

News at random

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The Swiss Observer

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NEWS AT RANDOM

Federal

The prospect of a somewhat normal postal service between this country and Switzerland is gradually approaching its realisation. On October 10th the Swiss Radio announced that ordinary mail for England will again be accepted; it will be sent once a week by lorry from Geneva to the Franco-Spanish frontier but no information is given as to the route it will follow then. The arbitrary and intermittent closure of this frontier is likely to cause uncertain delay, but the exit of the German censorship will probably compensate for this retardation. As regards Airmail, the Postmaster General announced on October 19th that this service has been restored; letters will be flown to Lisbon, thence by surface routes to Switzerland.

The Federal Council at its meeting of the 13th inst. sanctioned the issue of a loan of 500 million francs to finance current expenses to the end of the present year.

A large credit arrangement — amount and terms are not disclosed — has been concluded by a consortium of Swiss Banks with the Dutch Government for reconstruction purposes.

In the States Council a member urged the Federal Council to promulgate a decree offering assistance to home craft especially in mountainous regions; he was not thinking so much of financial aid, but favoured the supply of tools and small machines as well as professional instruction.

In the National Council a Socialist member (Dellberg) submitted a motion for a legislative measure to limit the dividends of limited companies to 6% p.a.

As from October 1st all export of war material from Switzerland has been banned. This decree affects particularly Germany, which country has been in regular receipt of fuses, aeroplane parts, precision instruments etc.

Contrary to the principle that every Swiss has a right to a passport for travelling or for settling outside

the home frontiers, the Federal Department for Justice and Police can, based on a decision of the Federal Council in November, 1941, impose a veto on the issuing of a passport, if there is a fear that by the residence abroad a serious breach of State interests may be caused. According to official figures there are besides the fourteen cancellations of citizenships, a further thirty-four cases of refusals of passports. This concerns particularly those Swiss living abroad, against whom the cancellation of citizenship could not be enforced, but who acted in a decidedly un-Swiss manner.

A recent instruction by the Federal Council to the frontier officials has created the impression abroad that the Federal Council has abandoned the right of asylum exercised up to now. In answer to this the Swiss authorities state that fundamentally the instructions of July 12th, 1944, do not alter the then prevailing conditions, but are merely uniform directions to be observed by all frontier officials, based on the experiences of the past years. As a directing line are the old conditions that next to military persons, civil persons are only received who for political or other reasons go in fear of their lives and who have no other way of escape from that danger than to flee into Switzerland. Foreigners who through objectionable actions appear to be unworthy of the asylum, or who through their previous activities or attitude have damaged or endangered Swiss interests are at all times to be refused. No one can expect of a country which, from its own poor soil and only under the utmost exertions, can provide just sufficient for its own citizens and the tens of thousands of foreign refugees who already enjoy its protection, to receive either unworthy or even hostile guests.

The Japanese Minister in Berne has requested the Federal Council to consent to the "Imperial Japanese

CITY SWISS CLUB.

Messieurs les Membres sont avisés que

L'ASSEMBLEE MENSUELLE

aura lieu mardi, le 14 novembre, 1944, à 6h., diner à 6h. 30 au Dorchester Hotel, Park Lane, W.1.

ORDRE DU JOUR:

Procès-verbal.	Démissions.
Admissions.	Divers.

Monsieur le Hon. Harold Nicholson, C.M.G., M.P., nous parlera au sujet

"The last Peace Treaty and the next".

Les membres sont priés de s'inscrire par écrit pas plus tard que le 11 novembre auprès de M. P. A. Moehr, Hon. Secr., Imperial House, Kingsway, W.C. 2. Prière de s'abstenir de téléphoner.

LE COMITE.

Economic and Financial Mission for Europe" being moved from its Berlin headquarters to Switzerland.

The ban on the broadcasting of weather reports in force since the beginning of the war has been officially lifted.

In the first quarter of the current year the number of Swiss emigrants liable for military service dropped to 150. Not a single one went overseas.

Cantonal

At a meeting of the "Union of Swiss Towns" when means for counteracting the scarcity of reasonable living accommodation were debated a strong protest was recorded against the exorbitant prices insisted upon by owners of building land.

At a meeting of cantonal education officials at which Federal Councillor Etter attended it was unanimously decided to recommend the issue of a new atlas for Switzerland.

A terrible accident consummated the wedding festivities of a large party that were returning to Lucerne on Thursday, the 12th inst., by a motor boat. The launch was approaching the town on the left bank of the lake when suddenly in the darkness it collided with a heavy transport barge; the private boat was completely turned over, the passengers being precipitated into the waters which at this spot reached a depth of over six metres. The funeral of the twenty victims took place at Lucerne on the following Tuesday, a tremendous crowd, amongst whom was Federal Councillor Etter, following the cortège. In the evening the

Beromünster station broadcast the whole of the funeral service.

The Zürich communal council approved a scheme reserving certain zones for factory and industrial buildings to the exclusion of private residences; it also voted Frs. 50,000 to the International Red Cross Committee and Frs. 30,000 to the Pestalozzi Library for re-issuing the works of this famous pedagogue.

The Berne Grosse Rät discussed new regulations affecting the different churches. Women are to be given a vote—which may even be compulsory—in all ecclesiastical matters; Roman Catholics are exempted from this franchise. After prolonged disputation the proposed law was referred back to a mixed commission for further consideration.

Radical changes in the financial household of Basle have been made and are still being debated in order to balance the accounts, the current budget anticipating a deficit of seven to eight million francs. A supplementary war tax has already been agreed upon but a special tax on bachelors is still the subject of a prolonged controversy which may afford the victimized an opportunity to remedy their civil status.

The States Council of Berne has made donations of Frs. 100,000 to the International Red Cross Committee and Frs. 50,000 to the Sanatorium at Leysin.

Property owners in Schaffhausen affected by the recent bombardment have received six-and-a-half million francs (up to September 25th) and a similar amount for damaged contents.

The strike of the tinsmiths in Geneva which broke out on August 1st, came to an end at the beginning of this month by the conclusion of a new working agreement. The ordinary working week has been reduced from 48 to a maximum of 46 hours with a minimum of 42 so as to lessen discharges during the slack season.

Army

No less than sixteen members of an espionage organisation formed in 1941 and distributed over the whole of Switzerland received varying sentences at a military tribunal which closed its proceedings on October 10th. Half of the accused were Swiss and the two principals, Grimm and Glauser, were sentenced to death by shooting.

Following a previous trial two death sentences appealed against were confirmed by Parliament in joint session. One of the condemned (Ernst Winzmann) directed for over a year a mysterious political news service and the other one (Fritz Heller) was engaged for the whole of 1942 in a large scale espionage conspiracy.

A certain percentage of our forces has been granted leave, especially those engaged in agricultural pursuits. The army command states, however, that the "latent" danger of a violation of our frontiers still exists. General Guisan is reported to have watched personally the fighting for the Belfort Gap and to have inspected the Basle defences, in particular the Rhine bridges.

Two 24-years-old Lieutenants, O. Biondina of Brione (Minusio) and R. Robbiani from Chiasso, were

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drowned on September 16th in the Maggia during military exercises.

At a recent match with army rifles the well-known match rifleman Karl Zimmermann, from Lucerne, created a new Swiss record by obtaining with twenty shots for each position: lying 182 points, kneeling 178 points, and standing 178 points, a total of 538 points. A masterpiece was also shot by Rhyner, who shot 18 tens and 2 nines, a total of 198 points at a target which was only seen for three seconds (Schnappschiessen). These results do not only prove the traditional skill of our match rifleman, but also demonstrate the quality of our army rifles which permit performances which hitherto could only be obtained by a precision rifle (Stutzer).

Traffic

Late in the evening of Wednesday, the 18th inst., a fast train from Vevey dashed into an empty goods train at Clarens partly telescoping one of the passenger coaches. About twenty people were injured, three of them seriously, who were transferred to the hospital at Montreux. The damage to the track and material is said to be heavy.

The Swiss steamer "Generoso" struck a mine in the Mediterranean. The only fatal casualty was the Portuguese captain; large quantities of oil and food-stuffs are said to have been lost.

Economical

Trade figures for August show a reduction in quantity and an increase in value of our imports which at 92,4 million francs are considerably below last year's August figure of 112,3 millions. The decrease in exports compared with last year is very marked: 46,6 million against 110,7 million in August, 1943. This is due to growing transport difficulties and a notable decrease in the average value of our exports; in 1943 the average figure was 546 francs, in July last 262, and now it has sunk to 201 francs. The export of highly-priced goods, such as precision instruments and first-class manufactured articles have suffered a severe setback.

On account of the stoppage of all imports of wool and cotton since 1942 all accumulated stocks are exhausted. An official communiqué states that no further issues of quotas are allocated until fresh imports of the respective raw materials are available.

The Federal Fuel Office warns householders that no further distribution of coal can take place during the coming winter. The promised arrivals of foreign coal are stated to be disappointing.

In order to make the best use of this year's copious potato crop, bakers and pastry cooks are compelled as from the beginning of November to mix their flour with a certain percentage of "spuds".

Over half a million visitors passed through the stiles of the "Comptoir Suisse" at Lausanne, which closed its doors on September 24th.

Here is a cutting from the "Evening Standard," October 3rd, which we hope will not disturb the equanimity of our friends in the watch trade:

"Lorry loads of watches are crossing France from Switzerland on their way to Britain.

The vehicles which have been taking goods over the Franco-Swiss border are returning—not empty, but with valuable cargoes of watches as "ballast".

These are the first imports to reach Britain overland since the liberation of south-eastern France gave us access to the frontiers of Switzerland.

An official of the National Jewellers' Association told a reporter: 'We understand that certain number of these urgently needed watches will be arriving shortly in this country.

'But the general public are likely to see very little evidence of their arrival.

'The vast majority are earmarked for priority use, and there is likely to be only a very small percentage for civilian sale'."

An airplane driven by producer-gas has been built by a Swiss airman, Captain Ernst Wyss.

The airplane, which developed a speed of 75 miles an hour, had to carry 77lb. of charcoal for an hour's flight, in addition to the producer unit which weighed 264lb.

The necessity of increasing home production of victuals of all kinds has caused many towns in Switzerland to use its open spaces and public parks to grow the most varied vegetable and field products, a matter which was looked upon by the town's population with admiring pride. Some little while back the space previously occupied by the old Tonhalle in Zürich, where rape-seed was cultivated, was harvested in a



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workman-like manner. It is said that the crop of the oil-producing seeds surpassed all expectation.

To further extend the self-provisioning of the country from our own soil, the respective authorities have decreed that an additional 20,000 ha have to be made arable in order to increase the agricultural land, which before the war amounted to about 180,000 ha, to 340,000 ha. This time an increase of agricultural feeding stuff, by planting "intermediate or after crops" is aimed at. Farmers unable any further to extend the area of their agricultural land have to plant twice the amount of intermediate and after crops as would be provided by the compulsory allotted area extension. Everywhere the harvested winter corn fields are already ploughed up and sown with quick growing feeding crops.

In the last two decades 25,000 farmsteads were closed down in Switzerland. During the war-years, on the other hand, wide tracks of land have been made arable by clearance, drainage and other melioration work and thus opened up new land for extensive cultivation. This new land is to-day exploited by a special organisation in order to supplement the provisioning of the population. Presuming that the compulsory cultivation may be repealed before long, a new association has been formed for the settlement of young farmers on this new land, which has been created through spending large public funds. Sons of farmers who would be unable to take over a new farm, experienced hands and small holders from the mountains are to receive medium sized farms, in the first instance as tenants, afterwards as free farmers, when by subsidies and cheap loans the association will assist them. Recognising that only by co-operation a weak class of people can be strengthened and the farming industry consolidated, nearly a million francs from various classes of the population have been collected in a few months for this national fund of settlement.

The method of breeding spotted cattle of the Simmental kind, so renowned far across our frontiers is to a large extent due to the work of a quiet scientist and adviser on breeding, Dr. Werner Schneider, founder and keeper of the cattle stud book for Simmentaler cattle. Numerous big treatises about heredity, blood lines and breeding aims, written by him in the course of twenty-five years earned the high opinion of scien-

tists and practitioners and became standard works for the breeding of spotted cattle. Now, on the day after the completion of another standard work, death has taken the pen out of the hand of this zealous creator. Dr. Schneider died at the age of 57 years through apoplexy of the heart. His work will last for ever.

The homely wooden chalet which is to be found in all parts of our country and which is equal to stone buildings as regards warmth and durability, is now to be mass-produced and exported to the countries ravaged by the war. It will be constructed in Switzerland and provisionally erected and then can be put up at its destination like the parts of a box of bricks.

Humanitarian

A Swiss medical mission in charge of Dr. G. Piedermann has arrived somewhere in Yugoslavia to tend the wounded in Marshal Tito's forces. The Red Cross ship "Zürich" is taking food and medical supplies to the population of Greece.

A collection arranged by the International Red Cross of books for prisoners of war amounted from Switzerland alone to 1,290,000 books of which 800,000 are already on the way to the various camps.

In the Roman amphitheatre of Vindonissa n/Brugg, four hundred children of Swiss living abroad said good-bye to their homeland, after several weeks' sojourn in Switzerland. After being greeted by Mr. Charles J. Bernard, the representative of the New Helvetic Society, Colonel Nager transmitted to the young guests the best wishes from General Guisan and from the army. In glowing words which were received with great enthusiasm this high ranking officer drew a picture of the Swiss soldier and of the defence readiness of the country. He finished his speech with the words: "You young Swiss after having been here for many sunny days and are now leaving, tell your relations on your return, that in your homeland you have met a people to whom freedom is dear above anything else."

The League of Swiss Women's Unions, comprising about 250 separate organisations, held its annual meeting at Zürich. After the submission of reports on edu-

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cation, family welfare and aid to war-victims, it was decided to support the demand for women's suffrage by a petition to the Federal Council. The present president, Klara Levy, from Herisau, resigned after nine years' office and is succeeded by Mme. Jenny Nicolet, of Lausanne.

* * *

Carl Spitteler, indisputably the greatest Swiss poet in the last decade bequeathed his copyrights to the Confederation. The Federal Council has entrusted a Committee with the publication of the whole works of the poet. Five of the expected ten volumes are to be ready for the one-hundredth birthday of the poet next year. Eight of the volumes will comprise the already published works and the remaining two are to contain the yet unpublished writings.

* * *

A short while ago the seventieth birthday has been celebrated of a man who has earned the thanks of our country and our people in the highest measure. He is Professor Gottlieb Bachmann, for many years the president of the council of administration of the Swiss National Bank. During the whole period of between the wars until to-day Professor Bachmann was the leading personality of our issue bank, the helmsman on the ship who steered our Swiss franc safe and strong through the reefs and shallows in spite of the raging storms. Whereas after the first world war the four neighbouring States suffered a catastrophical devaluation of their currency, the Swiss franc was able to withstand. Even in 1936 there was no currency-technical reason for a devaluation. Solely an economic necessity for an equalisation to the reduced world currency forced Switzerland to a certain devaluation, but the credit of the franc remained at such a height that the measure proved a success beyond all expectations. Since then, thanks above all to the work of Professor Bachmann, the franc has continued firm in spite of all the assaults and with it the economic security of the country has been safeguarded.

* * *

The Montana-Crans section of the Swiss Alpine Club has inaugurated a new cabane containing a refectory and 26 bunks.

* * *

Of interest to philatelists is the news that, to celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the formal open-

CITY SWISS CLUB

Members are informed that a

THE DANSANT

has been arranged for

Saturday, 4th November, from 3.30 till 6 p.m.

at the

Dorchester Hotel, London, W. 1.

Tables of eight and ten persons can be reserved and it is suggested that parties up to these numbers are formed. Chapman and the Dorchester Hotel Band will be in attendance.

Admission is by ticket only at 6/- each including gratuities, obtainable upon written application from the Hon. Secretary, P. A. Mochr, Imperial House, Kingsway, W.C.2, or from any Committee Member.

The list for applications will be closed on Monday, 30th October. Kindly send remittance with application.

THE COMMITTEE.

ing of "Airmail", a plane of Swissair made a special return flight from Zürich to Geneva on September 20th; apart from officials of the company the machine carried postal bags containing about 45,000 letters.

* * *

"Monty's Wine" is likely to be very popular at the festive gatherings of our colony if the vintage turns out to be of the same high order as the name suggests. The prospects seem to be promising as "The Times," October 3rd, correspondent at Geneva deemed it worth while to send the following cable to its Editor:

"Vinegrowers in the Swiss Rhone Valley have for centuries had the habit of giving to each year's wine a nickname related to important events of the year. This year's vintage will be 'Monty's wine', which is the tribute of Swiss vinegrowers and peasants to Field-Marshal Montgomery, who is very popular here. He has often been a guest of Switzerland. The population of Lenk has not forgotten him, and in the local hotel a room is reserved for his skiing outfit which is stored there. His skis are oiled and his shoes are greased every week with the utmost care."

* * *

The well-known Swiss inside-forward, T. Abegglen, will be filled with pride in the knowledge that the same preferential medical treatment is extended to an international footballer as to a prime minister. According to the verdict of the doctors of a Zürich hospital, Abegglen was slowly dying from septic poisoning and Penicillin was the only medicine that could save his life. The secretary of the Swiss Football Association telegraphed to his opposite number in England who at once approached Sir Alexander Fleming, the discoverer, with the result that arrangements were made to send a supply to Zürich through the Swiss Legation in London. (After this the editor of the S.O. feels inclined to take up football again).

* * *

A companion to the wonder remedy, Penicillin, discovered by England and America, has been produced by the Swiss chemical industry, which will be of the utmost importance in combating typhus, malaria, dysentery and similar epidemics. The product is

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DDT, manufactured by the chemical works of Geigy A.G. of Basle and its branch in England. It is an insecticide which enables a successful extermination of bacilli-carrying vermin. The epidemic of typhus which broke out in Naples was arrested within three weeks by DDT. To-day the British soldier, ere leaving for the continent is served out with a shirt impregnated with this product which will keep him free from lice for two months. Equally effective has DDT proved in combating malaria and dysentery caused by mosquitoes and it is now intended to use it against the colorado beetle.

* * *

Sons often place their ancestors in the shadow and the following cutting from a Goole paper will interest a good many of our readers. Mr. Studer senr., was a resident in the London Colony for many years, and was a member of the City Swiss Club until, in 1925, he took up an important appointment at Goole. This is what we read about his son:

"Captain Ronald W. Studer, Royal Artillery, only son of Mr. and Mrs. W. Studer, River Lodge, Goole, who up to last February was serving as British Liaison Bombardment Officer on the Dutch gunboat Flores, which ship was mentioned in various despatches whilst engaged on landing and other operations in the Mediterranean, has just been awarded by Royal Dutch decree the Bronze Cross and has received the King's permission to accept and wear the decoration. When his ship was ordered for refitment, Capt. Studer was given a fresh assignment as British Liaison Bombardment Officer to the French Forces, and participated in the battle of Elba, where the French achieved outstanding success. The Croix de Guerre with Silver Star has just been awarded by the French to Capt. Studer for distinguishing himself during these operations.

Capt. Studer, who holds the Africa Star, was serving as Liaison Officer on H.M.S. Renown when the landings in Africa took place. He is 26, speaks five languages fluently, joined the Army in 1939, and was commissioned in 1940. As an old pupil of Goole Grammar School, he finished his education in a college in Switzerland, and later worked in various shipping offices on the Continent, but just before the outbreak of war was employed by the Lep Transport, Ltd., Goole, Capt. Studer's father being the resident director of that company."

* * *

Many will remember the ever-obliging Signor Eusebio, of Diviani's Restaurant in Newgate Street, who for the last twenty years has so successfully attended to the inner man of many of our compatriots and other legal and medical celebrities from Bart.'s and the Old Bailey near by. The business having been taken over by a company, he has now retired from his daily worries and his customers will want to wish him and the signora a long spell of health and happiness.

DONATIONS

We gratefully acknowledge "donations" from the following:—J. Zimmermann, O. Frei, E. Winzeler, Miss J. Kerr-Waddell, J. J. Eberli, J. J. Huber, E. Chatelain, N. Morff, A. Koerber, E. W. Fehrlin, F. Golay, O. Kissling, R. Gloor, Dr. G. E. Bucher, H. Heusser, A. Keller, H. K. Ringer, M. Schaerrer, F. Schuetz, E. Etter, W. Fuchs, H. Zimmermann, E. Spleiss, P. Bessire.

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Chade D	162	162
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Fischer	950	890
Nestlé	960	930
Oerlikon	475	475
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OUR NEXT ISSUE

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