

# News at random

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# The Swiss Observer

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## PUBLISHER'S ANNOUNCEMENT.

Many subscribers have on different occasions expressed the opinion, that under the present changed conditions the "Swiss Observer" might be published at shorter intervals; we feel that we can now gratify their wish.

In future we shall go to publication twice monthly, namely on the 2nd and 4th Friday (a week later where there are five Fridays in the month).

We are sure that our subscribers as well as the advertisers will continue to give us the same support that has enabled us to carry on during the critical years of the war.

We have to remind our readers that the issue of our publication is only permitted on the condition that all the copies are prepaid and in order to fulfill our obligation, we shall be obliged if subscribers would promptly re-new their subscriptions on becoming due, as otherwise we shall be reluctantly compelled to remove such names from the mailing list.



## NEWS AT RANDOM

### Federal

The first of August was celebrated throughout our country on the traditional lines, the flood of oratory generally lacking last year's ardour and hopeful vision. In his broadcast Fed. President Kobelt stressed his firm belief that a new League of Nations could only maintain peace if the world were seized by a better frame of mind; as long as the balance of power was poised by armed forces it would be criminal to neglect our military defence. On the Rütli, Dr. Anderegg from St. Gall, referred with apprehension to the atomic bomb experiments and the measurement of strength between the western and eastern power groups. General Guisan delivered a patriotic address at Fribourg.

It is stated officially that the Federal Council has applied on June 4th for Swiss membership of the Food and Agricultural Organisation of UNO. The applica-

tion will be considered at the second conference of the FAO which opens at Copenhagen on September 2nd.

The necessary residence both for the Legation and the numerous staff having been secured, Minister Flückiger flew on August 2nd by Swissair to Moscow via Berlin; among his retinue were Counsellor of Legation Peter von Salis and the Attaché Robert Graf.

Nothing official has so far appeared in the Swiss press about the Russian diplomatic representation; the English papers have been more communicative and the following is taken from the "Daily Sketch," July 2nd:

"Soviet Russia has bought a mansion in Berne to house her first Legation. Only recently did the U.S.S.R. establish diplomatic relations with Switzerland. The aristocratic 18th century building, surrounded by a large park, is situated in one of the Swiss capital's most elegant districts, and is reported to have cost the Russians 1,000,000 Swiss francs.

By contrast, Britain's Legation in Thunstrasse, a middle-class suburb, is a small house. The Minister's office is equipped with typical Foreign Office furniture. This, to put it mildly, is unimpressive."

A resolution passed by the managing committee of the Party of Labour (Nicolists) declares that the existence and independence of Switzerland can no longer be defended by neutrality and military armaments and calls upon the Federal Council to make preparation for joining UNO and renouncing neutrality.

### Cantonal

Another record in the hotel frequentation in July has been registered in Zurich; the number of visitors that occupied a bed in the hotels exceeding 107,000 — an increase of 56% compared with the same month last year.

Viviculture in the canton Zurich is showing a steady decrease due solely to the shortage of labour for replanting and restocking obsolete vineyards. The cultivated area is now about 701 ha. against 848 in 1938, the chief centres still being Andelfingen, Bülach and Meilen.

The traditional boating excursion arranged by the Zurich Limmatklub on Sunday, July 21st, ended with a similar — though not so disastrous — an accident as the one three years ago when six participants were drowned near Ottenbach, in fact it was intended to honour their memory. Owing to previous heavy rains the Reuss was in a swollen state and the boat cannoned

between the two pillars of the bridge at Mellingen, it finally overturned. The majority of the 25 occupants saved their lives by swimming; two were not so lucky: one is the 36 year old chauffeur Hans Stöckli and the other Heinrich Homberger, who for the last 28 years has been the popular usher (Standesweibel) of the Kantonsrat in Zurich.

\* \* \*

An unexplained explosion in the cellulose factory Attisholz set the clothing of seven attendants alight, necessitating their removal to hospital. Two of them have since died; they are: Dr. Alex von Schulthess, a scientific chemist, and Alf. Frauchiger, an assistant.

\* \* \*

Carl Steiger, a St. Gall painter by profession, died in Zurich at the age of 89. He is better known for his life-long interest in aviation. Some 55 years ago he constructed — and personally experimented with — the first glider at Schaffelstein and has been one of the pioneers of modern aviation.

\* \* \*

The new Susten road between Innertkirchen and Wassen has been opened to general traffic on the 19th inst.; minor building operations are still awaiting completion, particularly where it joins the Gotthard road.

\* \* \*

The picturesque Märjelen lake at the bottom of the Aletschhorn has entirely disappeared due — it is surmised — to the dry weather experienced in the last few years.

\* \* \*

The "biter bit" best describes the sequel of a casual arrest by the Bernese police who questioned a workman trying to sell a valuable brooch. His explanations appearing unsatisfactory, a search of his lodgings was ordered which led to the discovery of a hoard of rings, brooches and other jewellery; he finally admitted that they were the contents of a parcel that he unlawfully appropriated at the local railway station. Further enquiries showed that the jewellery was contained in a trunk that had been stolen from the car of a Geneva jeweller when passing through Lausanne. The original thieves had arranged to forward the loot to accomplices in Zurich with the help of female associates and one of them had actually been relieved of her precious bundle in the train at Berne.

\* \* \*

While on a casual tour of inspection Dr. Paul Guggisberg, the 65-year-old director of the Lötschberg

railway, tripped near Wengi and was hurled to his death; he had been for 19 years a member of the Regierungsrat in Berne.

\* \* \*

In Baselland practically the whole of the potato fields have been destroyed by the colorado beetle. One local paper reports that after a tract of land had been obliterated of its cultivation the beetles could be seen in thousands crawling across country lanes for new fields of operation.

\* \* \*

The body of States Council. Emil Rudin, the director of the Basle co-operative societies, has been recovered from the Birs; he was 60 years old, had been missing for over a fortnight and is believed to have met with an accident while fishing.

\* \* \*

Robert LaRoche, senior of the Basle firm of bankers bearing his name, died at the age of 69; for many years he was president of the Swiss Bankers' Association.

\* \* \*

In spite of the universal wave of juvenile criminality honesty still does survive. Two youngsters in Basle trying to accumulate some funds for their holidays started a house-to-house collection of waste paper and old journals. Amongst paperasse handed to them by one old lady was a crumbled card-board box; on the return in the evening of the daughter she spoke of her good dead and learnt to her dismay that in the box were hidden the latter's savings in notes to the value of about 6,000 francs. The police were informed and the carton was promptly returned intact though it had already passed into the dump of a wastepaper dealer.

\* \* \*

Believed to be the last veteran of the 1870/71 mobilisation, Konrad Baumgartner, a farmer, died in Oberriet (St. Gall) at the age of 96.

\* \* \*

The large German sanatorium at Davos, the Kon-sul Burchard Haus, sometimes described locally as the Brown House, has been leased by the Federal Council for two years to an international Jewish organisation; it will be devoted exclusively to the care of Jewish refugees from the ages of 16 to 25 who suffer from tuberculosis. This decision has given rise to some critical comments in the local press.

\* \* \*

To check the commercial exploitation of our alpine flora, controls are organised occasionally. At one of these inspections at Innerthal (Wäggitel) no less than 500 Edelweiss and 250 Männertreu have been confiscated and the pluckers fined.

\* \* \*

At the Chiasso frontier two motorists vainly tried to pass the Italian customs officials and after a short scuffle one of them, Georg Müller from Zurich, was taken to the post and subjected to a corporal examination; Swiss gold coins to the value of about a million lire were duly taken care of.

\* \* \*

Considerable agitation seized the people of the southern part of the Ticino over the rumour that the body of Mussolini had been smuggled over the frontier and buried in a secluded place. All the picks and shovels were called into action and the small island

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in the Lago Maggiore near Brissago was practically scooped out. — "Se non e vero . . . . .!"

Negotiations are said to be in progress again between the Italian and Swiss authorities for the purpose of definitely closing the casino at Campione. The "Corriere del Ticino" states, however, that Italy is not enamoured with the suggestion on account of the foreign exchange which is flowing unceasingly into its treasury, all the stakes being laid in Swiss francs. It is not contradicted that these stakes are at times as high as at Monte Carlo but the majority of the gamblers are of British or American nationality who have little left to spend at Lugano, where they mostly abide.

**Army**

Replying to a question whether our present financial position and the shortage of labour did not call for a reduction in the duration of the "Rekrutenschulen" to two months, the Federal Council stated that the present four months was the absolute minimum and that training in the new war weapons might even make an extension desirable.

Four jet-propelled Vampire fighter planes with de Havilland Goblin turbines have been purchased by our army command. The first two arrived on July 27th at the Cointrin airport in very bad weather and the others two days later, flying the distance from Hatfield to Geneva in 71 minutes.

By colliding with an overhead wire a military plane of the "Taifun" type caught fire and crashed near the village of Trubschachen. The two pilots, Corp. Robert Knecht — a mechanic from Zurich, and Corp. Ernst Hablützel — an engineering student from Zurich, were killed; they were on an exercise flight from Emmen to Payerne and were both in the early twenties.

During a night exercise Lt. Theodor Bader, a 29-year-old cand. phil. from Solothurn, lost his life while trying to cross the Aare at Brugg. With two others he had been ordered to swim across in full uniform; he

was known to have been a good swimmer and it is believed that the previous strenuous drill had brought about heart failure.

**Traffic**

The long-pending amalgamation — or co-ordination — of our two aviation companies seems to have gone a step further by the Alpar company increasing its ordinary share capital from 250,000 to 1.2 million francs; the additional funds have been subscribed by the Soc. Gen. de Surveillance in Geneva, the Basle transport firm Hans Im Obersteg and the Berne municipality and the Kantonbank.

The Swissair has decided to increase its capital from one to twenty million francs.

The Susten road or pass was opened to general traffic on the 19th inst. It has taken nine years to build, actual operations being practical only from June to September; the cost was about 34 million francs. This new autostrada, which has an average width of six meter, connects over a length of 46 km. the valley of the Aare with the one of the Reuss and leads from Innertkirchen to Wassen where it joins the St. Gotthard Pass. The road runs through some of the most picturesque and wild scenery hitherto practically unaccessible to tourists; it ascends from 625 to over 2,224 meter over sea-level and is of great strategical importance.

A new air-mail service, said to be the fastest, has been inaugurated between our country and England on the 1st of this month. The plane leaves Basle at a quarter past midnight, hands over to another plane at Amsterdam and is due at Croydon at five minutes to five.

Little has been done so far to remedy the existing irritating and delaying formalities which precede a trip to the Continent. Here is a plea from J. B. Priestley which is taken from "The Listener," July 11th:

"I must confess the Calais-Basle express was rather dismal. We'd no food on the way out, and

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neither food nor sleeping berths on the way back. And the train acts as a kind of local service between places like Thionville, Valenciennes and Lille. What annoyed me was not the fact that the train had no dining car. I realise these luxuries are still probably difficult. No, what annoyed me was that we weren't told that there would be no food for us. It's part of this new contempt for the passenger, the customer, the ordinary citizen who doesn't happen to be an official. I believe this official contempt for the unofficial traveller will stay unless we do something about it. All this queueing up for passport, visas, valuta inquisitions, customs, may — or may not — still be necessary, but having visited half-a-dozen different countries within the last nine months, I notice there is little or no attempt to make the wearisome business any easier for the unofficial traveller.

Although I don't mind waiting an hour or two, if necessary, to have my papers checked in a Europe still recovering from war, I do believe there is something gravely wrong about all these obstacles to decent civilised travel. I'm old enough to remember the time before the First World War, when as a youth in my teens, I visited five or six foreign countries and never saw a passport or a visa, let alone valuta certificates and all the rest of it. Nobody asked me *where* I was going, *when* I was going, *why* I was going. That was my business, and I just went. Of course the crooks and scoundrels could go too — but probably even to-day they're just the people who are least inconvenienced — having suitcases full of forged passports. My point is, what is the use of screaming for better international relations when the authorities in every country make travel as difficult as possible? And not only do we need to travel now, but we badly need those particular forms of association, commercial, educational, cultural, that form elaborate networks crossing frontiers. Just as it's now taken for granted that private citizens shouldn't move about the world unless they have official permission, so too we assume that international relations are entirely the concern of Foreign Office representatives, and that our future depends upon how Foreign Secretary This gets on with

Foreign Minister That. The whole thing seems to me to go in a vicious circle."

**Economics**

From the scanty particulars now officially released to the Swiss press it transpires that we have made a conditional loan of certain watchmaking machinery to England. Against this the Board of Trade has increased the import quota of £500,000 in 1945 to £2,000,000 for each of the following two years. Before the war Great Britain imported about eight million watches apart from three million alarm clocks of German origin. Somewhat extravagant seems to us the vision unfolded in some of the English papers as to the future of the watch trade in this country, ignoring that machinery alone does not guarantee success. The "Evening News" on July 29th predicts that the watch industry will soon be in a position to meet home requirements and *enter into a mild overseas competition with Switzerland*, adding that *for the sake of good relations with the Swiss there is to be no intensive drive for overseas markets.*

It is unofficially stated that following an agreement with the Soviet Union petrol (Benzin) of Rumanian origin will be available in the near future. On the other hand considerable exports of machinery to the Russian occupied zone of Germany are anticipated to result from a visit of a Swiss trade delegation in Berlin.

The shortage of labour is still acute in all branches. At the labour exchanges at the end of last month no more than 678 totally unemployed were registered, all

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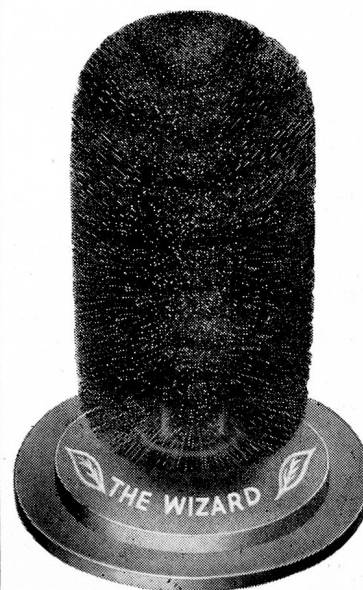
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of them difficult or unsuitable to place. It is said that our government is negotiating with Allied authorities for permits for 10,000 Germans to become available for employment on the land and in catering and domestic services.

\* \* \*

Turkey is to be a new source of coal which will be shipped mainly in payment of large orders for machinery and tools.

\* \* \*

According to Swiss Radio 50 prefabricated houses are to be sent to this country for exhibition; if they find approval they will be the vanguard of 25,000, the prices of which compare very favourably.

\* \* \*

Export and import statistics for the last month show a promising development, particularly when compared with the figures for the month of June. The value of the imports amounted to 267.9 million francs (5 million less than in June) and the exports reached the record figure of 269.2 million (70 million more than in the previous month); for the first time since October last we have attained an "active" trade balance. Notably increased figures are registered in our exports to Belgium, Luxembourg, Italy, Czechoslovakia and Sweden.

**Humanitarian**

A meeting of Swiss returned from abroad held at Lucerne decided to form a world union which Swiss abroad are invited to join. Among the far-reaching objects are mentioned: the perception and defence of

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rights and interests of Swiss living in foreign countries, the encouragement and placing of Swiss emigrants, the maintenance and furtherance of existing export markets and in particular the establishment of old-age homes or institutions for those returning without finding family circles of their own.

\* \* \*

About a quarter of a million American soldiers of all ranks spent their army leave in our country during the last twelve months. The 818 hotels and restaurants participating in the scheme derived an income of 27 million francs; the total of the money spent by the Americans including travelling expenses is said to be in the neighbourhood of 90 million francs.

\* \* \*

The latest trade union, just formed in Zurich, contemplates to protect and organise waitresses (more gracefully described as "Serviertöchter").

oo

The fascination of mountain climbing evidently does not constitute a sport for old and young, the more so when the rudimentary experience is lacking. A father and daughter, accompanied by a guide, were ascending the Riffelhorn when the girl, aged 14 only, lost her footing and dragged the other two, all being roped together, down a couloir. The father, George F. Moss from Tadworth (Surrey), died from his injuries soon after he had been transported to Zermatt; the guide, Felix Biner, is in a serious condition and the daughter escaped with minor disfigurements.

\* \* \*

Two brothers, Johann and Joseph Ubrik from Dietikon, met with a fatal accident when climbing the Piz Vacceda from Maloja.

\* \* \*

Two noted alpinists, M. J. Courvoisier from Bienne and R. Fuchs from Zweisimmen, who made an ascent of the Weisshorn, are missing and have not been traced in spite of intense exploration by search columns.

\* \* \*

Three tourists who were climbing the Lenzspitze without a guide on August 9th disappeared into a crevace. A search party found the bodies of Fritz

Hösli — Zurich, H. Strickler and R. Günthart, both of Zollikon. The same fate overtook the Zurich photographer Hans Schädelin who ascended the Silberhorn in the Jungfrau group.

\* \* \*

Dr. Hans Eggenberger, formerly a well-known medical practitioner in Herisau, met with a fatal accident while climbing the Schafberg. He was 65, a widely accepted authority on cancer and for the last six years had been in retirement.

\* \* \*

Lightning struck the summit of Vanil Noir (Gruyère) where a group of tourists had just encamped. The 38-year-old watchmaker Robert from Hauts-Geneveys (Neuchâtel) was killed on the spot whilst two others were badly injured.

\* \* \*

Some English papers state that there are about 500,000 Britishers who wish to spend their holidays in Switzerland; according to an estimate issued by the Federal Traffic Bureau at Berne about 80,000 are likely to have their wish gratified this year, and this is the number which the hotels and transport concerns can cope with under existing conditions. Among the 30,000 visitors from this country staying at present in Switzerland the British Cabinet is well represented and it is to be hoped that there will be many opportunities to contact our leading personalities and thus make the friendly relations between our two countries still closer and more intimate. Mr. Aneurin Bevan has made himself at home in a small Ticinese village along the Lago Maggiore and according to the "News of the World" has been struck by the way houses are springing up, men working on them from 7 a.m. to dusk. Sir Stafford Cripps is staying at Zurich undergoing medical treatment. Miss Ellen Wilkinson is no stranger

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in our country, no more is the linguist Noel-Baker. All these Ministers will be officially entertained by the Federal Council at Berne but the statesman who is entertained and fêted by everybody in Switzerland is Mr. Winston Churchill in spite of the official appeal to respect his desire for privacy during his stay. Mr. Churchill's residence is a large villa on the shores of the lake of Geneva; earlier reports stated that he would be in Zermatt. We hope he will also be seen in the central and northern part of our country where the popular welcome is likely to remind him of his days of triumph.

\* \* \*

Little relief in the passport and visé dallying is noticeable in spite of the hopeful prospects held out by highly placed office-holders in most of the countries. The "Daily Express" reports the exploits of a Swiss-American in Philadelphia, named Jakob Trümpi, who wanted to show his bride the old country. He applied for the visé as per pattern but when it dawned upon him that he was up against another "peace conference" he collected a week's provisions and a chair-bed and settled down in the respective state department; his firmness won and without further delay he was handed the required document.

\* \* \*

The first and outstanding victory won by our sportsmen this year was in a tennis match which took place in Zurich on the 2nd to the 4th of this month against a representative British side on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Swiss Lawn Tennis Association. It was played on a hard (not grass) court and resulted in the Swiss side winning 15 matches out of 17, the Swiss champion J. Spitzer scoring decidedly against his British opponent G. L. Paish.

\* \* \*

Dr. Ernst Strehle from Zurich has won this year's Swiss chess championship from the former holder Gygli; the new champion is 32 years old and led in the tournament by half a point.

\* \* \*

Memories of the "Loch Ness Monster" come to our mind when we read of a widespread hunt that has been proceeding for the last few weeks in the Rhone region of the canton Valais without the quarry being caught or killed. According to trustworthy reports by peasants, sheep and goats have been savagely torn to pieces by a fabulous creature and whole flocks driven over precipices. Though the beast has been seen in Siders, Chippis and the Val d'Anniviers its identity has not been established; it has been described variously as a large wild dog, a black panther and a lynx that might have crossed the Alps from Italy.

\* \* \*

La Chaux-de-Fonds is going to have an aviation ground if the promise of Fed. Counc. Celio of a 30% subsidy can stimulate the necessary financial support from local quarters.