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SUNDRY NEWS FROM SWITZERLAND.

In a speech at the annual Congress of the Liberal Democratic Party at Berne, the Swiss Foreign Minister, M. Pilet-Golaz, reviewed Switzerland's policy of neutrality. He declared that the country's traditional attitude continued to prove successful, and that Switzerland's foreign political relations were satisfactory. To-day, he said, Switzerland was the Protecting Power of twenty-five States, including almost all the great Powers. The Federal Council would continue to observe a loyal, firm and sincere attitude which would not be swayed either by internal tendencies or by external events. If it was true that this policy was based on reason and wisdom, then it was a reason susceptible to the influence of the heart and a wisdom nourished by hope. Thus politics were raised to the height of neighbourly love. The wish which animated them to tender their assistance to all those who were suffering made it imperative that their neutrality should continue to instil confidence. This active neutrality might contribute towards saving the cultural values that so far had escaped destruction.

At home, Monsieur Pilet-Golaz continued, the situation demanded the collaboration of all men of good will. The Swiss people could not afford to dissipate its strength and it would be useless to concentrate on the study of problems that were not really urgent. This did not imply, however, that Swiss institutions were incapable of improvement, but that the right moment must be awaited as these institutions were still sound on the whole, but according to the man directing them they would prove good or bad. This was the reason why attention ought to be focussed on the substance of matters rather than their form. Switzerland's primary problem today was the preservation of her national existence, which presupposed the complete independence of the country. As, however, there could be no life without work, it was up to the authorities to provide work. In order to live, Switzerland must serve in unity the cause of peace, whose advent the Swiss people could promote through honesty, loyalty and firmness.

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The total Government revenue for 1941 amounted to 398,000,000 Swiss francs as against expenditure of Swiss francs 458,000,000, thus leaving a deficit of Frs. 60,000,000 including reserves and amortisation amounting to Frs. 72,000,000. The deficit is accordingly Frs. 37,000,000 lower than estimated. On 31st December 1941 the national debt amounted to Frs. 3,662,000,000.

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The sum of Swiss francs 4,680,000,000 has been allocated to provide work. Post-war export is to be encouraged by developing technical processes, market analysis, commercial relations with other countries, adequate commercial representations, and the financing of exports and collective buying of raw materials. The State will intervene wherever private enterprise is inadequate. To encourage tourist traffic some hotels will be completely modernised and brought up to date.

Road and rail construction, land improvements, water power development and building of aerodromes are provided for. The road from Geneva to Lake Constance, and the runway from north to south are to be improved at an expenditure estimated at Frs. 495,000,000. The railway programme is computed at Frs. 760,000,000. A hundred million out of 160,000,000 francs grant for land work have already been allocated. A supplementary land improvement programme includes the building of power stations, etc.

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Maybugs as fodder for pigs.

The collection of maybugs has been declared compulsory in Switzerland. For every hectare of cultivated land at least four litres of maybugs must be delivered and it is expected, that a total of about 2 to 3 million litres will be collected. Out of these maybugs about 300,000 kilograms of fodder for pigs in the form of flour will be produced, which has a very high nutritive value.

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An Invention in the Watchmaking World:

(Geneva). A Swiss watchmaking firm has just perfected a new type of watch called "the ready reckoner chronograph". Owing to a special device based on the properties of logarithms, all processes possible by the slide-rule can be done: calculations of exchange rates, interest, cost prices, etc.

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The distillation of wood bye-products in the Canton of Grisons:

(Zurich). If work can continue normally, a factory for the distillation of the bye-products of wood will commence operations towards the middle of the year, in order to obtain saccharine from wood. This undertaking is not merely temporary to meet present difficulties, but will continue after the war.

Wood yeast will also be extracted at the Ems factory; this product is not only an excellent manure, but also a food of great biological value. The factory will first supply the requirements of the Canton of Grisons. The factory now being built was originally planned on a smaller scale, but later extended into an enterprise of national importance.

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At the spring session of the Swiss Parliament which lasted this time only one week, Federal Councillor Stampfli, chief of the Economic Department, made an impressive statement about the position of supplies in Switzerland. According to this report the coal situation should now be getting easier with the advent of warmer weather and the decrease of traffic difficulties; Germany has also promised a more regular supply of the 2.4 million tons annually contracted for. This, however, is only half of the yearly requirements. Home produced coal amounts to about 12,000 tons per month. The electric current production by next winter will be increased by 800 million Kwh. or 10% by the new power works at Innertkirchen and Verbois. Cause for alarm is, however, the heavy drop in the import of textile raw materials. The supply of boots is secure for another year, but rubber stocks have to be reserved almost totally for the army. The position in the supply of iron is such that new undertakings which require this metal as raw materials as well as the use of iron in buildings are now controlled and have to have permits prior to starting work. The import of sugar and rice is equally low but fats and oils are easier. As no more American vessels can be chartered, our own shipping space is not sufficient for the transport of cereals. The 114,000 tons which we were allowed by England to import could up to now not be increased. No Swiss ships or ships flying the Swiss flag have been sunk.

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Last year's home harvest was with 12,000 trucks about 4,000 trucks short of the record year 1938, so that 3,600 trucks had to be imported monthly. The increase in arable acreage ordered by the Federal Council raises the arable land by 30,000 ha. to 310,000 ha., but to be self-sufficient in cereals and root crops a total of about 500,000 ha. should be put under the plough. About 60,000 ha. could be gained by converting alpine meadows into potato fields and a further 20,000 ha. by uprooting forests. The missing 90,000 ha. would have to be gained by melioration works, but to do this at least two years are required, so that only by 1944 and then only by very hard and arduous labours will this be possible.

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The town of Zurich has just opened an installation which produces methyl gas from the mud of the sewers. Up to now the gas which accumulated in the so-called fermenting chambers was led into the town's gas works and mixed with the lighting gas. The new installation now purifies and compresses the gas, so that it can be used for starting up motors instead of benzine. By this method about 70,000 cubic metres of clarified gas can be obtained which is equal to about 45,000 litres of benzine. This gas is now used in the first place to drive the dust carts and such vehicles which generally do not go outside the town's boundaries. The price is considerably lower than the present price of Benzine, it amounts to about 77cts. per cubic metre of Methyl-gas and will thereby enable the amortisation of the installation within four years. The residue of the mud makes an excellent manure, so that the whole installation is of considerable economic importance.

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Electricity production plans:

(Basle). The Councils of State of the Cantons of Basle-Town and Basle-Country have decided to address a common petition to the Federal Council for the concession rights to build an electric power station at Birsfelden.

In a prison in the St. Gall Rheintal, interesting experiments were made last year to cultivate vegetables in flat bottomed water containers which showed surprising results. In three such containers of 3m. length, 75cm. wide and 20cm. deep to which the necessary chemicals were added and which were placed in a green-house, tomatoes and cucumbers were raised. The tomatoes which grew in the water reached a height of three metres and produced fruit over double the amount than a plant grown in the usual way, and from two containers 268 cucumbers of a total weight of 125 kg. were harvested. In similar containers in the open and of an area of 2.5m. roughly 12kg. of beans were obtained and potatoes showed almost double the result than ground cultivation. The trials are being continued this year in a bigger way in the gardens of the town. Should these trials prove equally successful a great deal would be gained for the provisioning of the country, as the several vegetables and fruits are said to be of excellent quality.

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To give consumers a possibility to have their own price control, the retailers in every kind of business have to mark in plain figures the price of every article exhibited for sale. Until now this duty only devolved upon dealers in the most essential food stuffs and clothing.

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The Sample Fair at Basle which closed on April 28th has been a great success. There have been over 270,000 visitors, 43,000 more than last year. According to the first estimate, about 700 foreign buyers from 16 European and four overseas countries visited the Fair.

The XII Exhibition of Swiss Watches and Clocks, held in connection with the Fair at Basle has been very successful, and extensions are proposed for next year.

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Talk by Civil Engineer Adolf Ryniker, Head of the Swiss High Seas Shipping Office in Basle:

Switzerland's Desire for Shipping Independence:

This talk dealt with the problems of Swiss merchant shipping on the high seas, especially regarding the Federal Council's decision of 9th April, 1942, concerning the Swiss flag on the high seas. The speaker said that, with one exception, it had not been possible to provide Swiss merchant ships with Swiss captains, but every effort was being made to do so. The decision of the Federal Council would show people at home and abroad that Switzerland desires to maintain her independence by her own strength.

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The Swiss Laboratory for Horological Research in Neuchatel:

(Neuchatel). The chief aim of this new institute is to further practical research work by placing at the service of all persons interested in watchmaking, as wide a scientific documentation as possible. This is effected by the collaboration of the Neuchatel Physics Institute which is housed in the same building.

The Laboratory also studies problems of general interest concerning the influence of various physical factors on watch movements and the construction of precision gauges destined to unify the calibres of pivots and the drilling of rubies with a guaranteed precision to one thousandth of a millimetre. At the moment, the Laboratory is studying waste salvage and substitute materials.

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Tyre economy:

(Berne). The shortage of rubber tyres and inner tubes for motor vehicles is so great, that steps have had to be taken to ensure the rational utilization of reserve stocks. The Federal Department for War Industry and Work issued an ordinance which came into force on April 1, prescribing the maximum speeds of 50 Km.p.h. (about 31 m.p.h.) for private cars, and 35 km.p.h. (about 22 m.p.h.) for char-a-bancs, lorries and industrial tractors. The same decree also ordains that rubber-tyred lorries and tractors used for goods transports can only be loaded to 90% of their capacity.

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