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The Swiss Observer

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NEWS AT RANDOM



Federal

As briefly reported in our last issue, the Swiss electorate, in a referendum, rejected a proposal to add to the constitution a paragraph that would prohibit on Swiss territory "the manufacture, importation, transit or storing of nuclear weapons, and of their constituent parts". Here are the figures of the voting in detail:

	Yes	No
Zurich	59,328	125,271
Berne	45,330	75,000
Lucerne	5,681	29,367
Uri	768	4,527
Schwyz	2,437	9,717
Obwalden	193	2,934
Nidwalden	480	3,012
Glarus	1,035	5,442
Zug	1,159	4,784
Fribourg	7,607	17,232
Solothurn	6,821	22,040
Basel Stadt	12,291	13,875
Baselland	7,415	12,191
Schaffhausen	4,005	9,864
Appenzell A.Rh.	2,009	6,847
Appenzell I.Rh.	136	1,629
St. Gallen	13,873	40,476
Graubunden	4,956	20,045
Aargau	21,274	52,511
Thurgau	8,458	24,402
Ticino	9,785	8,765
Vaud	32,579	18,069
Valais	7,380	12,196
Neuchâtel	16,323	6,749
Genève	15,529	10,148
TOTAL	286,858	537,387

54 per cent of the electorate went to the poll.

* * *

Although Switzerland is not a member of the United Nations, the Federal Government is prepared to subscribe about 691,660 frs. to help to meet the costs of the Congo operation.

* * *

The Ambassador of the Netherlands, Monsieur M. M. L. Savelberg, and Monsieur Bakar N'Diaye, Ambassador of Malaya, have presented their credentials to Monsieur P. Chaudet, President of the Swiss Confederation, and Monsieur F. T. Wahlen, Foreign Minister, at the Palais Fédéral in Berne.

The agreement between the Swiss National Bank and the commercial banks on credit restrictions, which is more than a gentlemen's agreement in the sense that it contains sanctions in case of nonfulfilment, has now been published. The agreement covers all banks with a balance-sheet of more than 10m. Swiss francs and relates to the following items: domestic debtors, current-account advances, loans to government bodies and institutions, domestic bills and mortgage investments.

Credits to borrowers who are not domiciled in Switzerland are outside the agreement. The increase in credits must in the period from April to December 1962 not exceed 65 per cent of the total increase in 1961 for debtors, advances to public bodies, and bills. As concerns mortgages the upper limit is 85 per cent of the increase registered in 1961. This means that normal credits to domestic borrowers should increase by not more than 86 per cent of last year's total increase, while for mortgages the limit is 103 per cent.

The limitations may seem relatively small. But it is to be remembered that many banks in the recent past have given large credit promises which they will have to fulfil in the near future. The rates of increase for 1963 are to be fixed before the end of 1962. The banks are asked to use restraint in making fresh promises of credit. Priority should be given to credits for subsidized house building and other new speculative building projects, and to credits for the agricultural sector and import credits.

Excess credits in any one item must be offset by a correspondingly smaller increase in the following period. If limits have been exceeded at the end of 1962 the banks concerned have to deposit with the central bank a sum which is equal to the excess credits.

The agreement, which came into force on April 1st, is valid to the end of 1962. If conditions should permit it the agreement will be cancelled earlier.

* * *

Cantonal

Mr. Otto Schnyder, a Lucerne composer, aged 76, who lost his way during an excursion on the 6,995-foot Pilatus, was found frozen to death.

Mr. Schnyder, who had been for more than twenty years a music teacher in the cantonal schools of Lucerne, was also a pianist and violinist. His chief interest was choral singing, and he did much to develop an interest in popular vocal music.

He collected old folk songs, of which he made transcriptions and for which he often composed tunes. His work in that field was particularly important as he helped to reconstitute a number of ancient songs which might otherwise have been lost. [A.T.S.]

The commune of Ingenbohl-Brunnen has conferred honorary citizenship on Leonard Boesch, Abbot of the Benedict cloister Engelberg. [A.T.S.]

* * *

Two masked men attempted robbery at the premises of the "Missione Cattolica Italiana" at the Feldstrasse in Zurich. On entering the office quarters, they threatened the cashier with a revolver, demanding the key of the safe. The cashier explained that he was not in possession of the key, whereupon the men left. The cashier took up the pursuit of the thugs, and, with the help of some passers-by, was able to detain them until the police arrived. [A.T.S.]

* * *

Mr. Konrad Zeller has retired from his post as Director of the "Evangelischen Lehrerseminar" Zurich-Unterstrasse. He had held this post for forty years. [A.T.S.]

* * *

A motor-car accident which occurred in Dietikon (Zurich) caused the death of five persons, the driver having lost control of the vehicle, which crashed into a stone wall. Those killed were Peter Schmocker (23), and his wife, M. Schmocker (22), of Kloten, Leonie Schmocker (18), of Bremgarten, Gertrud Ghisi (43), of Bremgarten, and Daisy Spiser (38), of Sao Paulo. [A.T.S.]

* * *

Dr. theol. Heinrich Ott, of Riehen, has been appointed Professor of Theology at the University of Basle, in succession to Professor Karl Barth, who recently retired.

Professor Ott (33) studied Theology at the Universities of Basle and Marburg, after which he held posts as preacher in the communes of Castiel in Schanfigg and Arisdorf (Ct. Basle Country). In 1956 he became a lecturer at the Basle University. [A.T.S.]

* * *

Mr. Gustav Seiler has celebrated his 60th jubilee as a journalist. He started his journalistic career in 1902, as a free-lance journalist, after which he became editor of the "Basler Volksblatt" and the "Schweiz Depeschen Agentur", Berne. [A.T.S.]

* * *

The 46th Basle Fair was opened on Saturday, 31st March, by Dr. H. Hauswirth, Director of the Fair. Amongst the speakers at the opening ceremony were Dr. W. Haenggi, Central President of the Swiss Press Association, and Dr. Carl G. Keel, representative of the "Schweiz Fachpresseverbandes". [A.T.S.]

* * *

M. Pierre Oguey has been nominated President of the Government of the canton of Vaud, and M. René Villard, Vice-President. [A.T.S.]

* * *

A girl apprentice collecting an amount of 8,150.— frs. from the post office in Lausanne was attacked by an 18-year-old youth, who snatched her bag and decamped. Owing to a reliable description by the victim of the attack the police were successful in arresting the thug. Of the 8,150.— frs. stolen, 7,400.— frs. were recovered. The youth confessed that he made another attack on a girl some time ago, which failed when the girl cried for help. [A.T.S.]

* * *

The Rt. Rev. Dr. A. C. Craig, Moderator of the Church of Scotland, attended a reception given by the Scottish Church at Lausanne and, among other engagements, opened the new buildings of the Church. He also paid

a visit to Geneva, visiting the "Modérateur de la Compagnie des Pasteurs de l'Eglise Nationale Genevoise".

[A.T.S.]

* * *

In the canton of Valais, aeroplanes and helicopters of the Air Rescue Organization went to the rescue of many skiers who were marooned in the higher reaches, and dropped food for workers imprisoned in a hydroelectric plant which is under construction.

Heavy snowfalls at the beginning of the month, when nearly five feet of snow fell, down to the 3,000 feet level, have hampered road communications. [A.T.S.]

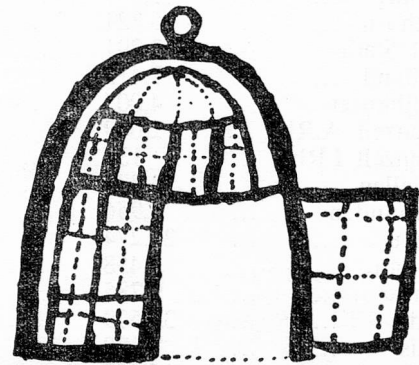
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The burial ceremony of the late Swiss Ambassador in Washington, Monsieur Henry de Torrenté, took place on Monday, 2nd April, at the Cathedral in Sion. The Mass

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for the dead was read by Mgr. Brunner. Amongst the numerous congregation was Federal Councillor F. Th. Wahlen, Head of the Federal Political Department, former Federal Councillors Petitpierre and Hohenstein, and members of the government of the canton of Valais. [A.T.S.]

* * *

During 1961, 13,528 (1960: 12,764) traffic accidents were reported in the canton of Zurich. 181 (1960: 182) persons were killed, and 5,666 (1960: 5,428) were injured. [A.T.S.]

* * *

The head bookkeeper of the "Kantonalen Brandversicherungs Anstalt" Lucerne, has been charged with embezzling 175,000.— frs. [A.T.S.]

* * *

Dr. Hans Truempy, chief editor of the "Glerner Nachrichten", has celebrated his 25th jubilee as editor of the paper. [A.T.S.]

* * *

Ostermundigen, near Berne, has enrolled its 10,000th inhabitant and, therefore, now ranks as a city. [A.T.S.]

* * *

The Hotel Bel-Air, in Les Brenets near Le Locle — built in 1837 — belonging to M. Louis Perret, was almost completely destroyed by fire. The damage caused is estimated to be 200,000.— frs. [A.T.S.]

* * *

Two members of the voluntary fire brigade of Niederbipp, Johann Ulrich Schoenmann-Frei (25), farmer, and Rudolf Müller-Probst, both of Niederbipp, lost their lives in a fire which broke out at the "Bindfaden- und Seilerwarenfabrik, O. Bürki-Obi, A.G." in Oberbipp. [A.T.S.]

* * *

The accounts for 1961 of the St. Gall "OLMA" Fair (Schweizermesse für Land- und Milchwirtschaft) show a credit balance of 113,000.— frs. [A.T.S.]

* * *

The French Ambassador in Berne, Monsieur Ph. Baudet, arrived in Neuchâtel on an official visit. He was received by the members of the cantonal government at the Castle (seat of the Government). The president of the Neuchâtel government, M. Gaston Clottu, and the Ambassador in their speeches referred to the friendly relations which have always existed between France and the canton of Neuchâtel. The reception was followed by a luncheon. [A.T.S.]

DEATHS

The following deaths are reported from Switzerland:
 Otto Siegenthaler, cheese merchant, from 1933 to 1939 a member of the Grand Council of the canton of St. Gall, in Gossau, at the age of 85.

Johann Josef Maria Tresch, mountain guide, and for 35 years "Hüttenwart" of the second Huefihütte, in Bristen, aged 98.

Dr. med. Francesco Pattani, well-known heart specialist in the canton of Ticino, in Berne, at the age of 43.

Hermann Hess, senior partner of the "Kleiderfabrik Esco" Amriswil, in Amriswil, aged 74.

Dr. med. Willy Bischofsberger, well-known medical practitioner in Zurich, in Zurich, at the age of 59.

Marguerite Ammann, painter, in Basle, at the age of 51.

Dr. Hermann Geiger, apothecary, in Riehen, at the age of 92.

Alphonse Bochatay, in Granges nr. Salvan, the oldest citizen of the canton of Valais, aged 99.

Carl Wartmann, formerly head of the "Eidgenössischen Personalamtes", in Berne, at the age of 80.

Armin Walter, in Schaffhausen, aged 61. The deceased was president of the Grand Council of the canton of Schaffhausen, a member of the cantonal tribunal, and for twenty years editor of the "Schaffhauser Arbeiterzeitung".

Emilia Cuchet-Alnaret, writer, in Vandœuvre, at the age of 81. The University of Geneva honoured her with the degree of *doctor honoris causa*.

Emil Kreis, from 1916 to 1946 drawing master at the Teachers' Seminary Kreuzlingen, in Kreuzlingen, aged 85. [A.T.S.]

ANNIVERSARIES

Albert Picot (80), of Geneva. He was from 1931 to 1934 a member of the government of the canton of Geneva. From 1935 to 1949 he sat in the National Council, and from 1949 to 1955 in the States Council.

Carl Stemmler (80), of Schaffhausen, eminent ornithologist, and founder of the "Schaffhauser Natur- und Heimatschutzvereinigung".

Albrecht de Haller (90), of Geneva, for many years pastor in Montreux and Lausanne. He is a great-grandson of the great Bernese scholar, Albrecht von Haller, who died in 1777. [A.T.S.]

LEGACY

The late Mr. Alfred Staehli, who died in December 1961 in Thalwil, has left the major part of his fortune to the commune of Thalwil, which will receive an amount of 75,000.— frs. The interest on the capital is to be used for helping sick and needy people of the commune. [A.T.S.]

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VARIOUS

The accounts for 1961 of the following Cantons have just been published.

Geneva	credit balance	29,045,000.— frs.
Lucerne	credit balance	430,000.— frs.
Zurich	credit balance	40,500,000.— frs.
Berne	credit balance	4,256,112.— frs.

[A.T.S.]

* * *

The collection made for a monument to be erected to General Henri Guisan, commander-in-chief of the Swiss army during the last war, amounts to 1 million francs after deduction of expenses. [A.T.S.]

* * *

The Swiss Colony in Uruguay celebrated its Centenary on 25th April in the town of Nueva Helvecia. The Federal Council was represented at the celebration by M. Enrico Celio, a former Federal Councillor. [A.T.S.]

GREAT ST. BERNARD TUNNEL

On the 5th of this month engineers constructing the Great St. Bernard tunnel blasted the last barrier of rock separating the Italian and Swiss sections.

The last blast was fired in the presence of the directors, the workers, press and television. When the smoke and dust cleared, the workers on either side of the gallery shook hands and were congratulated by the president of the board.

Representatives of the Swiss and Italian automobile clubs and the Swiss and Italian touring clubs who were present offered a dinner to all the workers.

Two workers lost their lives during the construction of the tunnel — through an unexpected explosion.

The tunnel, which will be open to traffic in the autumn, provides a motor road between western Switzerland and northern Italy which will remain open throughout the year. At present the only routes across the Alps in the region are the Great St. Bernard and Simplon passes, which can be used only for about five months a year.

The Great St. Bernard highway will connect with the German *Autobahn* and the Italian *autostrada* systems.

More than 85,000 cars crossed the pass during the months when it was open last year, and during the winter 35,000 vehicles were taken by train through the Simplon tunnel.

The Great St. Bernard tunnel is a private venture; the capital was put up by the Fiat company and the Italian provinces of Turin and Aosta, and on the Swiss side by the canton of Valais and the town of Lausanne. The total cost of boring the gallery, which began in 1959, and building the road approaches is likely to reach £7,500,000.

The tunnel starts at about 6,200 feet at Cantine de Proz on the Swiss side, 25 miles from Martigny, and it emerges near St. Rhémy at about the same height on the Italian side, 14 miles from Aosta. The tunnel is 6,430 yards long and it shortens by six miles the distance between Martigny and Aosta. It is 14 feet high and 23 feet wide, with a double track and a 3-foot footway on each side. Ventilation is by two vertical chimneys, one 600 feet high, the other 1,100 feet.

At each end of the tunnel the road is protected against snow for nearly six miles by means of a concrete roof and concrete sides. Snowploughs will keep the road permanently open.

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