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The Swiss Observer

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HOME NEWS

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FEDERAL.

SWISS FRONTIER VIOLATION BY NAZIS.

An inquiry has been opened by the Swiss Attorney-General into the circumstances of the violation of the Swiss frontier on Tuesday near Basle by a party of uniformed Nazis, and it is expected that at its conclusion the Federal Government will address a very strongly worded protest to Berlin.

All shades of opinion in Switzerland are unanimous in demanding that the Government shall make it quite clear that incidents of this sort shall not be repeated, and it is feared that if strong measures are not taken against incidents of this kind the frontier between Germany and Switzerland will become as troubled as the other frontiers separating Germany from small States.

The local Nazi Press reported that the watchman whose house was searched on the Swiss side of the frontier, had rendered himself suspect of Communism, because last Sunday he had quarrelled with a Nazi.

The quarrel was caused by the man's walking through the grass belonging to the Nazi while on his way to the river to bathe. The total amount of forbidden literature found and seized by the Nazis at his house comprised one copy of a Communist newspaper of last year's date, and the calendar of a sports club.

The German Minister in Berne has handed to the Swiss Federal Government a Note expressing the regret of the German Government for the violation of the Swiss frontier near Basle by a party of Nazis in uniform last week. The Note adds that the German Government is making an inquiry into the case and that the Nazis concerned acted without authorization.

The Swiss Government has received the communication with satisfaction, but has declared to the German Legation that it expects that once the official inquiry is completed disciplinary measures will be taken against the culprits.

NEW FRONTIER INCIDENT.

The question whether an island picnic resort in the Rhine near Basle belongs to Germany or to Switzerland has been raised by the arrest by German Customs officials of two Swiss holiday-makers who were accused of having Communist literature on them. The two arrested men belonged to a party of 40 Swiss trippers who went out in punts to the island on Sunday for a day's outing.

The island, called Augst, is actually nearer the German bank of the river and was largely created by a weir used for hydro-electric purposes. For many years Swiss trippers have used it for picnics and bathing parties, though it is said that there were once boards up warning people off. The two arrested Swiss were taken into German territory and placed in jail at Lorrach, in German territory, near Basle.

So far there has not been any Swiss protest, but in view of the incident last week when Nazis raided the house of a German night watchman of an electricity works situate half in Germany and half in Switzerland — about which the German Minister in Berne apologised — the position is being watched with interest.

NAZI ABUSES SWISS PRESS.

Dr. Edgar Schmid, a Swiss by naturalisation, and a German Press agent at Zurich, is furnishing his papers with articles classifying the Swiss Press (for present and future use), according to their attitude to the German Nazis.

The papers of the different "fronts" are highly praised, the others just as violently abused. The "Neue Zürcher Zeitung" is called "the mouthpiece of the French Government," the

editor of the "Bund" is "bribed," papers like the "Basler Nachrichten," "National Zeitung," which represent the best Liberal and Democratic parties, are called "Jewish and Marxiste."

The Swiss Press Association, in an open letter has retaliated by calling Dr. Schmid a traitor. The other day the unfortunate doctor was recognised on the Zurich bathing beach, and chased by a crowd of about 200 people.

ROBBERIES IN ALPINE HUTS.

The Swiss Alpine Club spends over 300,000f. (more than £17,600) a year on the improvement and upkeep of its mountain huts. These huts, which used to be regarded as almost sacred by all climbers and by the public at large, are no longer protected against the attempts of thieves and housebreakers. There even seems to exist among the younger generation of Alpinists a tendency to break into the mountain huts and "forget" to pay after having used emergency food supplies and implements.

Recently some unknown persons broke into the Planura and Clariden Huts, in Canton Glarus, and stole wood and food. Last winter some persons went to the Chanrion Hut (Val de Bagnes), and managed to open a gap in the concrete wall of the newly built chamber where blankets, emergency food supplies, and implements are kept while the hut is closed, and carried away a number of articles.

SWISS TOBACCO DUTIES.

The Federal Government proposes to substantially increase the duty on tobacco, cigars and cigarettes in Switzerland. Present Federal taxes on tobacco yield an annual sum of 25,000,000 Swiss francs (£1,000,000 at par).

The pipe tobacco and cigarette manufacturers agree to the proposal, but the cigar manufacturers, through their association "Ucifa," have started a counter-agitation. They say the extra duty will throw out of work 6,000 people now engaged in the Swiss cigar industry, as the public will cease to buy cigars.

THE SWISS FRANC.

Reports from Switzerland confirm the intention of the Banque Nationale Suisse to maintain the franc on the gold standard. During the past few years the bank has strengthened its position considerably and should the need arise could doubtless count on the support of other nations against whose interest it would be for the Swiss franc to depreciate.

BANK FOR INTERNATIONAL SETTLEMENTS.

The situation of the Bank of International Settlements as at July 31 showed a total of 716,300,186 Swiss francs, which represents an increase of 4,000,000f. as compared with the total at June 30. It is to be noted that for the first time the situation shows a holding of gold by the bank amounting to about 5,000,000f., this holding being offset by a corresponding liability to sight depositors. Earmarked gold held in custody for the account of central banks has never been included in the situation. The deposits of the central banks for their own account have increased by about 7,000,000f., while their deposits for the account of other depositors all show small increases. The profits allocated for the distribution, amounting to about 9,700,000f., were duly disbursed on July 1.

The above-mentioned gold bar deposit opens a new field of activity to the Work Bank, acting as the bank of the central banks. Banks that have a gold surplus may now deposit it at the B.I.S. to be re-lent to other central banks having a transitory need of gold for the seasonal pressure during harvest time. As the B.I.S. operates as the bank of central banks, assistance of gold clearing may thus be developed.

FIRST ALPS NIGHT FLIGHT.

The first night flight across the Swiss Alps was made by the Swiss aviator, M. Robert Fretz, who was accompanied by Herr Herzog, director of the Altenheim aerodrome.

Flying in magnificent moonlight the aeroplane took 90 minutes to complete the journey from Milan to Zurich, a distance of 130 miles.

25,000 FEET PARACHUTE DROP.

Last Sunday the Swiss parachutist, Bohlen, jumped out of an aeroplane at a height of 8,300 metres (about 25,000 feet) and landed safely in the neighbourhood of Basle. He claims this as a world record.

The previous record was that of a Frenchman, of about 22,000ft.

NEW SWISS CINEMA LAW.

Following the decision of the Conseil d'Etat for the Canton of Vaud to refuse admittance to children under 16 years of age, even when accompanied, to ordinary cinema shows, the whole of the 23 cantons (with the exception of Bale-Campagne) have now made similar decisions.

Geneva adopted the by-law two months ago, and now Vaud brings the number up to 23.

One of the complaints brought against the old rule of placing certain films in the category of "interdit aux enfants" is that the Commission de Censure were only responsible for the supervision of the principal film, and very often parents taking their children to the cinema were shocked by the additions to the programme particularly the specially selected scenes of the film for the following week.

Public and Press have approached the cinema directors with a view to obtaining the reservation of the Wednesday and Saturday matinees for films of an artistic, comic, educational or instructive value which have been passed by the Scholastic Commission.

In the case of a town where exhibitors are not willing to organise these matinees it is suggested that occasional shows to be organised by the "Cinemas populaires romands," who have already a big stock of suitable films and travelling projectors.

THE RICKEN TUNNEL.

Less well known, probably, than its more important and more lengthy Alpine neighbours, such as the Simplon, St. Gotthard, Lötschberg, Mont Cenis and Arlberg tunnels, the Ricken tunnel, 5½ miles long, nevertheless forms an important link between the populous St. Gall region of Switzerland and the upper end of the Lake of Zurich. In March last it celebrated the completion of its first 25 years of existence. Considerable difficulties were experienced during its construction, owing to the percolation into the workings, without smell, noise or pressure, of a dangerous inflammable gas. Interruptions so occasioned in the work of boring prolonged the construction to a total of nearly 5 years. But the worst tragedy connected with the Ricken tunnel was in October, 1926, and resulted primarily from the steepness of its inclination, which is 1 in 66½ throughout. On this date, in exceptionally bad atmospheric conditions, a freight train stalled on the rising gradient, and the fumes from the locomotive asphyxiated no fewer than nine men — the six men forming the train crew, as well as three men accompanying the breakdown train from Wattwil. Immediate electrification of the route was thereupon decided on by the Swiss Federal Railways administration, and electrical operation was brought into use in the following year.

SWISS MACHINERY EXPORTS DECLINE.

Exports of spinning, weaving, and knitting machines from Switzerland during the period from January to May, 1933, decreased in each case as compared with the same period last year. As the following table indicates, exports of spinning machines fell by 55 per cent., of weaving machines by about 27 per cent., and of knitting machines also by about 27 per cent. It will be noted moreover that exports of weaving machines were less than 50 per cent. of those for 1913 (January-May). The one hopeful feature is afforded by the knitting machinery branch, whose exports were very much greater than the 1913 figures.

	January to May		
	Quintals		
	1913	1932	1933
Spinning and twisting machines.	5,866	11,407	5,149
Weaving machines	27,056	18,077	13,346
Knitting machines	1,176	3,717	2,776

VETERAN'S ASCENT OF MONT BLANC.

On Sunday M. Henri Brulle, although 80 years of age, successfully climbed Mont Blanc (15,781f.), accompanied by two guides, Raymond and Chapelland, and came down by way of the Grand Mulet to Chamonix.

SWISS CYCLIST FOR HERNE HILL.

Among the cyclists who are to compete in the international meeting at Herne Hill on Saturday is Fritz Kratt, of Switzerland, who is a newcomer to this country. On the Continent Kratt has just recorded his fifth consecutive win in the Amateur Motor-paced Grand Prix de Vincennes.

Kratt is coming over to London to make a bid for the Grand Prix of London (motor-paced).