master sergeants and a driver in a battery of field artillery, were the delinquents. The first two made a request for the squashing of the sentence, which appeal was considered by an independent appeal court and rejected. They then submitted a petition for mercy, which can only be granted by the Federal Assembly. The third condemned man merely presented a petition for mercy. The three cases were examined by a committee specially appointed for that purpose by the Federal Assembly. After a sitting lasting for several days it reached the conclusion to recommend to the Federal Assembly, which met specially to hear and decide on the petitions, the rejection of all three appeals. The three traitors met their desert. In the "Schweizerischen Illustrierten" appeared at the time an article by General Guisan in which he states that "traitors of the country are to be removed from society, for the homeland goes before anything else and that one thing is imperative: loyalty to your country!"

\* \* \*

The extraordinary session of the Federal Assembly met on Monday and Tuesday to consider appeals for pardon by the three men condemned to death. The appeals were rejected by a majority of approximately ten to one. Sentence has meanwhile been executed. "Everybody, whatever his outlook, has the same imperative duty — to sacrifice everything for the country's independence and liberty" said the President in his opening speech. "Our community may not be perfect, but one need only look across the Swiss border to realise its value for us all." The Federal Assembly which has met to-day" he ended, "reminds those who may have forgotten it of the responsibility they bear and the risks they run."

On Monday night, November 9th, the Assembly met to consider the procedure for the consideration of appeals for pardon. One suggestion which gave rise to detailed discussion was whether the preliminary commission dealing with an appeal for pardon should have access to all available documents, or whether the Federal Council, for reasons of national security should

be entitled to withhold certain files. It was decided that all documents be submitted to the commission, as was done in the present case, unless the Federal Council decided otherwise. A further resolution was passed, concerning the period within which an appeal for pardon must be lodged. The majority accepted a period of three days. A further question was: when is the Federal Assembly to decide such appeals? The answer was: as quickly as possible. One member of the Federal Council said that further death sentences and appeals for pardon might be expected and that it would be unreasonable to call a session of the Federal Assembly in each case. Other business, no less important, was dealt with in ordinary session. The Federal Council, however, decided in favour of calling an extraordinary session at the earliest possible moment. It was universally agreed that the trial should be in camera, and the result ascertained by secret ballot. The suggestion was made that the public should be informed of the sentence but that the number of votes should be withheld. This was opposed by a journalist who considered such a procedure conducive to false rumours. The Federal Council agreed and decided that the Press should be informed of the findings. It was stated in the official announcement on the result of the appeals that such treason might have had immediate and disastrous effect. Although the Swiss people had abolished the death sentence, war made military considerations decisive. The announcement expressed this when it said: "The State must show no weakness when its existence is at stake."

A member of the Federal Council in a speech to the youth of Basle, made a striking comment on this by saying that the attitude of the United Federal Assembly must be considered an expression of the Supreme Authorities' intention to secure the Country's defence. It was, furthermore, an expression of the determination to maintain the Country's independence even at the cost of the most heavy sacrifices. It is a relief to the armed forces to know that everything was being done to protect them from treason, and those who might still allow themselves to be induced to commit treason could no longer be able to hope to escape punishment. He also appealed to youth to prepare itself for the struggle and help to build a truly Swiss national community. All physical, spiritual and moral forces were needed and physical training and the development of moral and spiritual forces should be systematically stimulated and practised.

\* \* \*

Our anti-aircraft gunners had plenty of opportunities for exhibiting their valour during the last few weeks when waves of R.A.F. machines flew over our country some of them crossing the frontier as far east as Stein-am-Rhein proceeding over the Engadine. The calm attitude of our people during the alerts and the sober reports and comments of the Swiss press intensified the threatening protest addressed to Berne by the German government against "allowing" British bombers to pass over our territory. Our authorities are, of course, no more able to stop this technical infringement of our sovereign rights than they can "disallow" the unceasing and heavy war material traffic passing over our railway system on the Gothard and Simplon lines for another one of the belligerents. We all sympathise with our Minister in London in his delicate mission of bringing these fruitless protests to the notice of the British Government.

The army command in agreement with the Federal Council have decided that black-out times shall be fixed from 8 in the evening (instead of ten) until 5 in the morning until further notice; this measure was taken in consequence of recent violation of Swiss air space. It is also announced that in future the public will no longer be required to take shelter when an alarm is sounded though they are recommended to do so on account of the danger from splinters. Theatres, cinemas, concerts, etc., need no more interrupt their performances.

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The "Review," October 30th, records the result of an unusual law case as follows: "A fight between a German military plane and a Swiss patrolling aircraft in June, 1940, has led to an interesting law suit before the Court of Appeal at Berne. The Swiss machine caught fire and the pilot baled out. He died later from burns. His life assurance policy for fr.10,000 with the Geneva Life excluded death arising out of participation in flights. It was admitted before the court that the accident was a war risk, but the legal issue before the court was whether death was due to a participation in a flight or as a consequence of the military duties of the assured, which were covered under the policy. The court held that no recovery under the policy would have been possible if death had occurred owing to any risk inherent in aviation, e.g., atmospheric influences, bad sight, etc. In the present case the assured was killed in action and the accident was therefore not an aviation but a war accident and, as such, was covered under the policy.

### Rationing

With the arrival of 16th October the happy time in which bread and milk could be bought *ad libitum* in Switzerland, has ended. From this day onward the normal ration of bread has been fixed at 225 grammes and for milk at 4 decilitres. Young children are allowed only half a bread ration, whereas heavy workers have their ration increased by up to 200 gr.; on the other hand, young children have a daily ration of 7 dect. full cream milk, youth up to 19 years of age 6 dect. and people over 65 years are allowed 5 dect. The bread rationing is the result of transport difficulties caused through the double blockade and the increase in the consumption of bread, which again was caused by the rationing of essential provisions. Fortunately the potato harvest has been so abundant that potatoes have not been rationed and are expected to last until the next harvest. The rationing of milk had to come, since with the beginning of winter feeding, the decrease of milking cattle by 100,000 heads since the beginning of the war, has now made itself badly felt. There is, however, no reason to complain, as the rations compared with most of the continental countries are still on a higher level.

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The Federal Council has again made clear how closely connected our economy is with foreign countries even to-day. This applies particularly to bread cereals; three quarters of Switzerland's requirements have to be imported mainly from overseas. This necessitates permission from the blockade authorities, provision of shipping space, which has become rather scarce, payment of very high freight rates and the transport over land to our frontiers. These circumstances produce a good many uncertain factors and it will be appreciated



that our authorities are anxious to diminish the consumption of bread by rationing. Similar reasons led to rationing at the beginning of the fourth year of the last war, when, through various mishaps to imports twenty per cent. maize and ten per cent. rice had to be mixed with flour. This experience shows how carefully the authorities have to plan the country's supplies today. Restrictions are imposed while supplies still hold out, and it is stated that to-day the grain situation is not disquieting, as the careful distribution should safeguard the future."

### Traffic

The "*Railway Gazette*," 13th November, publishes the following particulars about the electric power requirements of our railway system: "In 1932 the yearly power consumption of the Swiss Federal Railways amounted to 492 million kWh.; in 1939 an increase of nearly 40 per cent. was registered. In dry years the power installations of the railways can deliver about 640 million kWh., and the remainder is obtained from other power suppliers. In 1940 the increased traffic due to the war brought the yearly consumption up to nearly 740 million kWh., and this was able to be met only because the water supplies in that year happened to be particularly favourable. It is expected that increases in the speed and weight of trains will result in a demand for 700 million kWh. a year by about 1950, and these considerations have prompted a decision to build, in association with the North-Eastern Swiss Power Company, a new power station on the River Aare at Rapperswil, capable of a yearly output of nearly 200 million kWh. Two generator groups now are being installed, one for delivering the standard railway single-phase current, and the entire work is to be finished in about two years' time. The cost is estimated at rather more than 31 million francs."

\* \* \*

The same issue comments on the 1943 budget of the S.F.R.: "The ever-increasing cost of materials, and of maintenance and renewals occasioned by abnormally-heavy traffic are among the chief causes of a deficit of 53,500,000frs. shown in the Swiss Federal Railways budget for 1943. Other contributory factors are increased staff expenditure and the revised system of depreciations to be inaugurated next year. The 25,000,000frs. limit imposed for several years past on "construction" account cannot be maintained, due to the necessity of completing various important works in hand, and of undertaking others of an urgent nature (however prohibitive the cost under present conditions) which will enable the railways to make the best possible use of their limited material, renewal of which is becoming increasingly difficult. The "construction" expenditure is to reach 31,000,000frs.

For traffic receipts the average figure for the years 1938-41 was taken, that is to say, 388,700,000frs. Traffic expenses are estimated at 294,400,000frs., of which 84,400,000frs. are for renewals and maintenance of rolling-stock and installations, an increase of 10,200,000frs. over the 1942 budget estimate and of 20,900,000frs. over the 1941 expenditure."

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Acting on suggestion by Germany, the Federal Council in 1938 agreed to examine the question of the technical possibility and desirability of making the Rhine suitable for navigation from Basle to the lake of

Constance. The Department for the regulation of water supply has recently published an extensive study approaching the problem from the technical as well as from the economic point of view. Without forestalling the decision of the Confederation or the cantons, the Department has submitted two projects for the construction of this water way. For both projects the erection of 14 damming steps are foreseen, which partly are already in existence in the form of moles for hydraulic power works. The technically most difficult problem presents the great drop of the water-level at the Rhine-fall near Schaffhausen. This world-wide known fall must naturally not be spoilt by the erection of locks. After prolonged studies a solution has been found, which in no way will spoil this natural attraction. A canal is to be built starting a considerable distance lower down the stream which by the use of underground tunnels will side-track the fall. To overcome this steep step in this way an increase of 23 million francs has been considered as not too high a price to pay. Based on cost of labour and materials in September 1939 the cost for the 160km. waterway would amount to 114 million francs for the smaller and to 145.9 million for the greater project. The present-day costs of labour and materials would, of course, greatly increase the estimate. Much water will presumably flow over the Rhinefall before the work on either project will be taken in hand.

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The life-story of the latest addition to our mercantile navy is given in the "*Glasgow Herald*," under the title "An Old Salt;" the boat seems to have had many lucky escapes and we hope its future will be marked likewise. Here is the odyssey (October 9th): "Behind the intimation that the Swiss Shipping Company, of Basle, have taken over the Italian steamer *Semien* lies an interesting story of four wars. Built by Messrs. Hawthorn, Leslie and Co., for the Australian frozen meat trade in 1898, she was originally known as the *Morayshire*, and during the South African War was employed by Britain as a troopship and provision-carrier. After that campaign she was engaged on the Australian and New Zealand meat trade service until 1914, when she was sold to the Blue Star Line and renamed the *Brodcliffe*. In the last war she again served as a provision-ship, and narrowly escaped disaster in a submarine attack in the Mediterranean in 1917.

Renamed the *Tuscan Star*, she was later destined for the shipbreakers, but was reprieved and became a tramp steamer under the Italian flag, changing her name again, this time to *Fortunstar*. During the Abyssinian War the vessel once more changed hands, being transferred to another Italian company at Genoa. Renamed *Semien*, she traded between Italy and her East African colonies.

Switzerland has made the purchase from Italy with the Allies' consent. In any case, Italy no longer has any East African colonies.

### Humanitarian

During the time between the 23rd September, the day of the refugee debate in the National Council to the 4th October, 2,200 further refugees have illegally crossed the frontier and have been stopped on our territory. This development proved that the directions laid down by the Federal Council regarding the refugees were not only right, but absolutely necessary. The



number of refugees to-day is about 12,000. In several parts of the country reception camps under military direction and guard have been instituted, where refugees remain until the civil authorities have decided where they can be definitely sheltered, be it in labour or repairing camps. At the beginning of October the Federal Council created the post of a refugee Commissioner at the Federal Police Department. This post has been filled by Ulrich Wildbolz, a Zurich Architect, whose duty it is to get in touch with all the various interested parties and to report to the Federal Police Department the development of the situation of the refugees at the frontiers. He is also to visit periodically the reception camps, but does not occupy himself with individual cases.

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The association "Pro Ticino" which sponsors the erection of a monument and the institution of a foundation in memory of the late Federal Councillor Motta, was able to report at their last General Meeting that the practical execution of the plan was secure. Not only has the Federal Council decided on a gift of frs. 7,000.— towards the foundation and frs. 3,000 towards the monument, but has agreed that part of the 1st of August collection next year, which is for the benefit of youth just leaving school, shall be handed over to the foundation. It is the intention of the organisers of the fund to accumulate a large sum of money, from which a stipend is to be paid to talented and deserving young people to learn a handicraft. The foundation has already collected frs. 150,000.—. Important contributions have been promised from abroad; by the Swiss in Italy alone 200,000 lire have been subscribed.

A competition is taking place for a design of the memorial which is closing at the beginning of January 1943. The monument which is to be of a symbolical character will be erected in a little garden next to the Federal Palais.

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When in the beginning of the thirties the economic crisis was acute private organizations in several cantons instituted a help for families of the unemployed during the winter. The associations were combined into a general association for the whole of Switzerland in 1936, which has since then assisted with constantly increasing success poor citizens who did not have public assistance. Particularly are assisted families with many children, mostly in towns and in mountain districts, also elderly people who are endeavouring to pay their way through life without assistance of canton or municipality. The necessary funds for this "Winter help" are obtained by money collections in the parish, of which amount two thirds remain in the municipality and one third is handed over to a cantonal central fund. The cantonal central fund on their part contribute 5% of it to the general federal fund. Further resources are obtained by the sale of a distinctive emblem and finally by considerable contributions from cantons and Confederation. Last year the voluntary collections amounted to over 3,140,000 francs and public funds added another frs. 700,000 to this sum. With the money thus obtained 150,000 adults and children, or nearly 4% of the total population could be assisted in some way or another.

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The final accounts of the bazaar recently held at the Federal Technical Academy (E.T.H.) in Zurich, show that the previously announced result of 250,000

frs. has been greatly surpassed. The nett amount reaches frs. 350,000.— which is handed over to the "Childrens' fund" of the Swiss Red Cross for defraying Childrens' fares, for distribution of provisions to children in war ravaged countries and for the upkeep of the eight Childrens' homes in unoccupied France.

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According to the Hague Convention of 1907, prisoners of war who are able to escape into a neutral state, can either be received or refused entry by that state. Until now, Switzerland has applied towards such prisoners of war the same rules as are governing the right of asylum of political fugitives and has received them. Since the beginning of the war over 4,000 French escaped prisoners were able to continue their journey and return to unoccupied France. A few individual Belgians, Dutchmen, Englishmen, over 100 Jugoslaves, 16 Greek, 36 Roumanians, and 120 Poles have found a refuge in neutral Switzerland.

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The foundation "Pro Senectute," the voluntary organisation to assist necessitous old men and women, is celebrating its 25th anniversary. It is at present assisting about 40,000 old people through funds obtained by voluntary subscriptions. In the first quarter of a century of its existence it has spent nearly 45 million francs on such assistance.

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The radio-comrades, an association of young people, during a ten weeks labour camp have installed a small electric power works in the Urnerboden, which they presented to the population of the district together with the installation of the conduction network. A party of these young helpers also assisted in the building of a water main in which work the people of the Unerboden were engaged. At a simple ceremony in which the Landammann of Uri thanked the radio-comrades heartily in the name of the population the work was handed over officially.

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Dr. R. Gautier, officer in charge of the health services of the League of Nations, Geneva, arrived in London a fortnight ago on a short visit. He has come over to get in touch with the British and allied Governments' health services for post-war relief, especially in regard to nutrition in occupied Europe, and to discuss the part the League may play in this field. (T.)

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On November the 1st a chappel, dedicated to the memory of the Polish soldiers who gave their life for their country was inaugurated near Soleure. The Polish Minister and many Polish and Swiss personages were present.

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With the 1st December a new set of four "Pro Juventute" stamps will be issued and sold for the benefit of the fund "For Youth." With the two local dresses, one of a girl from Aüsserrhoden, the other of a Glarnerin, the beautiful series of national costumes (Trachten) designed by Carl Liner from Appenzell, will come to an end. The well-designed 5cts. stamp bears the portrait of Niklaus Riggenbach, the inventor of the cog wheel railway and the constructor of the Vitznau Rigi Railway. On the 30cts. stamp the kindly face of the great humanitarian and statesman Konrad Escher von der Linth is depicted.

The Swiss Society for Folklore has been collecting for many years, old and new songs all over the country, which have been carefully deposited in words and tunes in the archive for folk songs. This archive contains today the almost unbelievable number of 26,463 folk songs, yet the collection is not complete. There are still some to come from the Emmental and the Puschlav and the well-known lute-player and singer Hanns in der Gand is collecting the songs sung by our soldiers on active service.

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The skiing associations of Sweden and Switzerland have agreed to exchange outstanding skiers as trainers. The several times champion skier Heinz von Almen from Wengen will go to Sweden for two months to act as trainer and the Swedish jumping champion Sven Salanger and the distance runner Nil Englund will go to Switzerland. Sweden and Switzerland have also arranged an international match at Engelberg.

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After two experienced mountaineers in the district of Saas-Fee, in the canton of Valais, had conquered nine peaks of over 4,000m. inside 23 hours, two other Valaisans completed the same feat in 19 hours in ideal weather.

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Summer time has ceased on October 5th and Switzerland is back again on Central European time.

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Basle observatory reports that October had the highest average temperature in Europe for over a hundred years.

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The unusually mild autumn weather has tempted a few fruit trees in some districts to a second blossoming and in some low lying mountain parts rhododendrons (Alpenrosen) are in bloom.

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Mrs. Camenzind-Ruegg, from Bad Ragaz, who is 83 years old and blind, has knitted 540 pairs of socks for our soldiers on active service. She recently celebrated her golden wedding.

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The death in Lausanne of M. E. Chuard, at the age of 85 years, has been announced. M. Chuard was a former Federal Councillor.

\* \* \*

Dr. Frédéric Guyot, a former president of the Geneva Red Cross, has died in Geneva, aged 75 years.

\* \* \*

The music director of the town of St. Gallen, Hans Heuser has died at the age of 50. He has composed several marches well known throughout the country.

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The one time world champion pistol shot, John Revilliod, died at Nyon on the lake of Geneva, in his 75th year, as the result of an accident. The dead sportsman, who was also a very good skier and yachtsman, shot his world record at the age of 62.

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### UNSER FAHNENEID LAUTET.

Es schwören oder geloben die Offiziere, Unteroffiziere und Soldaten, der Eidgenossenschaft Treue zu halten; für die Verteidigung des Vaterlandes und seiner Verfassung Leib und Leben aufzuopfern; die Fahne niemals zu verlassen; die militärischen Gesetze treulich zu befolgen; den Befehlen der Obern genauen und pünktlichen Gehorsam zu leisten; strenge Mannszucht zu beobachten und alles zu tun, was die Ehre und Freiheit des Vaterlandes erfordert.

### SWITZERLAND'S FOOD.

(“*Economist*,” November 14th, 1942)

After three years of war, the food situation remains, on the whole, satisfactory in Switzerland, thanks mainly to the foresight of the Federal Government, which, as early as 1937, began accumulating reserves of all kinds. There is no abundance, but apart from sugar, rice, edible fats and wheat, imports of which are reduced almost to nothing, foodstuffs are sufficient, though all of them are now rationed. The last three products to come under the rationing scheme were meat, bread and milk.

At the outbreak of the war, there were about 1,711,000 head of cattle and some 881,000 pigs in Switzerland. Fodder supplies were seriously handicapped by the war and the ploughing up of pasture required by the expansion of agriculture; the severe drought which prevailed from the middle of 1941 in western Switzerland and the continued exports of cattle resulted in an alarming decrease in the national herd. In 1940, the decrease was 17,000 head, and the total fell by 110,000 in 1941 and by another 100,000 by September 30th, 1942, when it was nearly 40,000 below the lowest figure reached in 1918. The meat ration, which had originally been fixed at about 3lb. a month, was twice reduced during the spring and fixed at 2lb; that, however, was found to be still too generous, and, at the beginning of July, the authorities imposed on the population a two-week period of vegetarian diet, which was prolonged and lasted until almost the end of August. These measures, and the foreign demand for cheese instead of cattle this autumn, eased the situation; after falling to 1lb. a month the meat ration has now been raised to 3lb. again. Moreover, meat had to be stored against periods when the supply is low, and modern refrigerating storehouses had to be built. The Government has also issued a decree regulating the sale of cattle, which is now entirely under Government control. Farmers and merchants have to bring their cattle to official receiving centres, where they are valued by purchasing committees and then distributed throughout the country.

Another consequence of the shrinkage of the national herd is the fall in milk production, and, to regulate consumption, rationing is being introduced on November 1st, when each person will receive a minimum daily ration of 4 decilitres (about  $\frac{3}{4}$  pint).

According to reports in Berne last September, Switzerland has sufficient agricultural products for the whole population until next summer, provided there is no wastage. Cereals are, nevertheless, far from abundant, and as imports are practically non-existent, bread rationing has been enforced from October 15th. Each person is allowed a minimum quantity of 225 grammes (about  $\frac{1}{2}$ lb) of 48-hour-old bread made of wheat, barley, potatoes and other ingredients.

A new appeal has been made to agriculturists to add another 247,000 acres to the cultivated area. The Government recently decided to grant a fresh credit of Frs. 50 millions for land improvements. The area of agricultural land, which has already been increased by 311,000 acres since the beginning of the war, will thus reach the total of 1,100,000 acres which is considered indispensable for assuring the nation's minimum food supplies.