

Zeitschrift: Helvetia : magazine of the Swiss Society of New Zealand
Herausgeber: Swiss Society of New Zealand
Band: 6 (1940-1941)
Heft: 5

Rubrik: Swiss news summary

Nutzungsbedingungen

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. [Mehr erfahren](#)

Conditions d'utilisation

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. [En savoir plus](#)

Terms of use

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. [Find out more](#)

Download PDF: 10.01.2026

ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>

and Simplon tunnel. This railway, driven by electricity from the start, features 34 tunnels, 22 bridges and viaducts, also a number of avalanche galleries.

In 1913, the Swiss Federal Railroads decided to rebuild the St. Gotthard Railway for electric traction. This line, renowned for its many gradients, curves and tunnels, was chosen because the saving of coal in this particular instance was expected to be most appreciable.

On account of the post-war economic crisis, the electrification of the first stage, which included all main lines and was originally foreseen for the period of 1923-33, was rushed as an unemployment relief measure and finished in 1928. Through traffic of the electrified St. Gotthard Railway, from Zurich to Chiasso, was inaugurated on March 5, 1923. Since then, electrification has been progressing at a steady pace, so that steam locomotives are mostly only found on lines off the beaten track. Touring Switzerland is thus a constant delight, not only from the scenic standpoint, but also for speed, smooth riding and ultra comfort.

Electrification of the railroads necessitated at the same time a tremendous expenditure for the construction of adequate power plants. In addition to some minor installations, the Swiss Federal Railroads own today the power stations of Ritom, Amsteg, Barberine and Vernayaz, together with an extensive network of sub-stations for transformation of current.

+++++*+++++*+++++*+++++*

SWISS NEWS SUMMARY.

Friday, November 8th, brought news of the resignation of Federal Councillor Minger, Head of the Military Department, and of Federal Councillor Baumann, Head of the Justice Department. Both Federal Councillors handed in their resignation as from the end of the current year.

Federal Councillor Minger, speaking on the subject of his resignation at the traditional Soirée for Members of the Federal Council, declared that it had been his intention to resign last year, hence the purchase of the estate in Schuepfen. The outbreak of the war and illness of his representative in the Council, M. Oprecht, forced him to delay his decision and to continue at his post for another year. Now, however, he was going back to his farming. Federal Councillor Minger reiterated that neither internal nor external politics had had any bearing on his resignation. He finished by stressing the firm determination of Switzerland to defend her neutrality.

During the night of the 6th November Swiss territory was again violated by 'planes which flew in over the Jura and continued on their course in a south-easterly direction. Anti-aircraft guns came into action and the 'planes turned back before crossing the Alps. The Swiss Legation in London have been instructed to protest against the violation of Swiss territory which has occurred despite assurances that Switzerland's neutrality would be respected.

The Army Command made the following announcements on November 6th:

- (1) It has been decided to institute a general "Black-out" throughout Switzerland. This order is to come into force on November 7th.
- (2) As from the 7th November and until further notice "Black-out" will begin at 10 p.m. and will last until dawn.
- (3) It is to be left to the discretion of the borough officials to decide whether "Black-out" is to be made before 10 p.m.
- (4) In the case of a warning, public services will be allowed only sufficient light to ensure safety.
- (5) The above steps are being taken in accordance with the defence measures of the Army.

Military penalties are applicable to these measures.

The Army Command added that normal lighting regulations had remained in force in Switzerland on the assumption that her neutrality would be respected and safeguarded. However, as it had been found that the lights had served as a guide to foreign planes, "black-out" measures were now being taken with a full understanding of the dangers which they involve for Switzerland. --

The Management of the Railways and Transport Communications states that in the interest of the public, trains and road vehicles will have to be blacked-out. In many places the "blacking-out" of railway stations will have to begin before 10 p.m. as it cannot be done everywhere simultaneously. The Management emphasised that the public could do much to prevent delays by adopting a disciplined attitude towards this new measure.

Swiss territory was again violated during the night of the 8th November. English planes flew in over the Jura and continued on their way towards the south-east. Some A.A. detachments opened fire and several of the planes turned back.

A petition by the National Council was read in the presence of Federal Councillor Baumann, advocating suspension of naturalisation for a period of five years, cases of foreign persons born and educated in Switzerland to be excepted.

The newly appointed French Minister, Count de la Baume, leaves the Spanish Capital for Switzerland on Friday, November 8th. He was received in farewell audience by General Franco.

The Ministry for War, Industry and Labour has announced that cards for textiles are already being distributed in the various cantons. The distribution of these cards will probably be completed within the next few days, but they will not be valid until so declared by the Federal Department for Public Economy.

Furthermore, the Ministry announces that although coal supplies are coming in according to schedule, there will not be enough coal to supply Switzerland's requirements and the people are urgently requested to economise, and thus to ensure the supply of coal for 1941/42.

The Federal Council has made a decree whereby shops and stores can be closed under an emergency legislation in the event of panic buying. Transgression or over-riding of this law is liable to entail heavy penalties. This decision does not constitute valid grounds for the annulling of existing contracts.

The annual shooting held on the Ruetli boasted a record number of visitors this year. Federal Councillor Minger, Colonel-Divisionaire Tissot and the President of the Swiss Shooting Association were present. Federal Councillor Minger, in a speech held in "Bärndütsch" underlined Switzerland's military preparedness and declared himself in favour of the military preparation plan for Switzerland's youth, upon which a vote will be taken at the beginning of December.

Federal Councillor Celio was present at the showing of the official film of the "Landesausstellung" and the documentary film "Das Winzerjahr", which latter was produced by the Transport Association on the subject of the Swiss grape harvest.

Federal Councillor Minger attended the presentation of the official film of the cadets, entitled "Jeune Suisse, la Patrie t'appelle".

The Swiss Catholic party made a resolution when it met at Lausanne on November 11th, approving the continuation of the policy of Swiss neutrality pursued until now. The party confirmed its determination to combat all Swiss parties hostile to Christianity and declared itself in favour of protection for the family and monetary assistance for large families.

W. JUNGEMUTH
Clarence Rd.,
NORTHCOATE, AUCKLAND. N.4.

Please address to the Secretary

CORRESPONDENCE:

At a meeting in Lausanne on November 11th, the Socialist party decided to organise public meetings in the French-speaking part of Switzerland. Questions to be settled will be: Rise in prices, Unemployment, etc. The Socialist party affirmed its confidence in the fate of Switzerland.

The Farmer's party in the Waadt has declared its willingness to co-operate with any party whose aims are on a national footing. At the same time it is stressed that the creation of new parties tends rather to harm than to further national unity.

Zurich celebrated the entry of 4500 young citizens into civil life on November 10th. The Town Hall was decorated with the colours of Switzerland and of the Town of Zürich for this occasion.

A Swiss Delegation was sent to Belgrade to negotiate a new trade agreement with Yugoslavia. Discussions started on October 31st.

The Army Command announced that three trains bearing sick and wounded French prisoners of war crossed Switzerland. The trains reached Geneva via Berne or Neuchâtel. Provisions were supplied through the generosity of the Red Cross in Berne, Neuchâtel and Zürich.

The "Raeto-Romanische Gesellschaft" assembled in Berne. At this meeting Professor Fuort read a report in connection with the translation of the Federal laws into Romansch.

A draft decree urging the construction of bicycle paths has been drawn up in view of the fact that the number of bicycles on the road has augmented from 90.000 in 1924 to 270.000 for the years 1938/39. The funds required for this will be obtained by taxing bicycles and cars.

The foreign trade of Switzerland is reported as satisfactory. The import during October 1940 increased from 91 millions to 119 mill. The export was even more favourable, rising by 32 millions frs. to the total of 129 mill. These figures, however, are approximately 20% lower than those of October 1939.

Bombs dropped over Switzerland: Four people were killed and very considerable damage to property caused, through un-identified 'planes dropping ten bombs over Basel at midnight December 17th. One bomb exploded at the railway station, another landed at the Winkelried Platz, but the suburbs of Hunningen suffered most. Basel, which was "blackened-out" at the time, was completely surprised at the unexpected attack and the actual alarm was given only several minutes later. The "all-clear" signal followed an hour after.

On December 22nd our territory was again violated and a bomb damaged Hoengg, 5 miles from Zurich. A second bomb dropped near an automobile factory in Zurich. The Swiss High Command reported violation of Swiss territory from Schaffhausen to Berne right through to the Italian border. Swiss anti-aircraft batteries were in action and Swiss fighting planes rose into the darkness to pursue the invaders, who, the High Command, said, crossed in south-easterly direction.

+++++
+++++
+++++
+++++
+++++

A R E M I N D E R !

We regret that so far a considerable number of our members have not come to light yet with their subscription for 1940/41. Defaulters will find enclosed with this number a gentle reminder for a settlement. Collecting outstanding subscriptions is our biggest handicap, and we ask our members to assist us in the matter.

Please also help us to increase our membership. If you know of any non-member compatriots, invite them to join up or send us their address. During the present year we intend to break all records and enrol more members than ever before. With your help we can do it! Perhaps you may consider that our Society does not live up to its name, but we can assure you that is not the case. Naturally with our moderate funds we cannot do much, but there are many occasions where we are able to lend a helping hand. We have already experienced many such cases, but for obvious reasons we cannot publish them. To our greatest satisfaction we are receiving every now and again letters from members expressing appreciation of our work.

+++++
+++++
+++++
+++++