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# The Swiss Observer

FOUNDED BY MR. P. F. BOEHRINGER.

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## FEDERAL.

### THE FIRST OF AUGUST.

Throughout Switzerland our national day has been observed and celebrated in the traditional manner. In Altdorf a performance of Schiller's "Wilhelm Tell" was given last Sunday by local talents; the play is to be repeated during the following six Sundays.

### TOWARDS THE ABOLITION OF PASSPORTS.

A welcome innovation came into force on August 1st. French and Belgian tourists who do not stay more than three months in Switzerland will be required to produce their "Carte d'Identité" issued in their own country; passports for these two nationalities are no more necessary.

### AGAINST DISARMAMENT.

In the course of a speech delivered to a large meeting last Sunday at the soldiers' monument at the "Forch" (Zurich) Federal Councillor Minger discouraged the idea of disarmament in Switzerland. Though the League of Nations offered certain peace guarantees conditions in Europe did not encourage us to reduce military expenditure. A deliberate foreign invasion was unlikely but in case of war a violation of our neutrality, considering our unique position between possible belligerents, could not altogether be excluded.

At the first of August celebration in Winterthur which was marred by a copious downpour of rain Federal Councillor Häberlin stressed the necessity of a strong and efficient army and concluded his oration with an appeal in favour of Swiss residing abroad.

### THE WATCH INDUSTRY.

In order to strengthen and protect the Swiss watch industry a limited (holding) company is in formation comprising all the manufacturers. The scheme is being supported financially by the Confederation and some of the large banks. This "Société Générale de l'Industrie Horlogère Suisse" will seek to bring about a concentration in the industry and regulate the export through a central office.

### SWISS TRADE RETURNS.

The foreign trade returns for the first half of this year show that Switzerland has been seriously hit by the general economic crisis. During this period the value of her imports was £44,351,181, compared with £51,459,918 in the first six months of 1930. Nearly all classes of imports show a decrease, and the drop is very marked in raw materials. Exports on the other hand, totalled £28,392,959, as against £36,927,729 last year, a decrease of nearly 34 per cent. The monthly export figures, which had risen slightly from £4,556,228 in January to £5,234,406 in March, fell to £4,804,502 in April and to £4,407,968 in June, the lowest monthly record for the past six years. All the export industries are affected by the depression, but especially the watch making, the silk, the cotton, and the machinery industries, the exports of these four industries totalling in value roughly £12,400,000, against £17,500,000 last year.

Trade with Great Britain shows a decline, Swiss imports amounting to £1,972,602, compared with £3,159,369 in 1930, and Swiss exports to £4,573,548, as against £5,185,919. Great Britain ranks fifth among the five chief purveyors of the Swiss market, coming after Germany, France, Italy, and the United States, while she holds the first place among the five best clients of Switzerland, followed by Germany, France, the United States, and Italy.

### UNEMPLOYMENT.

The number of unemployed remains high.

There were 27,000 in January; that number fell to 16,000 in April, mainly owing to seasonal causes, but it was still 50 per cent. higher than in April, 1930. There was no great change in May, but a further increase was registered in June. Most of the unemployment is in the watch-making and textiles industries.

### Tourist Traffic Decline.

The home market is very slack, and there is no great hope of its improvement during the summer as the number of tourists is much less than in any of the previous five summers. German and American visitors are few, and British less numerous than usual, while the increase in the number of French and Italian tourists does not compensate for the decrease in that of other nationalities. Consequently the earnings of the hotel industry and transport undertakings will be smaller than usual, and retail trade will suffer.

### STATE HELP FOR WATCH INDUSTRY.

The Federal Department for Public Economy is preparing a Bill, to be submitted to the Federal Chambers during the next session, to help the watch industry, which is passing through a difficult period. The Bill provides for the prevention of the export of watch parts to be assembled abroad. It is proposed to create a consortium of all the factories producing watches and parts in Switzerland. The new company would have a capital of 10,000,000 francs and would count on the financial support of the Confederation.

### SWISS RAILWAY AFFAIRS.

#### Dining Cars Accessible to Third-class Passengers.

Third-class passengers are now allowed to make use of the dining-cars without any extra charge. (Swiss railways do not run third-class dining cars).

#### Combined Rail and Road Tickets.

The Swiss Federal Railways and the Federal Postal Car Service issue new combined tickets for excursions over some of the most beautiful roads in the country. The postal coaches are of 50-100 H.P. built for the mountainous routes over which they operate. The drivers have been specially trained, and undertake not to smoke, nor to drink any alcoholic beverage during their period of service.

#### Reopening of Brienz-Rothorn Railway.

The Brienz-Rothorn Railway, which ranks with the famous Rigi and Pilatus mountain railways, was reopened for traffic a few weeks ago. This rack railway was built in the year 1891, and was operated until the outbreak of the war, which cut off the revenues of all the purely tourist enterprises in Switzerland. The interruption lasted longer than had been anticipated, and only the energy and the optimism of certain persons in Brienz, the centre of the wood-carving industry, saved the railway from demolition. The reopening has taken place at a moment when touring in the Alps is becoming more and more popular. Brienz, the starting point of the railway, can be reached easily by rail, boat, or car, and it is confidently anticipated that the initiative will be crowned with success.

The railway in question has a gauge of 800 mm. (2 ft. 7½ ins.), and works on the Abt rack system. The gradient is 1 in 16, and covers a distance of 7.6 km., starting at an elevation of 1,269 m. The summit at Rothorn is 2,252 m. There are numerous tunnels and galleries; the tunnels alone having a length of 671 m. Every locomotive is equipped with two winch-handle brakes, an air and a steam brake, whilst every carriage is also provided with toothed wheel brakes.

#### Electrification of an Important Private Line.

Proposals are under consideration for the expenditure of £200,000 on the electrification of the South Eastern Railway, connecting Arth-Goldau with Rapperswil, a distance of 24 miles. The total route mileage of this line, on which there are many steep gradients, is 30½ miles.

R.G.

### LOCAL.

#### ZURICH.

A new party has been formed under the name "Eidgenössische Front" which recruits its adherents amongst "truly sincere patriots." The President of the Committee is Dr. jur. Hildebrand of Bülach. The party seeks to stem the gradual filtration of personal irresponsibility amongst our people, to counteract the dissemination of bolshevist notions and generally to edu-

cate the people from the existing materialistic outlook to a higher moral and ideal standard.

\* \* \*

The police authorities of the town have introduced a welcome innovation. For minor offences against police regulations which are generally subject to a fine an official warning will be issued; fines will only be levied for second or further offences.

#### BERNE.

Two Wengen guides, Christian Rubi and Ernest Gertsch, have made a descent from the Jungfrau summit (13,670ft.) on the eastern face by a hitherto unknown track, via the Silberhorn to Schwarzmönch.

#### LUCERNE.

The village-fathers of Langnau, for whom an election of a magistrate had been staged last week, were unable to record their votes as the erection of the usual ballot box had been overlooked.

#### AARGAU.

Rheinfelden is to have a river-light and sun-bath at an estimated cost of Frs. 300,000.

An official medical examination carried out at the public schools in Aarau has disclosed the fact that over 95% of the school children show traces of goitre (Kropf).

#### APPENZELL A.Rh.

The proposed amusement tax has been sanctioned by the voters in Herisau. Tickets or entrance fees are to be increased for that purpose by about ten per cent, and the proceeds are to be applied towards philanthropic objects particularly the construction of a municipal hall.

#### SCHAFFHAUSEN.

The discord in the communist party for whom this frontier canton has become a stronghold is further aggravated by the defection of the president of the Grosse Stadtrat, Mr. Ed. Büchi; he was formerly one of the leading communists but is now supporting officially the Socialist party.

#### GRISONI.

For the first time in its history Klosters is introducing a communal tax of one per mille. So far the expenditure of the local exchequer has been balanced by the yield from the timber forests and the concession of the Power Works.

\* \* \*

A series of landslides in various parts of the country has been caused by the recent wet weather in Switzerland.

In the canton of Coire between Küblis and Saas, an avalanche has swept away a section of the railway and blocked the cantonal road for some distance to a depth of about thirteen feet. The landslide has also wrecked five stables and destroyed many fields and vineyards. The extent of the damage is considerable.

\* \* \*

A falling block of rock was the cause of a slight railway accident that happened last Monday on the Chur-St. Moritz line between Filisur and Stuls. The engine and mail van of the train became derailed and rolled down the mountain side, the remaining coaches keeping to the track. A few passengers and the two postal employees were slightly hurt chiefly through broken windows; the engine driver, Richard Fritz, lost his life. The engine which was one of the new electric type costing about £14,000 became a total wreck.

#### 2,000 ROVERS 7,700 FT. CLIMB.

Three thousand Rovers have taken to the mountains last Tuesday for four days, following the conference section of the World Rover Scout Moot at Kandersteg.

The conference will reassemble after the mountain expeditions of Friday.

On Tuesday Great Britain's 1931 Expeditionary Force of nearly 2,000, a force, as Lord Baden-Powell has said, "towards peace and good will," set off about 4 a.m. to conquer the 7,700ft. Niesen mountain.

Others have gone through the Lötschberg tunnel to the Rhone Valley, while a few are climbing the peaks and glaciers of the Kander Valley.