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The Swiss Observer

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NEWS AT RANDOM

Federal

The Minister of State, Mr. Richard Law, has conveyed the following message to the Swiss Minister for Foreign Affairs, M. Pilet-Golaz:—

"Now that the repatriation of our sick and wounded prisoners and of the protected personnel who came with them from Germany has been completed, I wish, on behalf of the Secretary of State, to express to you and, through you, to the Swiss representatives and their staffs, to whose unwearied efforts we owe so much, very sincere and grateful thanks. Without Swiss help, an operation which has been welcomed here and throughout the British Commonwealth of Nations with feelings of deep satisfaction and relief would have been impossible."

The following are the results of the elections for our second chamber, the National Council, which took place throughout the country on October 30th-31st: Socialists 56 seats (11 gains), Radicals 47 (2 losses), Catholic-Conservatives 43, Farmers and Bourgeois 22, Liberals 8, Democrats 5 (one loss), Landessring 6 (four losses), Unattached 7. The new Council has been elected on the basis of the last census and will comprise 194 councillors, i.e., an increase of seven. Generally speaking our people have once more demonstrated their firm belief in the vitality of democracy and their determination to strengthen the forces ensuring social security. The outstanding fact is the ascendancy of the Socialists who are now the strongest party in the Chamber and will presumably insist on their old claim of having a direct representation in the Federal Council. In this connection the latest news item that Federal Councillor Ernest Wetter has resigned for reasons of health is interesting. Little surprise will be caused by the reduction of nearly half of the Landessring bloc as the questionable ramifications of their leader, Duttweiler, have been followed by the defection of numerous adherents notably Prof. William Rappard of Geneva who declined to stand again.

The 1944 budget of the Confederation is estimated to show a deficit of 123 million francs, roughly a quar-

ter of the total expenditure has risen enormously during war years and is 31 million more than the present period and 49 million more compared with 1942. Receipts are expected to be about 5 million up but the amount of 389 million francs compared with 1942 shows an additional income of about 50 million francs. The large adverse balance is of course mainly due to the steady drop in customs revenue which is the backbone of our fiscus; compared with the last pre-war year 1939 the loss to-day is about 37 million francs. Higher administration costs, the cost of living bonus to Federal employees, etc., are having a large share in the increased expenditure. The above are the items in the ordinary accounts but the extra-ordinary budget (mobilisation or national defence) impose an additional heavy burden of 1340 million francs which will have to be added to the 5,642 millions francs expended under this heading to the end of the present year; thus about seven thousand million francs will be the total cost of maintaining our neutrality unless the war takes a completely unexpected turn. The special taxes so far imposed (Deckungsmassnahmen) secure an annual income of 335 million francs which it is hoped will amortise the national defence expenditure in 25 years; so far, by the end of this year, 1,600 million francs will have been collected.

The Federal Council ratified the economic agreement with Hungary, signed in Budapest on 20th October. Concerning exchange of goods, both parties have agreed to continue the practice established as a result of past negotiations. As regards goods to be supplied to Switzerland, the following will be imported: grain, vegetables, seeds, cattle for slaughter, timber, silk remnants, willows for basket-making, various chemical

CITY SWISS CLUB.

Messieurs les Membres sont avisés que

L'ASSEMBLEE MENSUELLE

aura lieu mardi le 7 décembre au Brown's Hotel, Dover Street, W.1, le dîner commencera à 6h. précise.

ORDRE DU JOUR:

Procès-verbal.	Démissions.
Admissions.	Divers.

Une conférence nous sera donnée par Mons. André Dupart, Directeur de Cabinet de Mons. André Philip, qui parlera "Sur quelques idées pour la reconstruction de la France."

Les Membres sont priés de s'inscrire par écrit pas plus tard que le 4 décembre auprès de Mons. P. A. Moehr, Hon. Sec., Imperial House, Kingsway, W.C.2. Prière de s'abstenir de téléphoner.

LE COMITE.

goods, etc. Swiss exports to Hungary were also adapted to present conditions; these include machines, instruments, watches, aniline dyes and certain chemical articles. As far as possible existing conditions in both countries were taken into account, but the delicate question of transport was left open. The pact is of a temporary nature and expires on Sept. 30th next year.

* * *

Following the events beyond our southern frontier the Swiss press has been allowed to express a considerable measure of compassion and in commenting on the war situation generally and exhibits a healthy freedom which the official censorship seems to tolerate. This has given rise again to German repatriate referring to "louts in certain Swiss editorial offices" and to "the barks of these little dogs"; an article in the leading German daily is headed "Is Basle in England."

(No! And it is not in Germany either. *Ed. S.O.*).

* * *

The shifting of the theatre of war to Italy has also increased the interest in the neutrality of Switzerland in several foreign countries. In the course of a meeting of the Committee of the National Council on Foreign affairs this problem was thoroughly discussed in the presence of Federal Councillor Pilet, chief of the Political Department and it was established that the policy of the Federal Council was unalterably directed to "maintain a correct relationship towards all States on the basis of a defensive, comprehensive and honest neutrality, to preserve peace to the country and honour, independence and freedom to its people." By this pronouncement the position of Switzerland has once again been clearly defined and the neutrality has been confirmed as an unchangeable fundamental principle of the State.

Cantonal

Large majorities were secured by three proposals submitted to the citizens of the canton Zurich. A revision of the taxation system chiefly by increasing the contributions of the "upper classes" will bring additional funds to the cantonal exchequer whilst the other two schemes sanction a credit of about forty million francs to alleviate unemployment and the housing scarcity.

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In the Zurich Kantonsrat two members demanded an explanation as to how it was possible that the department chief Vetterli was able to abstract 90,000 meat coupons. It was stated that he possessed a key to the lumber room where large quantities of surrendered coupons were stored and that nobody discovered a method yet by which such used coupons could be rendered valueless.

* * *

For many centuries past the inhabitants of Zurich have held the "Boys shooting festival" (Knabenschiessen) in the autumn of every year, at which boys of pre-military age participate. This year more than 5,100 "men" at ages from 12-18 showed their skill in shooting. Winner of the competition was the 13 year-old Harry Ruffin from Zurich, who, with the old ordnance rifle at 300 m. was only two points below the possible maximum. A second youngster, Ralph Sagelsdorf, from Uitikon a/Albis, had the same result, but was beaten in the tie. A special pleasure was this year in store for these boys, as General Guisan presented a beautiful challenge cup to be competed for by the best riflemen amongst cadets, boy scouts or pre-service youth (Vorunterricht). Besides this cup a splendid selection of prizes awaited the competitors and each of them received the traditional "Wurst und Brot". General Guisan, in a letter sending his greetings, exhorted the boys to prepare themselves to serve their country, and as soldiers, with a will for freedom, to preserve that readiness to the last moment. The message was received with great enthusiasm by the boys.

* * *

Since time immemorial there are in the middle of the Limmat in Zurich, not far from the main railway station, some buildings which stand on a pile grid where the stream provides, free of charge, the necessary water-power to some of the trades carried on in those buildings. Now the houses as well as the pile grid have through time and water got into such a state of decay, that fears of a possible collapse have arisen. At the moment this old part of Zurich is being pulled down, thus giving an unobstructed view on to the lake.

* * *

A strong committee representing trade, industry and tourism, has been formed in Zurich to take in hand the construction of a large airport on waste land near Kloten.

* * *

After a lively campaign the inhabitants of Horgen (Zurich) rejected by a small majority a demand by the shop assistants backed by the socialists to close stores and shops at five o'clock on Saturday afternoons.

* * *

Believed to be the oldest Swiss, Alois Gabriel, of Unterwalden, celebrated his 103rd anniversary on the 6th inst.

* * *

In the canton of Zug a project to erect an aerodrome between Cham and Zug has been rejected for technical and financial reasons.

* * *

The Berne municipal council has passed the 1944 budget which foreshadows a deficit of over four-and-a-half million francs.

* * *

Fribourg is one of the few cantons which is entirely self-supporting. A large portion of the agricultural products are exported to neighbouring cantons; the cultivated area has nearly doubled from 15,500 hectares in 1918 to 29,500 in 1943. About 850 truck

loads of surplus cereals have benefited the rest of the country.

The tobacco crop in the Broye valley has produced about 900 tons, which is less than in previous years, but the quality is stated to be excellent; the falling-off is due to drought.

The 400th anniversary of the death of Hans Holbein, the painter, was commemorated by a ceremony in Basle, at the Fine Arts Museum, where his most famous works are hung.

Holbein, who was born in Augsburg in 1497, spent most of his life in England, where he died in 1543. He was buried in Westminster Abbey, and some of his finest drawings form part of the Windsor Castle collection.

Dr. Robert Flatt, a well-known authority on sports and gymnastics and Federal chief expert for supervising the examination as to the physical fitness of recruits is celebrating his eightieth anniversary in the best of health; all the Balois in our Colony are anxious to send him the best of wishes.

At a special manifestation in Schaffhausen the mayor welcomed about 600 young men who had reached the age of 20; they each received a present and a copy of the communal charter.

The St. Gall Grosse Rat has approved the 1944 budget which with an expenditure of 45 million francs anticipates a deficit of four million francs.

A large number of villages and communes in the canton Grisons will be known in future by slightly different names; this change is in conformity with a revision of the Constitution in order to give effect to the adoption of Romansch as the fourth national language. Altogether 87 changes have been decided upon the chief of them being Samaden which will be known as "Samedan," Truns "Trun," Lenz "Lantsch-Lenz," Munster "Munstair-Munster," Celerina "Schlarigna-Celerina" and Bergun "Bravuoga-Bergun."

A large part of the small village of Arbaz, near Sitten, was destroyed by fire, said to have originated in a barn. Over ten buildings were reduced to ashes, many families were ruined amongst whom are the Sernier, Quarroz and Torrent.

The present population of the town of Neuchâtel is stated to be 24,797.

By a decree of the Geneva Conseil d'Etat all children under six will have to wear the official identity disc in use by the Red Cross.

In Geneva mushrooms can only be sold at the open markets where a special inspector is always in attendance; the latter is giving free advice to any purchaser of this delicacy. (Our readers will be interested to hear that mushrooms which are in such great demand in this country contain no nourishment at all).

A black market affair involving the illicit sale of about 100 tons of foodstuffs (mainly flour) has been discovered in Zurich. The goods are supposed to come from the canton Aargau where the farmers had under-declared their crop. Over 100 persons were engaged in the distribution and the chief agent kept a

record of his transactions in a special pigeon-hole inside the radiator of his car.

The Government of the canton of Vaud has approved a project for financial assistance to the Yverdon-St. Croix Railway Company in the Jura to permit the electrification of the line. The total expense to be borne by the Company, the Federal Government, the Canton and the Communes concerned is likely to exceed three million francs. Owing to the present lack of raw material, only the first stretch of the line can be dealt with during the war. The work is expected to take eighteen months.

Louis Gérold, stated to be the last postillon of the Simplon, died at the age of 83, for 45 years he had been driving the postal coach drawn by five horses over the well-known pass.

Army

Immediately the news got abroad of the armistice between Italy and the Allies, the Federal Council and the Supreme Command of the Army took the necessary measures to occupy every alpine pass. The frontier troops, which are constantly in readiness, were at once mobilised. Besides them several army units inclusive the fortress troops of St. Maurice, the St. Gotthard and Sargans were called up. The mobilisation was completed with habitual quiet and speed and the people of Switzerland, as well as those of the belligerents can be fully confident that the country and its neutrality is in safe keeping.

Lt. Rolf Fehlmann, from Winterthur, was accidentally shot during military exercises.

An exhibition flight near Gstaad was responsible for the death of Lt. Domenjoz Ives, a 23 year old student at the Geneva University.

In the afternoon of October 14th an American Fortress made a forced landing on a farm near Reinach (Baselland); the crew of eight, one of whom subsequently succumbed to his injuries was interned.

It is officially stated that Swiss territory was again violated by foreign aircraft. During the night of 21st-22nd October. Single aircraft, whose nationality could not be ascertained, crossed the southern frontier and flew over the cantons of Ticino and Grisons. Flares were dropped at various points. A German bomber which flew into Swiss territory near

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, 10th December 1943, together with remittance for 5/-.



Switzerland, where a big Protestant gathering of the Canton Valais was being held, with services in French and German for the hundreds of persons who had come from all parts of the Canton.

The Australians were given a great reception by the Swiss, and a service in English was held for them by Pastor Hahn of Sierre, who was formerly in London."

Economical

The Federal Council has authorised the National Bank to open special credits for the benefit of the watch industry in order to stimulate export notably to America.

In spite of the high cost and scarcity of instruments the number of Radio subscribers has increased during September by 545, totalling at the end of the month 757,619; since January 28,388 have invested in new installations.

Somewhat a stir has been caused in the English press by the official communication that the well-known firm of Sulzer Brothers, of Winterthur, has been placed on the English black list. There are already 1,163 names on this list, and it is, of course, no crime for a Swiss firm or individual to be branded in this way; our people have to work for a living and unfortunately our industrial leaders and concerns must depend on export. In a general way this export is counterbalanced by the import of raw materials vital for our very existence. The fact that the senior of this firm, Dr. Hans Sulzer, has been Swiss Minister in Washington, and the head of a Swiss trade delegation in this country negotiating with the Ministry of Economic Warfare has invested this regrettable development with added interest. Dr. Sulzer also holds important appointments at Berne; he is at the Department of Public Economy War Section, and President of the Imports and Exports Commission. On November 5th, the Swiss Government issued a rather unconvincing official communiqué in which, according to "Reuter," it is asserted "that during the war the firm has exported neither arms nor munitions. The entire output of its armament division is being used to supply the Swiss Army and is only operated on contract from the Swiss authorities."

"Contrary to certain statements, the Sulzer firm has since the outbreak of war exported neither submarine engines nor spare parts for vessels of this character."

"The inclusion of this firm in the black list is liable to affect its branch factories and engineering department in the matter of the opportunities for export afforded them by the Swiss regulations regarding the supervision of imports and exports."

"The head of the Department of Public Economy, in agreement with the Federal Council, recently gave Swiss engineering firms instructions not to sign any undertaking regarding exports which would submit them to foreign control."

"Sulzer Brothers refused to sign such an undertaking. This firm has been included in the black list although it has confined itself to exporting, in virtue of the instructions of the Federal Department of Public Economy, articles coming within the range of its peace-time production."

At about the same time an order was issued by the Federal Council forbidding business houses to make

Lugano at 20.54, landed at 22.20 in Dubendorf, having lost its bearing. The crew of four were interned.

A military funeral service took place at the English church in Ragaz when the fourteen members killed in the crash of the American fortresses on October 1st were buried in a common grave in the presence of representatives of the American Legation.

We may yet see some of our compatriots in the actual fighting line not on the orders of General Guisan but of Commander von Pfyffer who is the C.O. of about a hundred unscripted but privileged gallant warriors known as the Papal Swiss Guard. The news that they have had to discard their picturesque uniform of medieval cuirass with two-handled Crusader sword and change into ordinary battle dress with automatic rifles and live ammunition may have caused visions of the Tuileries in some of them though we hardly think that they will be called upon to emulate that historic feat. Like all famous regiments they are proud of their history. They were called into being by Pope Julius II during his reign from 1503 to 1513; originally the Swiss Guard was recruited exclusively from Lucerne and it is recorded that Michelangelo designed their uniform.

Many of us will appreciate a sign of life and activity from a former friend of our Colony when reading the following from "The Times," October 15th: "About one hundred Australians, who had escaped from prisoner of war camps in Italy and made the journey over the Alps, arrived recently at Brigue, in

contracts, directly or indirectly, formally or tacitly, with foreign Governments or their representatives. Unilateral declarations to foreign Governments binding the contractor to imports or exports of goods are also banned.

This looks as if all foreign trade is being temporarily suspended despite the commercial pacts recently concluded with some of our neighbours.

The last act of this melodrama took place in the House of Commons when Mr. Dingle Foot, Parliamentary Secretary for Economic Warfare, in answer to a question stated in a written reply that the Government, while realising that Swiss manufacturers could not avoid trade with Germany, were bound to take a serious view of cases where deliveries to the Axis were greatly in excess of normal trade. The firm was invited to sign an undertaking — similar to that given by a large number of neutral firms — that they would confine such deliveries to their normal pre-war volume. This they refused to do, and there was no option but to include their names in the list. He would like to make it clear that traders in European neutral countries should not too hastily assume that when the armistice was signed we would at once forget those who had elected to assist our enemies.

A somewhat gloomy outlook was given to the member of the Swiss Association of Tourist Traffic when they met at Neuchâtel. They were advised to cater in future for tourists with little money and that a recovery of tourist traffic on the pre-war level cannot be expected, and that a recovery after the war will take time.

The two express trains from Berne and Lucerne which were timed to cross at about 9.30 p.m. at Schüpfheim, collided on Sunday, October 17th. The locomotive of the Berne train, the driver of which was able to jump from his cab, partly demolished the two last coaches of the Lucerne train. Four passengers were killed outright, they are: Charles Daepf from La Chaux-de-Fonds, Gottfried Weibel, from Berne, Frau Dora Reh, a refugee, and Angelo Bordoni, from Berne. Five of the 27 injured, who were taken to local hospitals, were badly mauled.

Traffic

Federal President Celio spoke on November 5th at the transport and traffic congress in Zurich. After greeting the organisers and participants he declared that Switzerland was able to assert herself in every sphere. The keystone of the Helvetic edifice — democracy and liberty — were preserved intact, and if further proof of this should be required, the recent elections were able to offer ample evidence in this matter, as they were preceded by many long and open discussions which all passed off in an atmosphere of complete freedom. They resulted in the formation of a Government in which all parties were represented. Mr. Celio then spoke of the economic situation. He stated that the economic position as well as the finances of Switzerland had remained healthy and that every effort is being made to keep them in that state. The Federal Railways required financial strengthening and some of the private railways needed an equal treatment, the motor industry intended to take a legitimate revenge and the tourist traffic will become even more flourishing than ever before. There is likewise a Switzerland which educates

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and teaches. Confident as she is in understanding foreign Governments and peoples, Switzerland, favoured thus far by providence, knows that she has undertaken an important duty towards the other nations, which consists of proving by acts of charity that democracy and liberty are the primordial source of all progress and a just peace.

The congress also heard an address by Mr. Dubois on the tendency of motor cars and their influence on the development of road traffic. Professor Altkrenz outlined in a lecture prospective aerial technology and Mr. Muri, the General Manager of the P.T.T., spoke of the progress made in the various branches of transmission of news and expressed the hope of having for these a time table even more complete than that of the S.B.B. and a faster postal service by making use of the air mail. The facilities of the automatic telephone service are to be greatly extended.

Oversea goods for our country are now unloaded at Barcelona and Marseilles as Genoa is no more available for ordinary traffic.

Humanitarian

At the moment a movement is taking place in Switzerland to raise means for the extension of the building of the university sanatorium in Leysin, for the benefit of tubercular students and professors, which was started some twenty years ago and which was to become an international establishment. The old house has already served to heal and re-establish to complete health over 1,000 professors and students from 42 different countries and at the same time en-

abled them to continue their studies. Many hundreds of doctors' dissertations have been written there and many more examination preparations have taken place. The sanatorium to be erected is to have 208 beds as well as the necessary work and study rooms, practical laboratories, etc. The costs are estimated at five million francs, to which sum the Federal Assembly has already granted half a million as a subsidy. The further financing is to be achieved by the issuing of 208 founders shares of 25,000 frs. which will be used to maintain one bed each. The building is to be started as soon as 100 beds have thus been endowed.

* * *

There are more than 1,000 escaped British prisoners among the 61,000 refugees in Switzerland.

"Swiss Divorce Record One of World's Worst" is the heading of an uncomplimentary article in the "*Catholic Times*," October 29th, which also criticises the declining birthrate. It bases its conclusions on some statements which appeared in the Fribourg daily "*La Liberté*." We should have liked our contemporary to give some reliable statistics justifying this sweeping assertion; like in this country divorce is a legal right or privilege and generally a mutually welcome release with prospects of a happier future.

* * *

Plans and prophecies as to what the future has or should have in store for us are often too perplexing for the ordinary unimaginative man to study, but here is a simple scheme submitted by a fair contributor to "*Time and Tide*" which the Editor deemed fit to publish in the issue of November 13th. We hardly think that our councillors at Berne would care to take on the job of becoming the guardians of the whole of Europe. Here it is: "Your note upon the Swiss Elections prompts me to make a suggestion for the pacification of Europe that I have had in mind for many years. 'The Swiss people,' you say, 'have demonstrated their continued belief in the vitality of democracy, and its ability to reconcile a liberal outlook with future demands for a system of social security, without subordinating the individual to the State.' Perfect! Already we know that the Swiss have persuaded Catholic and Protestant, German, French and Italian to live in amity together. Why then, after the war, should we not simply extend the boundaries of Switzerland until they comprise the whole of Europe? No change need take place in the religious or national preferences of the peoples concerned. Simply year by year Swiss land administration should spread one or fifty, or a hundred miles (for after all, we are in a hurry) an A Ring, a B Ring, and a C Ring, and so on of new Swiss mandated territory extending every year. In short, a much needed nursery governess for Europe! In three or four years, at the hundred-miles a-year rate, Swiss good behaviour would have extended over nearly the whole of France, much of Germany, Italy, the Balkans, and even into Spain. It would have reached to the English Channel, and at this point, perhaps, my letter had better stop. But I see no disadvantage in being born a skater speaking French, German and Italian."

* * *

As many of our friends have forgotten what the inside of a private motor-car looks like, here is the description of a new gadget which they will not wish to miss when the good old times come back again.

It is taken from "*Commercial Motor*," November 12th: "The accurate measurement of sound is a matter of considerable interest to the motoring industry and road transport in general. In this connection the Swiss are now producing a device known as the Gasjet Phonometer, which measures on the hydrodynamic principle, and is produced by James Jaquet, Ltd., Thannerstrasse, 19-25, Basle. The surface of a jet of air or other gas emerging from a suitably shaped nozzle is extremely sensitive to a disturbance of equilibrium. The new instrument comprises a nozzle, which is roughly elliptical in cross-section, and air or gas at low pressure from a cylinder with a reduction valve is emitted. Above the nozzle is a Pitot tube with a small trap disc. This leads to a simple pressure 'level' with an alcohol filling, which acts as a projectile manometer. To use the device, first a steady jet of air is directed on to the Pitot tube, the manometer then registers a maximum displacement. If sound waves now fall upon the section immediately above the nozzle, the jet pressure is at once reduced, and the indicator recedes on the scale. It is necessary merely to graduate this scale according to the frequency and amplitude of the incoming sound, or the instrument can be delivered already gauged. According to the length of the jet, ranges between 300 and 3,000 Hertz or between 2,000 and 11,000 Hertz can be measured with the same instrument. It can also be used in the sphere of ultra sound, measurements having been extended to a frequency of 16,000 Hertz."

* * *

The "*Daily Worker*," October 30th, has discovered where Swiss alarm clocks can be obtained. Here is the hidden spot if you care to take your place in the queue: "Two shops in King's Cross, London, are selling alarm clocks—but at vastly different prices.

"In the window of one are Government-controlled clocks costing 16s. 9d., which can be purchased only by transport workers holding permits from their union, but in the window of the other shop are alarm clocks offered for the sum of 45s. and for which no permit is required.

"They are, I learned, part of a new consignment from Switzerland, and the permit order, apparently, applies only to those alarm clocks manufactured in America.

"So, if you can pay the price, you can get a Swiss-made alarm clock whether your work is of vital importance or not. It appears, 'the sky's the limit.'"

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