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The Swiss Observer

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The Official Organ of the Swiss Colony in Great Britain

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NEWS AT RANDOM

Federal

The Federal Council has promoted Monsieur Pierre Micheli, Swiss Minister in Paris, to the rank of Ambassador. The Legation in Paris will thus assume the status of an Embassy.

* * *

Federal-Councillor Chaudet, head of the Federal Military Department, in reply to an interpellation put before the National Council by National-Councillor Gruetter concerning *Vaffaire* Colonel Ryser, gave full particulars of the happenings. He emphasized that the Federal authorities at once made exhaustive investigations as to the relevant facts of the case, which proved that Colonel Ryser could not be prosecuted under the Swiss penal code. He informed the interpellator that his Department has entrusted Federal Judge Schoenenberger with the task of investigating whether Colonel Ryser can be charged for alleged violation of the Swiss civil statute. This report, Federal Councillor Chaudet said, has not yet been submitted.

* * *

A Swiss Government commission of experts has published plans for a compulsory Federal Health and Disability Insurance scheme, largely following the outline of the old-age pension scheme that has been in operation since 1948; the scheme is estimated to cost 143 million francs a year and provides for a special fund to which the Government would contribute 50 per cent, and the workers and employers 25 per cent each. All employed persons would contribute 0.2 per cent of their total income to the fund, and this contribution would be matched by an equivalent payment from the employers. The payments would represent an increase of one-tenth on those now being made for the old-age pension system.

* * *

The receipts of the Federal Customs Administration for the month of February, 1957, amount to 70.1

million francs; of this amount the Confederation receives 54.4 million francs or 12.4 millions francs more than in February, 1956.

* * *

Marshal Nieh Yung-chen, Vice-President of the defence committee of the People's Republic of China, has paid a courtesy visit to Monsieur Max Petitpierre, Swiss Foreign Minister in Berne. The Federal-Council has entertained the distinguished visitor to a luncheon.

* * *

Monsieur Aonso Alvarez de Toledo y Mencos, the newly appointed Minister Plenipotentiary and Envoy Extraordinary of Spain, has presented his credentials to Dr. H. Streuli, President of the Swiss Confederation, and M. M. Petitpierre, Swiss Foreign Minister.

Monsieur William Fry Valle-Riestra was received at the Palais Fédéral in Berne by the President of the Swiss Confederation and the Swiss Foreign Minister on presenting his credentials as Minister Plenipotentiary and Envoy Extraordinary of the Republic of Peru.

Cantonal

Dr. L. de Weck has been elected head surgeon of the "Humilimont" clinic in the Gruyère district, in succession of the late Dr. R. Pasquier. [A.T.S.]

* * *

Mr. U. Baumgartner and Dr. A. Lorenz, both members of the Superior Court of the canton of Appenzell A.Rh., have tendered their resignations; the respective successors will be elected at the next "Landsgemeinde". [A.T.S.]

CITY SWISS CLUB

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

on Tuesday, April 30th, 1957, at 6.30 for 7 p.m.,
at Dorchester Hotel, W.1.

Agenda: Minutes of last meeting.

Admissions.

Resignations.

President's Report.

Treasurer's Report.

Elections.

Members wishing to be present should send their card to the Manager of Dorchester Hotel, W.1, to reach him not later than, Monday, April 29th, 1957.

THE COMMITTEE.

The strength of the various parties in the newly elected Grand Council of the canton of Aargau is as follows: Socialists 66 (1 gain); Cath. Cons. 48 (1 gain); Liberals 39 (3 losses); Peasant Party 29 (1 loss); Landesring (Duttweiler) 9 (1 gain); Young Peasant Party 1 (1 loss); Evangelical Party 5 (1 gain); Christian Socialists 2 (no change); Independent 1 (new). [A.T.S.]

* * *
Dr. Kurt Kim (Liberal) will occupy the post of "Landammann", and Mr. Adolf Richner (Socialist) the post of "Landsstatthalter", in the Government of the canton of Aargau. [A.T.S.]

* * *
On March 24th it was 1,200 years since the town of Diessenhofen (Ct. Thurgau) was first mentioned in the archives of the cloister of St. Gall. The town will celebrate this event in the coming summer. [A.T.S.]

* * *
A fire which broke out on the premises of "Hobel- und Spaltwerk Dorner & Co., A.G." at Romanshorn caused damage estimated at several hundred thousand francs. [A.T.S.]

* * *
In consequence of the recent election for the Grand Council of the canton of Vaud the following parties are represented in the Council, which numbers 211 members: 99 Radicals and Young Radicals (5 losses); 43 Socialists (3 gains); 38 Liberals (2 gains); 10 Communists (3 Losses); 16 Peasant and Bourgeois Party (2 gains); 5 Christian Socialists (1 gain). [A.T.S.]

DEATHS.

The following deaths are reported from Switzerland:

Professor Dr. med. E. Sigerist in Pura (Ct. Ticino) at the age of 66.

The deceased was born in Paris and at the age of 10 came to Zurich where he was educated at the "Kantonsschule"; afterwards he studied medicine at the University of Zurich. In 1921 he was appointed a lecturer at this University, and four years later (1925) Professor of medical history at the University Leipzig. In 1932 Professor Sigerist went to the John Hopkins University, Baltimore, as Professor, remaining there until 1947 when he returned to Pura and finished his book "Weltgeschichte der Medizin". Several Universities honoured him with the degree of *doctor honoris causa*. In 1933 he received the Karl Sudhoff, and in 1950 the William Welch medal.

Louis Roux, a noted veterinary surgeon and from 1942 to 1945 head of the Veterinary Bacteriological Institute, Lausanne, in Lausanne, aged 77.

Professor Dr. med. Heinrich Zangger, in Zurich at the age of 83. Born in 1874 at Bubikon, he studied medicine at the Universities of Zurich, Paris and Naples. In 1901 he became Professor of anatomy and physiology at the University of Zurich and five years later (1906) Professor of "Gerichtliche Medizin" at the same University. Professor Zangger was a *doctor honoris causa* of the Universities of Frankfurt a.M., Hamburg, Zurich and the Federal Institute of Technology (ETH), Zurich.

Madame Laura Scheibenstock-Vermot, the oldest inhabitant of Le Locle, in Le Locle, aged 96.

Dr. Otto Wirth, formerly editor of the "Luzerner Neueste Nachrichten", "St. Galler Stadtanzeiger"

and "Lanboten", Winterthur, in Zurich at the age of 79.

Mme. Tina Truog-Saluz, well-known author, in Chur, aged 75. [A.T.S.]

ANNIVERSARIES.

* * *
Professor Dr. Arnold Heim (75) of Zurich. Eminent geologist known for his geological excursions to Greenland, Sumatra, North America, Central Asia, Africa and South America. In 1936 he was the leader of the first Swiss expedition to the Himalayas, and from 1929 to 1931 he was a Professor at the Geological Institute of the University of Nanking (China). He is the author of a number of travel and scientific works.

Rudolf Maurer (85) of Wallisellen (Ct. Zurich), from 1920 to 1939 a member of the Government of the canton of Zurich. He was for many years a member of the Board of the "Nordschweizerischen Kraftwerke."

Dr. Bernhard Kaelin (70) of Einsiedeln, for many years Professor of Philosophy and rector of the "Collegium", Sarnen, and at present a member of the St. Benedictine College of Sant Anselmo, Rome. [A.T.S.]

DIAMOND WEDDING ANNIVERSARIES.

* * *
Mr. & Mrs. H. Stapfer-Gronmeier of Aarau, Mr. & Mrs. Zellweger-Schreiber of Diepoldsau.

* * *
Mr. & Mrs. I. Kurz-Kuebler of Schaffhausen have celebrated their iron wedding anniversary (65 years). [A.T.S.]

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VARIOUS.

The following cantons have published their accounts for the year 1956. Lucerne, *debit* balance 837,793.— frs.; Solothurn, *credit* balance 467,999.— frs.; Vaud, *debit* balance 3,487,800.— frs.; Fribourg, *debit* balance 75,893.— frs.; Appenzell A.Rh. *credit* balance 79,750.— frs. [A.T.S.]

The result of last year's collection "Für das Alter" amounted to 1,056,931.53.— frs. or 16,000.— frs. more than in 1955.

The Swiss army is storing blood for use in a possible war. Two subterranean laboratories will process, store and distribute Switzerland's emergency blood supplies. One of them, shielded from nuclear blasts beneath 100 feet of rock at Zweilütschinen, is already producing plasma. The other underground installation at Amsteg, a village in the mountain canton of Uri, will go into operation later this year.

At Zweilütschinen the army converted an abandoned munition depot into its new blood bank at relatively small cost.

The Swiss Army estimates that it would need 100,000 packages of plasma in time of war. Since the Red Cross blood centre at Berne deals primarily with civilian needs, the army has constructed the Amsteg and Zweilütschinen laboratories for itself, although they are staffed by Red Cross personnel.

With the approval by the National Council of a clause banning closed circuit motor races, for insertion in a new general law on road traffic, it seems that the Swiss Grand Prix motor race will no longer be held. The National Council approved the clause by 66 votes

to 46. The matter has yet to be discussed by the upper house, the Council of State.

For many years the Swiss Grand Prix, held on the Bremgarten circuit on the outskirts of Berne, ranked as one of the *grandes épreuves* counting towards the world championship. It was banned in 1955, as a direct result of the disaster at Le Mans, and was not held last year.

The Association of Swiss Jewish Welfare Organisations assisted about 300 Jewish refugees from Hungary in the course of last year. Mr. Otto H. Heim, the President, reported at the Association's recent annual meeting. The budget of the organisation in the past year, he said, was 1,150,000 francs (about £94,000).

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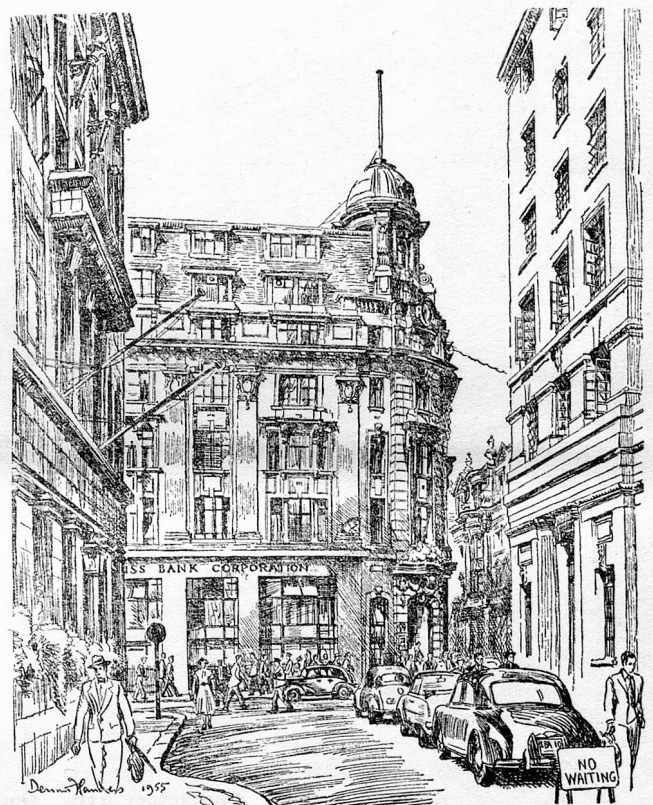
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While refugees from Hungary were granted asylum in Switzerland, those from Egypt could obtain only short-term transit visas, Mr. Heim said.

* * *

A Swiss "Hollywood" is to be set up near Lugano.

The Italian producer, Senor Filippo del Giudice, well known for his production of "Hamlet" and "Henry IV", both starring Sir Laurence Olivier, is understood to have picked Lugano as his permanent future studios.

Senor del Giudice has been negotiating for the great Castello di Trevano estate, former home of German-Russian nobility, with the local authorities, and negotiations are believed to have been completed.

The Castello di Trevano, surrounded by spacious gardens of almost semi-tropical luxuriance, stands in one of the sunniest spots of central Europe and may well match southern California as to advantages for outdoor filming.

* * *

An Apostolic Letter conferring the title of a Commander of the Order of St. Gregory the Great on a member of the Swiss Parliament has started a constitutional controversy in Switzerland.

Article 2 of the Federal Constitution decrees that no Swiss officer, official or member of a legislative assembly may accept "from a foreign government any pension, salary, title, gift or decoration", and that "contravention of this prohibition involves loss of the mandate or office".

By accepting the Papal reward for services

rendered to the Catholic Church, some Swiss feel that a national councillor, Otto Studer, violated this constitutional law and should therefore step down from his seat in the Federal Assembly.

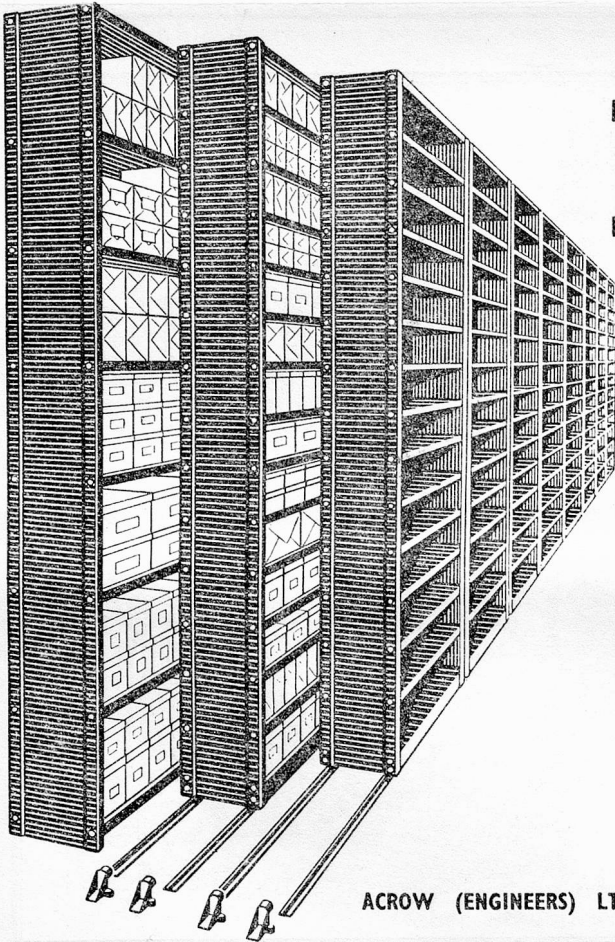
The Pope, they maintain, is the sovereign of a state — the Vatican — and therefore any title or decoration he bestows should be considered as coming from a "foreign government".

Studer's Catholic Conservative party colleagues, however, maintain that the Pope did not act as the head of the Vatican state when he conferred the honour on Studer, but as the head of the Catholic Church.

* * *

Switzerland's cost of living shows smallest increase in Europe.

Switzerland ranks 14th in a diagram visualizing the increase of costs of living and food since 1950 in fourteen European countries, with Belgium and West Germany claiming the next higher positions. This means that life in Switzerland is only slightly more expensive than it was six years ago whereas living costs have jumped up considerably in Greece, Austria, Norway, Great Britain and Sweden which are featured in the five upper ranks of the graph. This is the result of a joint analysis by the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) and the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) of the United Nations. Europe's smallest increase of general costs of living is less than 10% (Switzerland), while it reaches upwards of 62% in Greece. Economic experts express the opinion that Switzerland's liberal import policy is to a large extent responsible for this development. The Swiss, it is



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pointed out, believe in maintaining a sound balance between demand and supply and have never allowed bureaucratic protectionism to interfere with natural market requirements.

* * *

Switzerland has 47 airports.

Switzerland has no less than 47 airports equipped for landings and take-offs of non-military planes. Only three of them, it is true, are international airports with permanent customs services, i.e. Zurich-Kloten, Geneva-Cointrin and Basel-Blotzheim. Airports with limited customs services are at Berne-Belp, Lausanne, Sion, La Chaux-de-Fonds, Samedan near St. Moritz, Locarno-Magadino, Lugano-Agno, Altenrhein near St. Gallen and Porrentruy. Moreover there are 34 public airfields where private aircraft may land after the pilots have consulted a customs airport as to terrain conditions.

* * *

The price of petrol in Switzerland has been reduced by 2d. a gallon. Ordinary will now cost 3s. 4d a gallon and super grade 3s. 7d.

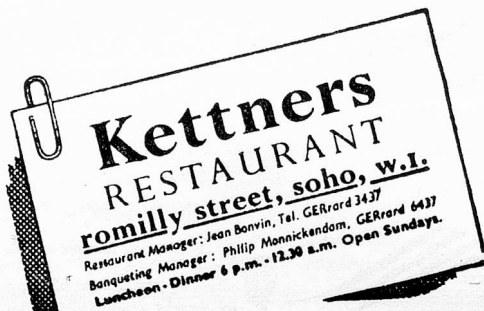
* * *

The first railcar of a new series has been delivered for the Chur-Arosa railway in Switzerland. These modern and more powerful cars will gradually replace the older types, which date back to 1914. Track improvements at Göschenen Station will permit normal speeds through the station and facilities available for the loading and unloading of cars and coaches will be greatly improved. This station is the northern transshipment point for road vehicles passing by rail through the Gotthard Tunnel when the road across the pass is impracticable.

The office of Secretary to the **SWISS MERCANTILE SOCIETY** and its **COLLEGE** will shortly become vacant. The appointment is a full-time one and includes attendance at committee and council meetings in the evening. Proficiency in English, German and French is essential. Ability to teach shorthand (Stolze-Schrey system) is an advantage. Candidates should write by April 23rd to: The Chairman of the Council, Swiss Mercantile Society Ltd., 34/35 Fitzroy Square, London W.1, marking the envelope "Private".

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ANOTHER "AFFAIRE".

The various happenings recorded in the Swiss Press during the past few months in the Federal Services are causing great anxiety, and one wonders what will come next.

The suicide of the Federal Attorney General, M. R. Dubois, has caused a considerable sensation in Switzerland, coming after the recent imprisonment of the Director of the Federal Customs Administration and the dismissal of his principal assistant, the suicide after misappropriation of funds by the chief of the Federal Office for dealing with Swiss residing abroad, the dismissal of the chief of the post office finance division for breach of trust, and the participation of a military attaché in commission realized on the purchase of Centurions from Britain.

It is no secret that for some time investigations were afoot concerning serious indiscretions which had been committed, it is alleged, by an Inspector of the Federal Police in tapping the Egyptian Legation's phone during the Suez crisis, and passing on secret diplomatic information to a foreign Embassy in Berne. Mr. Dubois by his status as Attorney General was entrusted with these investigations, which apparently took the usual course until it became known that he had committed suicide after the police questioned him about possible connection in this matter. By his death, the enquiries have suffered a set-back owing to the fact that he was, no doubt, *au courant* with the relevant facts. His death has, however, not put an end to the enquiries. The Federal Tribunal and the Government have entrusted Dr. Hans Walder, State Prosecutor of the canton of Zurich, with further investigations, together with Mr. Hans Fürst, President of the District Court of Horgen.

There does not seem to have ever been any question of money reward for the action of Mr. Dubois, which probably was solely the result of his abhorrence of totalitarian methods.

* * *

M. René Dubois was born in 1908. On completion of his law studies he qualified in 1934 as an advocate. In 1934, he was appointed as district commissioner by the League of Nations in charge of the arrangements for the elections in the Saar district.

He entered the service of the Confederation in 1936 where he made a rapid career. Thirteen years later (1949) Dubois was elected substitute to the Attorney General, and in 1955 he was elected Federal Attorney General. *ST.*

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