

News at random

Objekttyp: **Group**

Zeitschrift: **The Swiss observer : the journal of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK**

Band (Jahr): - **(1942)**

Heft 1003

PDF erstellt am: **28.04.2024**

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The Swiss Observer

FOUNDED BY MR. P. F. BOEHRINGER.

The Official Organ of the Swiss Colony in Great Britain.

EDITED WITH THE CO-OPERATION OF MEMBERS OF THE LONDON COLONY.

Telephone: Clerkenwell 2321/2.

Published Monthly at 23, LEONARD STREET, E.C.2.

Telegrams: FREPRINCO, LONDON.

VOL. 24 — No. 1003.

LONDON, AUGUST 28th, 1942.

PRICE 6d.

PREPAID SUBSCRIPTION RATES.

(Monthly issue.)

UNITED KINGDOM	(6 issues, post free)	3/6
AND COLONIES	(12 issues, post free)	6/6
SWITZERLAND	One Year (12 issues, post free) Frs. 5.—	

(Swiss subscriptions may be paid into Postscheck-Konto Basle V 5718).



NEWS AT RANDOM

Federal

In a speech delivered on August 1st the President of the Confederation, Dr. Philippe Etter, said that last year, the 650th anniversary of the Federation was celebrated in an unforgettable manner, and Switzerland showed her readiness to remain loyal to the "confederation of freedom." This year, he said, we celebrate the anniversary in a quiet simple way. The National Day is neither a holiday nor a day of rest. We are working to-day, for we know that our good fortune to be free citizens of a free nation must be earned by hard daily work. Every Swiss feels in his heart the sanctity of this anniversary. We know that, in this hour, hundreds of thousands of our countrymen in foreign lands and beyond the seas are thinking of the home country, united with us in spirit. To these I send in the name of the whole country, heartfelt greetings from the Homeland. In a few weeks, three years will have elapsed since the beginning of the war. Since then the nations of the world have had to endure untold ordeals. There is no foreign suffering with which, in our hearts, we do not sympathise — no heroism, no sacrifice, no greatness to which we can deny our respect. He added that, in the midst of warring nations, Switzerland was following her humble task of keeping the light of love burning and hope that God would preserve Switzerland as the stronghold of freedom and peace. "We thank our army, which has honourably and loyally been carrying out its duty. In it is embodied the old martial strength of our people and its honest ever watchful determination to remain independent." On the National Day the unity between the nation and its army must be proved by deeds. He asked the people to subscribe generously to the National Contribution for old soldiers and their dependants and the "Swiss Samaritan Fund" or symbol of christian charity.

"The longer the war goes on the more will its effect extend to our land. There are more and more difficulties in the way of imports and exports. The difficulties of supplying our land with food and raw materials are felt more acutely every day. I must not withhold from you that further possible developments fill us with grave concern for the future, but the

greater the hardship we have to bear, the stronger and more stubborn must be our will to unity. The motto of the first founders of the Confederation must be ours also: They swore "to stand by and help each other." Where, under the heavy weight of hardship, tension begins to grow, it must, as its very first sign, be surmounted by mutual goodwill, and give place to mutual understanding. We must all, employers and workers, realise how close are the ties which bind us to each other and the extent of our common interdependence. Each one of us must adjust his desires and actions to exigencies of common hardships. Our burden will be easier to bear if we try to distribute it equitably. Don't lend your ears to anyone who tries to sow dissension, despair or discontent in your midst. They cannot help you, but do a disservice to the country by endangering the internal peace which is a necessary condition of our holding out. From the desire for freedom sprang our union: our will for union will preserve our freedom. Let us therefore go on, united through these anxious days; let us continue undaunted in the path of duty, through trial to security."

* * *

Suggestions for the tightening up of penal legislation and measures for the maintenance of state security were made during the session of Parliament which has just come to an end. The Federal Council has now passed a decree which became effective on the 10th of this month increasing the penalties for espionage and any kind of subversive propaganda endangering neutrality and public order. Acts of this kind will henceforth be dealt exclusively by the military authorities even if the offenders are civilians. Spreading of rumours likely to cause unrest among the population becomes a punishable offence as well as the utterance of critical remarks inconsistent with a strict conception of neutrality. An entirely new feature of this internal measure is the fact that its application and operation is extended to the Swiss residing abroad who thus become amenable to criminal

CITY SWISS CLUB.

Messieurs les Membres sont avisés que

L'ASSEMBLEE MENSUELLE

aura lieu Mardi, le 1er Septembre à 6 p.m. au Brown's Hotel, Dover Street, (near Green Park Tube Station).

ORDRE DU JOUR:

Procès-verbal.

Démissions.

Admissions.

Divers.

Causerie en français par Monsieur Maurice Thiery.

Les participants sont priés de bien vouloir s'inscrire au plus tôt auprès de Mons. H. Bingguely, 167 Clapham Road, S.W.9. (Téléphone: Reliance 4150).
Le Comité.

or military proceedings inside Switzerland(!). The full text is not to hand yet and it remains to be seen how this decree will operate in practice as an arbitrary interpretation may place us in a delicate position, all the more as the principle of protective imprisonment without trial or definite charge has been introduced.

The two Houses of Parliament have elected Dr. Franz Fässler (Appenzell) a Federal Judge in succession to Dr. Andermatt; he was previously clerk to the Federal Tribunal.

An increase in the emoluments of Federal Councillors is proposed by the finance commission of the States Council. In future a Federal Councillor would be entitled to an annual salary of Frs. 35,000 and Frs. 5,000 representation expenses with an additional Frs. 3,000 for the President.

The Initiative Committee formed to stimulate the proposed extension of the Federal Council from seven to nine members has decided to suspend activities as the prospects of collecting the minimum number of 50,000 signatures required by our Constitution are unfavourable. The Initiative seemed to be hopeless almost from the outset particularly after the recent rejection of the socialist proposal to elect the members of our supreme council by a direct vote of the people.

Cantonal

Mr. J. D. Rockefeller has presented to Geneva University the eighteenth-century Villa Rigot and park, situated near the Palace of the League of Nations. It was formerly the headquarters of the League of Nations Union.

The Grand Chalet near Château d'Oex well-known to British holidaymakers has been acquired by the Rossinière Conseil for 75,000frs. as in consequence of the death of the owner this historic wooden structure built in 1754 was threatened with demolition.

The house shortage is so acute in Arbon that no rooms can be let to non-residents without official sanction.

The local council of Thayngen (Schaffhausen) has decided to refuse for the present all demands for naturalisation.

Army

Federal Councillor Kokelt of the Military Department issued a warning stating that "in this war of surprises no one can say that a situation will not develop which might threaten us. Military service has been cut to a minimum in view of economic needs, but it cannot be further reduced without impairing our preparedness."

It is officially confirmed that two Messerschmidts landed at an aerodrome near Berne at the end of last month the pilots having lost their way.

Economical

The potential of our agriculture is being strained to the utmost in order to achieve self-sufficiency as far as its products are concerned. A few figures will show the gigantic strides made during a period when the bulk of the agricultural workers were taken away from the fields in consequence of the mobilisation. Before the war about 16% of the total area were under culti-

vation, in 1941 the percentage had risen to about 23% (an increase of nearly 50%) and by the spring of this year it reached 25.7%. This year's harvest constitutes a record but is still about 12% short of the vital minimum; in many districts crops suffered badly either through hailstorms or drought.

The immediate outlook for the supply of meat is somewhat gloomy. The ration has been halved and is now 500 grammes per month and hotels and restaurants have to observe three meatless days per week instead of two as hitherto.

It seems almost a wonder, that after three years of world war we are still able to buy bread at a proportionately low price and without bread cards, although not white any longer. It is easily understandable that this fact has caused a great increase in bread consumption during these last years. The increase is from 170 grammes per head and day in August 1939 to an average of 260 grammes. This fact, however, is apt to conceal the difficulties in the importation of grain. These are causing great worries to the authorities. Until next year when the increased home production of grain makes itself felt, two thirds of the necessary wheat has to come from overseas. Before the war 100kg. of wheat could be sent from a North- or South American port to a destination in Switzerland for 8 to 9 frs., inclusive insurance and lighterage charges. To-day the cost for the same service amounts to 30 frs. from New York and nearly 40 frs. from Buenos Aires. Argentine wheat costs to-day 48frs. per 100 kg., i.e. two-and-a-half times more than the pre-war price. This price, however, prevails only when wheat can be brought direct to Genoa, but if it has to go by shuttle service via Lisbon to Genoa, then the price for 100kg. La Plata wheat rises to 60frs. If the price of bread were calculated on the basis of cost the 1kg. loaf would have to be sold at 72 to 73 cts. Actually the price was 53 cts. until recently when a price increase of 5 cts. was introduced by an increase of 4 cts for white flour, the remainder was born by the Confederation and amounted to round 80 million frs. Should the war situation change in such a way that wheat could no longer be imported from the U.S.A., then not only would the price of bread have to be increased, but the problem of tonnage would become more acute, as the journey from New York to Europe is only half the distance of that from Buenos Aires.

For the first time the intensified cultivation of potatoes has made it possible to provide the country with its own home production of potatoes from harvest to fresh harvesting. Already early potatoes have appeared on the market at the end of June at prices below last year's Italian price for earlies. This pleasing fact is in the first instance due to the result of the increased cultivation which from 48,000 ha. in 1940 rose to 63,000 ha. in 1941, and although there was only an average harvest, a total of 100,000 truck loads of 10 tons each was at the disposal of the country. Further, thanks to a number of wise measures on the part of the authorities, above all the compulsory storage of 3,000 truck loads, made it possible to supply deficiency districts without the need to import foreign potatoes. Even seed supplies were at hand until the arrival of seed potatoes from foreign countries with which agreements for such supplies were in existence.

Great progress has of late been made in the production of coal. *Anthracite* occurs in considerable quantities in the Valais, almost half the amount coming from Chandoline and the remainder from Grône.

Brown Coal is so far being raised in 4 different coalfields, — at Erlenbach, Kandergrund, Sonnenberg and Gotthalden. The output at Kandergrund and Sonnenberg (near Lucerne) together amounts to 1,000 tons per month. The coal found at both places is black lignite of the Tertiary age, similar to true coal. The Erlenbach mines yield brown coal abounding in gas. Work has also begun at Boltigen which belongs to the same coalfield as Erlenbach. The heating power of Boltigen brown coal amounts to as much as 7,000 calories. Its quality is better than that of any other coal in Switzerland. According to the calculations of the pit-owners the quantity available is more than 10,000 tons. The pits should therefore be worth working even after the war, provided that the coal seams are sufficiently thick and that the cost of working is not too great. After close examination carried on for several months a mine has now been opened at Gotthalden near Horgen. The brown coal here obtained is of a very recent period and was extensively raised at Käpfnach during the last century. Coal has also been discovered in small quantities in various parts of Central Switzerland.

The only coalfields in which *Slate Coal* is raised are at Hüsli between Willisau and Huttwil, and at Mörschwil in the Canton of St. Gall. The yield of the Hüsli collieries amounts to 9,000 tons a month, while Mörschwil does not produce more than about 100 tons. At Hüsli the coal is raised above ground by means of 4 large dredging machines. Although the seams attain a depth of 4 metres, they are often overlaid by beds of clay and sandstone measuring twice this depth, the removal of which entails very arduous labour. Hüsli slate coal dates from the glacial age and therefore contains a high percentage of water. The quantity available is estimated at more than half a million tons, presenting favourable prospects for a great increase in output.

It is evident that the production of coal in Switzerland does not amount to more than a certain percentage of the quantity required. It is, however, of inestimable value for certain industries, enabling them to carry on in spite of the present difficulties.

* * *

The demand for the construction of a second sugar factory in the eastern part of our country led to an instructive discussion in the National Council. Federal Councillor Stampfli stated that the existing factory in Aarberg with a maximum yearly output of 16,000 waggon loads could only turn out 12,070 waggons during last year on account of the shortage of homegrown sugar beet. Experts were of opinion that unless another 6,000 loads of beet sugar could be secured the question of a second factory could not arise and Federal Councillor Stampfli added that the machinery for another factory could only be obtained from Germany — a foredoomed hope under present conditions as in normal times the delivery period was from one to two years; he said that the Government were all in favour of encouraging an increased sugar beet cultivation. Other members of the Council stressed the desirability of taking a long view so as to secure self-sufficiency after the war; farmers could hardly be expected to prepare soil for an increased

cultivation of beet as long as the marketing possibilities were absent. In the end the Council registered a large vote against the Government, i.e., for the erection of a second sugar factory.

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The compulsory surrender of all spare tyres and inner tubes for heavy motor vehicles has been ordered. The measure is intended to safeguard the replacement of these parts on lorries and tractors vital in the national interest. If the urgency arises the order may be made applicable to all motor vehicles.

* * *

An official poster is being widely displayed emphasising the urgency of the utmost food production. Over the slogan "plant more or die of hunger" a man is shown digging watched by an onlooker with hollow cheeks and sunken eyes.

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According to statistics concerning the price movement of imported goods, the average level reached in 1941 was 80% higher than in the peace year 1938. Comparative figures of the price movement of imported goods during the last World War show that from 1913-1915 the price increase was, on an average, 55-60%. As regards exports, prices show a much smaller increase. In 1941 they averaged about 30% more than in 1938.

Traffic

The semi-official Schweizerische Reederei A.G. reports that during 1941 two ex-colliers have been in service for the transport of wheat between New York and Lisbon and Genoa. At the beginning of 1942 a third vessel was bought, and the company is also the owner of a training ship. Despite high purchasing prices and operating costs, the merchantmen have been working at rates which were substantially below those demanded by foreign shipowners. The river fleet recommenced operations on the Rhine in the spring of 1941, and canal steamers on the Rhine-Danube Canal have been in service again since August, 1941. Operating costs on these waterways have increased substantially, but freight rates were raised only slightly in the interest of a cheap coal supply.

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The training ship "Leventina" riding in the Basle harbour continues to attract a satisfactory number of future Swiss sailors; during the last year three courses were held when they were instructed and fitted out for the transatlantic service.

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The new Swiss steamer "Lugano" (10,000 tons) acquired by the Nautilus A.G., in Lugano, was handed over with the customary ceremonial and banquet at Dakar where owing to its former Italian nationality (its ancestral name being "Semien") it had been securely moored for the last two years in consequence of the blockade.

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After having been held up for several months, Swiss lorries in Spain will again be put on the road, the necessary fuel now being obtainable. The transit service from the Spanish-Portuguese frontier to Canfranc has therefore been resumed. The 19 lorries circulating in Spain will return to Switzerland on expiry of contract and will be replaced by 10 other Diesel lorries, a few of which are already *en route* for Spain. Preparatory work on the organization of a column of wood-gas-driven lorries has made progress.

Special permits are now required for non-military planes using our airports. The aerodromes of Basle-Birsfelden and Altenrhein (St. Gall) are reserved for flight to and from Germany, Geneva-Cointrin in addition to the first-named for air-traffic to and from France and Locarno-Magadino for the Italian traffic.

In 1947 the Swiss Federal Railways will celebrate their centenary. On that occasion the modest little railway museum at the Zurich goods station will be completed and transferred to a building erected for the purpose. An important illustrated history of the Swiss Federal Railways will also be published.

An insistent and wide-spread appeal is being made with the help of attractive local maps published in the daily press for our people to make a more extensive use of our sport and tourist facilities. The suspension of the foreign tourist traffic is gradually sapping the power of survival in our hotel industry. Some of the big hotels have been partly or entirely closed for the time being and in others the rates have been reduced so as to reach the unprolific pockets of our own people. It is recognised that the great luxury hotels cannot hope for a return of prosperity even after the war as the general impoverishment will drive visitors to cheaper and less pretentious establishments and pensions. Ever since 1914 most of the large fashionable hotels have only been able to carry on thanks to the financial assistance of the Confederation and the banks and the feverish boom-years expansion will now be followed by concentration; some of the hotels will probably be liquidated and adapted to other purposes.

Humanitarian

The unemployment insurance organisations recognised by the Confederation have paid out last year for total or partial unemployment the sum of 12.4 million frs. or seven million less than in the previous year. The average relief amounted to frs.23.61 and is the lowest since 1929, when the average daily assistance was frs.4.83, against frs.5.32 to-day. The welcome development is due to the continued favourable conditions in the various occupational branches of industry whereby members of these insurances have found employment in work of national importance as well as in agriculture.

Over 3,000 sisters from the Congregation of the Holy Cross at Ingenbohl near Schwyz are at work all over the world in hospitals, schools and educational establishments. But the post of a Superior General is, since the death of the venerable Sister Agnes Schenk a year ago, still vacant. Now the General Council of the Congregation has elected Sister Diomira Brandenburg, from Zug, who for nearly forty years is a member of the Congregation, to the post of Superior General. Sister Brandenburg has been in charge of the well-known Clinica Quisisana in Rome for the last three years.

A prize competition open to Swiss artists for suggestions or designs for new postage stamps is announced by the Swiss postal authorities; an amount of Frs.10,000 has been earmarked for this purpose and the contest closes on October 15th.

Official figures show that the movement of the majority of our glaciers continues to be retrograde. Of a hundred glaciers officially examined 72 exhibited a receding tendency, 24 extended and four remained stationary.

In 1941 emigrants of military age numbered 1685, namely, 743 less than in 1940, whereas the number of repatriations totalled 2,326 as compared with 1,711 for the previous year. The number of Swiss returning therefore exceeds that of emigrants by 641. Foreign immigration is receding heavily, as 5,206 permits to enter the country and to reside were delivered last year, namely, 5182 less than in 1940. A considerable reduction was registered in the number of permits granted to foreign seasonal workers and domestics (4,635). Oversea emigration, however, shows a slight increase, as 1,398 emigrants, i.e. 287 more than in 1940, were registered last year.

A few days ago a trial run of a new Diesel electric locomotive, built by Sulzer Bro. A.G. Winterthur, took place on the Chur-Disentis line of the Rhaetian Railways, which proved to be a pioneer performance of Swiss engineering skill. The locomotive built for the Thailand Railways is a successor to several engines already built and delivered by the same firm for the narrow gauge railways of Thailand ten years ago. The newly constructed locomotive has a service weight of only 47 tons with a capacity increase to 735 h.p. The proportion of weight to capacity proves to be a record. Unfortunately the seven ordered and now completed locomotives cannot be delivered until after the war. The electrical equipment has been manufactured by the Oerlikon Engineering works.

Considerable damage, estimated at Frs.400,000, was caused by lightning in the soap factory "Schnyder" in Bienne; the regular work has only slightly been interfered with.

In the small parish of Avry in the Fribourg district of Gruyères there are eight families which between them have 98 children. There are: one family with 17 children, two with 14 each, one each with 13, 12, and 10, two with nine, and several with 8 and 7 hopefuls. Some time ago three Fribourg couples celebrated their silver wedding, when it was established that between them they had 50 children of whom 38 are still alive. The Fribourgeois therefore take no share in the dropping birthrate in Switzerland.

According to the "Manchester Guardian," August 17th, a party of Swiss journalists is expected to visit this country shortly. The visitors will include members of the staffs of both German and French Swiss journals representing the main political currents in the country. Among the papers represented will be the "Basler Nachrichten," the "Neue Zuercher Zeitung," the "Gazette de Lausanne," and the "Journal de Genève."

The object of the tour is clearly to enable the leading figures of the Swiss press to observe war-time conditions in this country at first hand and to make themselves familiar with current political trends and opinions on war and post-war problems in this centre of Allied activity.

If the latest reports are reliable the party has so far not been able to obtain the requisite transit-visas.