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NEWS AT RANDOM

Federal

Counsellor of Legation, Monsieur Philippe Zutter, head of the International Organisation at the Federal Political Department in Berne, has been nominated Minister.

Minister Zutter, was born in La Chaux-du-Milieu in 1904. He studied law at the Universities of Neuchâtel and Vienna, and for some time practised as an advocate. He entered the Swiss Foreign Office in 1930; three years later he was transferred to the Swiss Legation in Bucarest with the rank of Secretary of Legation. On his promotion to 1st Secretary he was sent to the Swiss Legation in Buenos-Aires, and whilst there, was nominated Counsellor of Legation. In 1943, he occupied the post of Chargé d'Affaires in Santiago de Chile. Three years later (1946), he returned to the Foreign Office in Berne, where in 1948 he was appointed head of the International Organisation at the Federal Political Department.

* * *

Professor Chaim Weizmann, President of the State of Israeli, has arrived in Geneva by air. He was received at the airport by M. André Dominicé, of the Federal Political Department, and M. Albert Picot, representing the Geneva Government.

The visit is a private one, Professor Weizmann is consulting an eye specialist in Geneva.

* * *

Monsieur Arias Ferand, Chargé d'Affaires of the Republic of Panama, has presented his credentials to Monsieur M. Petitpierre, Swiss Foreign Minister.

* * *

Monsieur Erasmus, Minister of Defence, of the South African Union, and General Beyers, chief of the General Staff, have arrived in Thun, where they have visited various military institutions.

* * *

The Swiss Federal Railways have carried during the month of June altogether 17,91 million passengers or 1,50 million more than in June 1948. The receipts from passenger traffic increased by 2,10 million francs

to 24,41 million francs. The increase is principally due to the fact that Whitsun fell in June, whilst in 1948 it fell in May.

Goods traffic decreased by 271,056 tons totalling 1,39 million tons, the receipts of which amounted to 24,91 million francs less than in June 1948.

* * *

This year the 1st of August was celebrated throughout Switzerland with more than the usual solemnity. Federal-Councillor Nobs, President of the Swiss Confederation spoke on the radio. The theme of all the patriotic demonstrations was one of national unity which bordered on a sacred union of all the political forces of the country.

As usual, bonfires were lit even in the smallest villages, and the inhabitants listened standing and bareheaded at the lecture of the Federal Pact of 1291.

Cantonal

Jean Haecy, for many years Manager of the well-known Hotel "Balances" in Lucerne has celebrated his 70th birthday anniversary. Haecy rendered great services to the Swiss Hotel industry, he organised the Restaurant of the Swiss Pavilion at the world exhibition in New York. [A.T.S.]

* * *

The "Kunstpreis" of the town of Zurich, amounting to 5,000.— frs. has been awarded to the sculptor Herrmann Haller. [A.T.S.]

* * *

Emil Rieder, a former judge, and President of the Socialist Press Union, has celebrated his 75th birthday anniversary in Zurich. [A.T.S.]

* * *

The oldest inhabitant of the town of Zurich, Jakob Ott, a former cabinet maker, has celebrated his 95th birthday anniversary. [A.T.S.]

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Dr. W. Wartmann, for 40 years Director of the "Zurcher Kunsthaus" has retired from his post, which he has held with much distinction. [A.T.S.]

* * *

M. de Lesseps, mayor of the town of New Orleans (U.S.A.), has arrived in Zurich, where a dinner was held in his honour. M. de Lesseps is President of the American Municipal Association. [A.T.S.]

* * *

A sports aeroplane piloted by Mr. Ernst Spahni, from Zurich, on a flight from Zurich to Amsterdam, crashed near St. Peter (Black Forest).

The five occupants, wife of the pilot, his two children aged three and four and a married couple by the name of Hayot were seriously injured and had to be taken to hospital, where the three years old boy Hans Spahni succumbed to his injuries. [A.T.S.]

* * *

On the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the Swiss Watch Manufacturers Association, which took place in Bienne on the 16th of last month, Federal-Councillor Rubattel spoke on the importance of the Watch Industry of Switzerland. [A.T.S.]

* * *

The "Dornacher Schlachtfeier" commemorating the 450th anniversary of the battle of Dornach, was celebrated on the 23rd of last month at Dornach.

[A.T.S.]

* * *

The "Schweizerische Bodensee-Zeitung" of Romanshorn, known at one time as "Der Bote vom Bodensee", has celebrated its 100th anniversary.

[A.T.S.]

* * *

The twenty-five million francs Loan at 3 per cent, issued by the canton of Vaud, has been considerably over subscribed. [A.T.S.]

* * *

Mlle. Gunther, a chemist of Yverdon, lost her life when on a mountaineering expedition in the Val d'Aniviers (Ct. Valais). [A.T.S.]

* * *

A violent storm which broke out over the lake of Neuchâtel caused the death of two people. A. Burkhalter (18) of Areuse was drowned when his boat was overturned by a wave, and a young lady school teacher from Neuchâtel fell into the lake and was drowned.

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Economics

An agreement in principle has been concluded between the Western European countries and Switzerland regarding the covering of the deficits of their payments balances by means of Swiss credits and Marshall aid, that means no longer by gold. The agreement is based on the Belgian example.

Credits will especially be granted to Britain, the Netherlands and Sweden, and would be covered by dollars for 50 per cent. A difficulty is that there is no Swiss-American bilateral pact regarding Marshall aid.

The Swiss export surplus to Western Europe is estimated at 500m. Swiss francs for 1949-50.

* * *

The Swiss wholesale prices index in June declined by 0.5 per cent. from the preceding month's level — to 220.2 at the end of June from 221.3 at the end of May in the series based on July 1914 equalling 100, and to 205.2 from 206.1 in that based on August 1939, equalling 100.

* * *

The downward trend in U.K. exports to Switzerland is clearly reflected by official foreign trade figures covering the first six months of this year.

British goods imported by Switzerland during that period amounted to Frs.137.4m., against Frs.211.9m. during the corresponding period in 1948. A slight recovery was recorded last month, when U.K. exports to this country rose by Frs.1.7m over the previous month to Frs.25.3m. This is still low, however, in comparison with the peak of Frs.38.5m. reached in May, 1948.

Swiss exports to Britain during the first half of 1949 increased from Frs.61.7m. to Frs.69.3m., against

the corresponding period in 1948. The figure for last month was Frs.16.5m., compared with Frs.11.8m. in May.

* * *

An unusually high gold influx of Frs.47.4m. is recorded by the latest return of the Swiss National Bank for the week to July 23. This raises the bank's gold stocks to the total of Frs.6,052m.

No official explanation is given for this rise, but it may be ascribed to transfers by foreign central banks under payments agreements.

Foreign exchange holdings rose by Frs.12.7m. to Frs.459m. Notes in circulation advanced by Frs.35m. to Frs.4,240m.

* * *

The Belgian Government is reliably stated to have given three months' notice to terminate her payments agreement with Switzerland. The pact will end on October 12.

This does not affect the trade agreement but relates simply to the separate pact providing for maintenance of the official rate of exchange and for gold settlements between the central banks if either holds more than the stated balance in the other's currency.

It is understood that the official exchange rate will no longer be quoted. A similar abolition of the Belgian quotation of the official Belgo-French rate was effected some weeks ago.

After the end of the payments agreement the effective Belgo-Swiss exchange rate will be settled wholly by supply and demand. It is understood that the Belgian exchange control will not issue Swiss francs

for tourists, who will finance their travels with Belgian bank-notes sold in the free markets.

It is thought that termination of the agreement is intended chiefly to enable Belgium to earn more Swiss francs from her exports. It represents acceptance of a devaluation of the Belgian franc vis-a-vis the Swiss, but the substantial gold and dollar reserves of the Belgian National Bank provide ample resources for open market operation. This, it is presumed, will be undertaken only to eliminate short-term fluctuations and to mitigate the effects of speculation rather than to interfere with the basic supply and demand relationship.

—oOo—

The following deaths are reported from Switzerland:

Pastor Ernst Lendorff, for many years pastor at Lausen, at the age of 84.

Elie Gagnebin, Professor of Geology at the University of Lausanne, aged 59. The deceased enjoyed a great reputation and is the author of a number of books on the history of Geology

Max Gay, editor of the "Nouvelliste Valaisan", in St. Maurice, at the age of 46.

Dr. Paul Mutzner, from 1918-1939 Professor of law at the University of Zurich, aged 68.

Dr. Charles Valencien, "Kantonschemiker" in Geneva, at the age of 72. The deceased played a leading rôle in the community of Carouge.

David Mader, industrialist in Neuchâtel, aged 49. Mader was well-known in Sports circles and presided for many years over the cantonal Sports-Club.

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Franz, Xaver Andres, from 1874-1923 in the service of the cantonal "Bau" Department (Lucerne), in Lucerne, at the age of 95.

Hermann Wegelin-Hauser, senior-partner of the Banking firm Wegelin & Cie of St. Gall, in St. Gall, at the age of 83.

Ferdinand-Louis Ritter, painter, former Professor at the College Saint-Michel, Fribourg, at the age of 80.

Heinrich Rickenbach-Boss, a member of the "Kantonsrat" of Schwyz, in Zurich, aged 53.

Counsellor of Legation, François de Diesbach, chief of the Swiss "Heimschaffungsmission" in Germany, due to an accident in Berlin. [A.T.S.]

The following couple has celebrated their diamond wedding anniversary in Switzerland: Mr. & Mrs. H. Dünki-Schneider of Rorbas (Ct. Zurich). [A.T.S.]

Mounted on a jeep, Locarno's Madonna del Sasso statue has completed a four-month tour of every parish in the canton of Tessin.

Fifteen thousand people attended a Marian congress in Locarno when the tour ended. Bishop Jelmini, Apostolic Administrator of Lugano, was there.

A Capuchin friar accompanied the statue which reached each parish in time for midnight Mass and all-night prayer.

Winter sports air excursions at reduced fares are to be introduced from September 10 to March 31 following an agreement negotiated by the International Air Transport Association and signed by British European Airways, Air France, and Swiss Air. The new fares save between £4 and £5 a ticket for a 23-day excursion from London, Belfast, Birmingham, Glasgow, or Manchester to the three main centres of Basle, Geneva, and Zürich. The usual reduction for children will apply. The return fare from London to Geneva and Basle will be £23 instead of £27, and £24 instead of £28 16s. to Zürich.

A secret ballot at the diplomatic conference which is engaged on the revision of the Geneva conventions, resulted in 22 votes in favour of retaining the Red Cross emblem and the existing variations. Twenty-one voted against and there were seven abstentions. Earlier a proposal for the adoption of a geometrical sign to replace the Red Cross was defeated by an overwhelming majority.

Dr. Paul Ruegger, president of the International Red Cross, had warned the conference of the risks that

would follow a multiplication of the protective signs and the inevitable reduction of their protective value in time of war.

* * *

Switzerland has extensive vineyards; and the average annual consumption of alcoholic drinks amounts to about 8 litres (compared with 4½-5 litres in Great Britain), consumed mostly as wine. This was explained to the Society for the Study of Addiction on July 12 by Dr. Henri Revilliod, who estimated that the average Englishman drinks 4 times more beer but 100 times less wine than the Swiss. In Switzerland spirit-drinking, which had disastrous effects in the German-Swiss cantons during the 19th century, has been greatly reduced through the federal alcohol monopoly. The chief cause of alcoholism in French Switzerland is wine in the countryside and aperitifs in the towns, whereas in the German-Swiss cantons cider and spirits are more popular. In Switzerland cirrhosis of the liver is apparently more common than in any other country and is thought to arise chiefly from protracted mild alcoholism. Cirrhosis has been found at 11% of necropsies (14% of males, 7.5% of females); in 91% of the cases the condition was attributed to alcoholism, and very often the liver disorder had not been diagnosed during life.

Inebriates are treated at 75 centres — the "anti-alcoholic dispensaries" — and where necessary in homes for the rehabilitation of addicts (six for men, three for women). Since 1946 patients have been admitted to hospital in Geneva for treatment with apomorphine. Of 73 addicts psychologically normal or with some disorder due to alcoholism, 72% abstained from alcohol for three months, and 46% for more than two years after treatment.

* * *

The Swiss Hoteliers' Federation has appealed to Swiss not to go abroad, but to stay at their own hotels, which are now approaching the climax of the holiday season, but which are still half empty despite reduced prices.

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