

[News]

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EIGHT TIMES ROUND THE EARTH. Last year, 5,520 kilometres of cable were added to the telephone system of the City of Zurich, bringing it up to a total of 316,050 kilometres, or eight times the circumference of the earth. The number of telephone subscribers rose from 49,426 to 52,710 and, compared with the population of the City, this means a proportion of one subscriber to every 7 inhabitants, including children.

A WELCOME GOVERNMENT ISSUE: Through the intermediary of banks and saving banks in Switzerland, the Federal Finance Department has issued bonds for the anticipated payment of the capital levy termed "National Defense Sacrifice", which will have to be paid during the years 1945, 1946 and 1947. A welcome feature of these bonds is that they yield an interest of 3% per annum, free of the stamp duty on coupons and the National Defense Tax at source. These bonds are therefore an interesting investment. As a proof of the interest shown by the public in this issue, it may be stated that 110 million francs have been subscribed to date since the end of January when the bonds were issued.

On August 3rd, 1943, the Federal decree according to which the Swiss Federal Council has the right to deprive unworthy Swiss living abroad, who have acted against the interests of the Confederation, of their Swiss citizenship has for the first time been put into effect. Major Leonhard from Basle (living in Frankfurt a.M.) and Max Burri, from Lucerne, both previously condemned "in contumaciam" for high treason are from August 3rd no longer considered as Swiss citizens. The Swiss Radio adds that they will thus be prevented from shielding their subversive activities behind the cloak of Swiss citizenship.

Freight and passenger traffic through the Simplon Tunnel has been stopped, and there are only some empty trains running between Brig and Domodossola.

The Swiss ship Maloja has been sunk on September 13th, in the Mediterranean off Corsica. Of the crew of 23, twenty were saved. The cargo, consisting of oil and copra, is lost.

The Municipal Council in Zurich has decided to continue with its policy regarding naturalization. Candidates born in foreign countries will be questioned on civics and must know some Swiss German dialect. Candidates who are more than 60 years of age will not be considered eligible to citizenship.

The Executive Branch of the Zurich City government is proposing to the Municipal Council that a gift of 50,000 Swiss francs be made to the International Red Cross Committee of Geneva.

The 21st day for the Swiss abroad was celebrated on Sunday, August 22nd, in Rapperswil, on the shores of the Lake of Zurich. Mr. de Steiger, head of the Federal Department of Justice and Police, spoke in defense of our political institution and of the Swiss residing abroad. He stated that our most precious possession - our freedom and independence - must continuously be protected against opposing forces of disintegration. The great majority of our people have but one aim, namely, the maintenance of the freedom, independence and neutrality of our country. Mr. de Steiger then spoke about the measures taken by the Confederation to help Swiss citizens living abroad. Due to the war, many Swiss colonies have been found to be in need of help. Finally, he justified the recent legislative measures taken to give the Swiss Government the power to withdraw the citizenship from those who have proved themselves unworthy of our nationality.

The bombing that almost completely destroyed Milan caused no casualty in the Swiss colony there. However, the Swiss school and many buildings occupied by Swiss have been destroyed. For several days, all telephone and telegraph communications between Switzerland and Italy were interrupted.

On Wednesday, August 18th, the thermometer reached in Basle 37.5° Celsius (100°F.) and the following day even more than 38° was registered, which was record-breaking for the previous 22 years. Due to this African weather, huge crowds of people were gathered at beaches and pools. In Basle, for instance, approximately 9,500 persons visited the swimming pool in one day only.

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The warm dry weather enabled the farmers to harvest the hay crop in good condition, but the absence of rain has been damaging the pasture land. In many parts of our country, green pasture is already lacking and has to be substituted by hay. This creates a serious condition, especially at a time when our stocks are already scarce. Our milk supplies will not be as abundant in the future as they were so far, during the war.

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In the marksmanship competition held between a Swedish and Swiss team on Sunday, August 22nd, Switzerland beat Sweden by 17,212 against 17,060 points. The Swiss won the war arm and the pistol contest, whereas the Swedes won in the Carabine shooting. The competitive games were controlled by diplomatic representatives.

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The government decided, for the benefit of the students of technical and professional schools, that these young people must attend school daily for at least eight years. The purpose of this measure is to prevent them from being taken out of school and thrown into the "fight for existence" before they are fifteen years of age.

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ENROLMENT OF MAN-POWER IN SWITZERLAND. In 1942, about 63,000 persons in Switzerland were enrolled as auxiliaries for landwork; 30,000 of these were recruited on the compulsory work system, but the remainder offered their services voluntarily. Among the latter, there were more than 22,500 students, school children and young people.

Although Switzerland must exert strenuous efforts to ensure national food supplies by home production, the Government has been obliged to reduce by one-quarter the 250,000 additional acres to be planted with food crops during the fifth stage of the agricultural extension plan, and to preserve this acreage as pasture land. The main consideration behind this decision is that the present intensity of production may be maintained.

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A REDUCTION IN SWISS MEAT SUPPLIES. According to official statistics, the number of cattle and sheep slaughtered in Switzerland during 1942 was 21.5% less than in 1941, and the total volume of butcher's meat, 45,600 tons, showed a 24% decrease. Last year, 443,000 animals were slaughtered, as compared with 564,000 in 1942.

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95% OF SWISS FEDERAL RAILWAY TRAFFIC TRANSPORTED BY ELECTRICITY. Today, 78% of the Swiss Federal Railway system is now electrified, but 95% of the total traffic is transported by electricity on the main lines. No other railway system in the world has undergone so complete a transformation as in Switzerland.

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DEPRESSION IN THE SWISS HOTEL INDUSTRY. In 1941, the aggregate capital shown by Swiss joint-stock companies decreased by 130 million francs. The dividends paid nevertheless remained about the same, and a slight increase in the average dividend paid out was consequently noted; it rose from 5.23% in 1940 to 5.33% in 1941. Despite this improvement as compared with the previous year, 31.8% of the aggregate capital nevertheless remained unproductive, i.e., paid no dividends.

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By a decree of the Federal Council dated May 25th, a small political group styling itself "Eidgen. Arbeiter-und Bauernpartei" is to dissolve. The party was formed in summer 1941 in Basle by one named Lothar Zumosen and is stated to harbour elements inimical to the safety of the country.

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At the Landsgemeinde in Stans the "Nidwaldner" took over four hours to dispose of the tractanda list; the official proposals led to animated discussions but in the end received approval. Of the four naturalisation petitions only one was accepted. On the other hand at Sarnen the "Obwaldner" insisted on adopting two Germans and two Italians whose naturalisation was officially opposed. The elections to fill the different posts vacant by rotation in the cantonal administration followed traditional lines but an insurance scheme against unemployment was contested by the labour elements and will now be submitted to a secret ballot. The parish-president of Sachseln, Ludwig von Moos, was elected to the Ständerat and being only 35 years old is thus the youngest member of that distinguished assembly at Berne.

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The Fribourg government has issued a decree prohibiting throughout the canton the publication of advertisement offering loans without the usual securities or guarantees; it is directed against the activities of professional moneylenders.

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The Appenzell A. R. Landsgemeinde was held at Hundwil when over 8,000 burghers attended. The proceedings and ceremonial enlivened by the participation of the traditional drums and fifes lasted just over an hour; the accounts and government were confirmed and a proposal to introduce proportional representation received little support. The Innerrhoden Landsgemeinde took place on the same day (Sunday, May 2nd) at Appenzell no controversial proposal disturbing the usual harmony.

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At a very appropriate moment a pamphlet has been published in French and German, written by Colonel Louis Couchepin, entitled "The Redoubt - How our army is defending Switzerland." The booklet shows in a convincing and easily comprehensive manner the possibilities and purposes of the well-planned central position in the alps. It shows how the redoubt, which at the same time is also a citadel, is the pivot of a fortress. Our country is "A fortress which is defended on all sides. The heights of the Jura and the fortifications and positions of the central plateau are its outer walls and its advanced bastions. Never was the thought entertained to abandon these outposts at the outset on account of the fortress having such a strong centre. Neither for a moment nor with a single word has the General altered the orders to the frontier guard troupes. These troupes, in conjunction with the other forces which have the task of resisting outside the central position, will defend the country inch by inch, starting from the furthest point at the frontier. Not one single foot of Swiss territory will be allowed to fall into the hands of an aggressor intact or without a fight. A citadel for valiant defenders is never a place of refuge neither is it a prison. The defenders of the redoubt will be active and eager to attack. Redoubt means, defences built to prolong the defence of the country and eventually to drive the enemy out of it."

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An addition or mixture of 15% to 20% of potatoes to the ordinary bread has been officially sanctioned as from May 17th as a result of experiments recently made in Winterthur. This will extend the life of the existing stock of bread cereals the majority of which are imported from oversea countries.

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There is news of a favourable development in Switzerland's live-stock position in 1943 after two years when the outlook was very black. The number of horses has increased by 1500 (1%), sheep and goats have also increased slightly. There is now one milk-goat to every 25 inhabitants. In spite of lack of feeding grain, the number of hens has greatly increased. Most important of all, however, is the increase of 1.6% in cattle.