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The Swiss Observer

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HOME NEWS

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FEDERAL.

SWISS GRAND PRIX.

The German driver Bernd Rosemeyer, at the wheel of an Auto-Union, won the Swiss motoring Grand Prix in Berne, on Sunday last. He covered the distance of about 325 miles in 3hr. 9min. 1.6sec., at an average speed of 161.755 kilometres an hour.

The only British competitor, Earl Howe, driving a Bugatti, retired in the twenty-fifth lap owing to engine trouble. The British racing motorist, R. J. B. Seaman, driving a Delage, won the Prix de Berne, the event for cars of under 1.500c.c., for the third year in succession. Seaman covered the twenty-eight laps of the 4½ mile course—a distance of about 125 miles—at an average speed of 141.381 kilometres (approximately 88½ miles) an hour. The Swiss driver H. Ruesch won the Prix de Berne on a Alfa Romeo car.

SILK IMPORT TARIFF INCREASED.

Of the 15,000 looms which were operating a few years ago in the Swiss silk industry, once the largest and most flourishing of the Swiss exporting industries, only about 4,000 are running to-day, and these, moreover, are on short time. Exports, too, have declined during the past nine years to less than one-sixth of their former volume. With a view, therefore, to protecting the home market as far as possible to the advantage of the domestic silk industry, the Swiss Federal Council has increased the import tariffs on silk tissues to between 600 and 800 frs. per 100 kgs. and on silk wearing apparel to between 1,200 and 1,500 frs. per 100 kgs.

SWISS FRANC'S FUTURE.

Dr. Jean M. Musy, a former President of the Swiss Confederation and ex-Finance Minister, who is on a visit to Holland, states in an interview with the "Algemeen Handelsblad" that an automatic adaptation of prices in the on-gold countries to those in the devaluation countries cannot be achieved. The only alternative is deflation or devaluation.

As to whether deflation—of which Dr. Musy had been a strong supporter—still has a chance of success in Switzerland, he said "I feel it is now too late for carrying on deflation. The Swiss population has lost its courage."

He added that any devaluation of the French franc would not automatically lead to devaluation of the Swiss currency. There was no close connection between the two currencies and the gold stocks of the Swiss National Bank were large enough to resist attacks. The Swiss authorities would therefore retain their liberty of action in the event of France devaluing her currency.

QUEEN OF THE NETHERLANDS.

Queen Wilhelmina and Princess Juliana of the Netherlands left Switzerland after a fortnight's holiday at Weissenburg in the Bernese Oberland.

SWISS STANDING ARMY PLAN.

Creation of a standing army to defend Switzerland against sudden invasion is being discussed by the Swiss General Staff, and a report on the subject will shortly be made to M. Minger, the Minister for Defence.

Up to the present Switzerland has had only a militia army varying in strength from 130,000 downwards, according to the number of men undergoing training at any one time, and it has been thought that it would always be possible to mobilise the force in time to meet any threatened invasion, as was done in 1914.

Recent developments of mechanised armies, however, have convinced the military authorities that there would be no time for mobilisation before an invader would be able to sweep across the northern frontier. The federal constitution specifies

that it forbids a permanent army, but it is believed that it would be possible to find a way out of the legal tangle.

SWISS COMMUNISTS SENT BACK.

Twelve young communists from Zurich, who intended to join the government forces in Spain, were detained at Basle by the police; they were sent back by the next train from "whence they came."

SWISS NATIONAL BANK.

The statement of the Swiss National Bank for the week ended August 22nd shows that the gold reserve has increased by 10,000,000f., to 1,471,700,000f., while the bank note circulation has decreased by 4,800,000f. to 1,245,000,000f. On August 22nd the gold reserve represented 86.89 per cent. of all the engagements of the Bank.

SWISS NEUTRALITY IN CIVIL WAR.

The Swiss Federal Council decided to take several new measures to ensure Switzerland's complete neutrality in the Spanish civil war.

According to these regulations, which came into effect immediately, anyone leaving Switzerland to take part in the hostilities, or preparing for or actually collecting money for any other than charitable work in connection with the war, or publicly provoking or inciting anyone to break the new regulations, is liable to a maximum penalty of six months' imprisonment or a maximum fine of 10,000 Swiss francs (more than £600), or to both.

The measures also provide that money collected to help to finance the hostilities, and all booklets, posters, or other printed matter which are considered likely to lead to an infraction of the regulations, will be seized by the police.

Finally they provide that all demonstrations organised in favour of one or other of the belligerents in Spain (particularly public meetings or parades) are forbidden without permission.

The new regulations complete the measures taken about a fortnight ago by the Federal Council, which provide for a total embargo on arms to Spain and forbid the enlistment of Swiss subjects as soldiers for either side.

The new measures are considered to be primarily an act of censure against the Socialist Mayor of Geneva, Leon Nicole, who a few years ago actively took part in a lively protest meeting against Spanish Fascists organised by the local Socialist and Communist party.

SWISS BANKING MORATORIUM.

Closut and Co., a private banking firm, of Martigny, in the Canton of Valais, has been granted a 12 months' moratorium. The bank was founded in 1885.

AIRPORT FOR ST. MORITZ.

A scheme to enable British visitors to get into an air liner at Croydon and land within ten minutes of St. Moritz and Pontresina is being discussed by the municipalities of the Engadine towns.

The proposal is to build an airport, to be called "Upper Engadine Aerodrome," at Samaden. The site is a large flat field, near the golf course, frequently used in the past as a landing ground by private aircraft.

The estimated cost is approximately £13,000. The Swiss Labour Board will make a grant of about one-tenth of the total towards wages and workmen's insurances. Part is to be raised by collections in the neighbouring communes, and the remainder by a Cantonal lottery.

It is hoped to have the aerodrome ready by the beginning of the winter sports season in December.

LOCAL.

ZURICH.

The deficit for 1935 of the accounts of the canton of Zurich amounts to 5,293,525 frs. (Deficit 1934: 8,488,252 frs.)

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The founder and since 1928 President of the Christian-Socialist party, National-Councillor Bernard Widmer, has celebrated his 60th birthday anniversary.

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The Federal Council has appointed Dr. H. Pallmann from Frauenfeld to the post of Professor of Chemistry at the Federal Technical University in Zurich.

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The town council of Zurich has made a presentation (Kunstmappe) to Doctor Birch-Benner on the occasion of his 60th birthday anniversary, in recognition for his services rendered to medical science.

BASLE.

Through the death of Pastor Jakob Täschler, the congregation of the Basle Minster loses one of its favourite former preachers, who for 25 years occupied the pulpit.

BERNE.

M. Eduard Egger-Lehnher, proprietor of the "Bären" and Hotel "Schweizerhof" in Kandersteg, has died at the age of 70. M. Egger was a well-known personality in Hotel circles both at home and abroad.

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Lieutenant H. Bosch, attached to the Field-Battery 43 at Thun, was killed in a motor accident.

LUCERNE.

M. Hans Emmenegger, one of Switzerland's best known landscape painters, has celebrated his 70th birthday anniversary. After having studied in Paris and Munich, he established himself in Switzerland in 1900; his pictures were exhibited at numerous exhibitions both at home and abroad.

SOLOTHURN.

The death is reported from Solothurn of Dr. W. Kottmann, who was for many years connected with the "Bürgerspital." From 1927-1932 he occupied the post as surgeon-in-chief.

THURGAU.

The canton of Thurgau makes no exception from other cantons in showing a deficit in their accounts for 1935. (Fr. 360,720,40.)

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The late Colonel P. Lardy from Kreuzlingen has left an amount of 65,000 frs. for charitable purposes.

ST. GALLEN.

M. Walter Zollikofer-Kern, senior partner of the well-known Printing Works, Zollikofer and Co. in St. Gall has celebrated his 70th birthday anniversary.

GENEVA.

Pastor Ernest Sauvin died at Geneva at a great age. He took over a pastorate in the canton of Neuchâtel in 1882 and in 1899 he was appointed pastor at Geneva. For many years he was European Secretary of the Y.M.C.A.

NEUCHATEL.

The Cement Works at St. Sulpice have closed down for want of work. Forty-five workmen are thus unemployed.

TICINO.

Great excitement was caused at Cureglia, where a bomb exploded at the town hall. It is reported that the damage caused to the structure of the building is considerable. The police have opened an investigation.

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The buildings of the "Korkplattenfabrik Margaroli" at Biasca were destroyed by fire. The damage is estimated to be considerable.

SWISS FOREIGN TRADE RETURNS.

The foreign trade returns for the first half of 1936 show a decrease over 1935 both in imports and exports, but the 1936 results are not as unsatisfactory as had at one time been forecast. Imports totalled 542,013,180 francs, a drop of nearly 80,500,000 francs over 1935, which was mainly due to import quotas. Exports totalled 396,210,434 francs, a drop of about 6 millions over 1935. The import surplus, which was 220 millions last year, was reduced to 145,750,000 in 1936.

The results for the four chief exporting industries are nevertheless encouraging. These industries' exports totalled 186.5 millions for the first six months, as against 178.75 millions the previous year. Exports of the watch-making industry reached 55.7 millions, compared with 48.8 millions in 1935; the market for Swiss watches has somewhat expanded, and there was a noticeable improvement in the demand for the better quality watches. Silk and cotton goods exports showed a small decrease over last year, but the machines industry's exported products rose by 3 millions.

Imports from Great Britain dropped to 33,600,012 francs from 37,719,719 francs in 1935, and exports to Great Britain rose from 35,443,683 francs in 1935 to 41,934,255 francs in 1936. Trade with the five principal countries was as follows (in millions of francs):—

	Imports from	Exports to
	1935	1936
Germany	161.6	144.8
France	106.2	82.4
Great Britain	37.5	33.3
U.S.A.	32.6	29.8
Italy	47.0	28.4
	90.1	85.1
	60.4	52.2
	35.1	41.7
	20.7	23.8
	38.2	29.0

The decrease in imports from and exports to Italy is due to the application of sanctions; but since the raising of sanctions trade with Italy has been more active, though far below the 1935 level.

The economic situation is more satisfactory than at the beginning of the year; and though recovery is still far away, prospects are now much more encouraging. In July imports totalled 95.3 millions, or 1.9 million more than in June; and exports totalled 66.5 millions or 0.3 million more than in June and 5.6 millions more than in June, 1935. Imports of coal and raw materials in July were much higher than in June.

The half-yearly reports of the more important Swiss banks show that commercial business, as well as the influx of foreign capital, have increased since January last. The change of Government in France resulted in a big increase in the total of French gold, banknotes and securities deposited in the Swiss banks, while numerous houses and estates were purchased by French citizens, particularly in French-speaking Switzerland.

The Swiss Federal Council issued on June 19th a decree designed to "protect the national currency against speculation." Its object is to prohibit speculation in gold and foreign gold values which might be contrary to the interests of the country and prejudicial to its currency. The decree imposes penalties for the forward purchase or sale of gold, the granting of advances on gold and foreign exchanges, and the purchase of foreign exchanges in the forward market, when such operations are not justified by some commercial transactions. The free movement of payments and the transfer of capital abroad, so long as they do not represent speculative operations, are to continue as before, and are not subject to any restrictions. There is no question, therefore, of anything more than measures against speculation.

Payment for goods of all kinds, for securities and for the transfer of capital, etc., will proceed as formerly without the slightest difficulty. The regulations controlling the maintenance of a gold currency remain in force without restriction, when speculative activities are not concerned; nor is there any question of hindering in any way the reflux of capital which had found a refuge in Switzerland. The Federal Government's decision is by no means an innovation. The principal measures for combating speculation were already formulated in a "Gentlemen's Agreement" concluded on June 20th, 1935, between the Swiss banks and the National Bank. That agreement, directed against speculation, is even more strict and precise than the recent Government's decree. According to the stipulations of the "Gentlemen's Agreement," the banks are to abstain from participating in any operation connected with "monetary speculation," i.e., with the granting of advances on gold, exchange transactions in the forward market, and advances on securities in foreign currencies. The agreement remains in force alongside the Federal decree.

Economist.

YODELLING ON THE LAKE OF LUCERNE.

Night has fallen on Lucerne, softly, gently, imperceptibly. The sun that has glorified the day is replaced by the stars that glimmer in the heavens. It is a fitting interlude ere the Queen of Night takes up her reign and the lake reflects the lights from mountain railways and hotels. A soft radiance from behind yonder mountain heralds the moonlight that soon will spread over lake and valley, and as if to greet the fair Luna, the yodellers lift their voices in musical refrain. Such melody as never greets the ears of audiences in London, when some cockney artiste renders an abortive imitation of the Swiss Yodel.

A motor boat chugs its way, its coloured lanterns contrasting with the silver sheen of the moonlight on the lake. The burst of yodelling that arises from it, the tone, harmony and precision attest trained yodellers whose Alpine songs are a revelation to those unacquainted with the yodel amidst surroundings of Alps and Lake.

The yodellers are in costume, and of a truth no gondolier of Venice could vie with them. This Club comprises two first tenors, two second tenors, two baritones, two bass and one principal yodeller. Harmony compact, graduated, perfect. The melody rolls around the lake, is echoed by the hills, joyous carollings that bid dull care farewell and invite all and sundry to partake in this festival of melody. In glad abandonment the singers revel in their task. What opera can compare? Here on this broad expanse of water nature provides the stage, her scenery snow-capped mountains and green glades sloping downwards to the water side.

Strict in their rules these yodellers. Once accepted, the member of a yodel club is not permitted individual performances, nor can he commercialise his art. In the true meaning of the word they are lovers of their art, yodelling for the cause of music, joy and life. In the day time their avocations are varied and perhaps uninteresting. Farmers, village shop-keepers and so forth, but here on fair Lucerne in the moonlight they are yodellers, artists, musicians.

Far back in the past, when Uri won its freedom from Austria, the herdsmen called their cattle from the pasture with voices echoed from the mountain ranges. The snow-capped Jungfrau sent back calls, the Pilatus contributed its echo, Rigi, Engelberg, Stanserhorn added their bass and the lonely mountaineers found the echoes pleasing and indulged playfully in calling, echoing—and the yodel was created. Some soul, inspired of Heaven, conceived the idea of joining his voice to that of other herdsmen and the yodel club had its origin.

As individuals, apart from their art, these yodellers are interesting men. One has acted as referee when West Ham United played the Lucerne Football Team. And what an enthusiast! No need to purchase a Football Annual. His memory is stored with the deeds, the names of gifted British players. His interest in British sport is amazing. Another is a composer of songs, only to be sung in his club. As the melodies are rendered by his fellow yodellers they prove compositions of worth. The dozen of the club has reached a period when three score years and ten are not far off, and his tales of past yodelling prove vastly entertaining.

Lucerne with the moonlight, yodelling, the busy motor boat chugging onwards; would it might last for ever! The night is now advanced, hey for the shore, mine host and his inn. Eleven o'clock! No yodelling after this hour in restaurants unless special permission be obtained. However there is next year and the next and the obliging yodellers promise me a yodel evening in their favourite haunt ashore—next year.

The Club members are naturally mountaineers. Who is not a climber in Switzerland? And their talk! Different, somehow a quaint originality, a shrewdness, and withal a knowledge of their land that reveals the secret of their charm in their singing. They are imbued with that Fatherland love which renders them victims of nostalgia when away from the glistening peaks of their mountains and the placid waters of Lucerne.

A tribute to their singing, at once flattering and embarrassing was rendered by a party of Americans who seized the yodellers' hats and kept them as souvenirs! Compensation was forthcoming, the dollars atoned and all was well!

An incident, impressive, weird, as the motor boat passed the Meggernhorn. The lake was then in darkness when suddenly a searchlight on the boat threw into striking relief the "Wasserzege" — the Blessing of the Water—a figure of Christ with outstretched hands. No language can fittingly convey the feelings evoked by the Man of Sorrows in attitude of benediction and protection. It aroused the susceptibilities of the beholders; one and all felt that the figure seemed to approach nearer, even nearer, to embrace with those outstretched arms.

Lucerne and yodelling! A memory to brighten the dark dull days of winter, echoing those "mouths filled with laughter and tongues with song." Even as the eternal hills echo the yodel of the herdsmen, there is the merry cheerfulness of the singers re-Football Team. And what an enthusiast! No need sounding still in the ears of those who had had the joy, the privilege of gliding over Lucerne Lake in the moonlight with glad yodelling as of yore ere Switzerland became what it now is, the darling of the holidaymaker, the delight of the world!

Harry Zimmerman.

SCHWEIZER EIGENER KRAFT.

By O. LEIBACHER.

(Verlag des Schweiz. Kaufmännischen Vereins

Zurich, Frs. 3.30.)

Taking advantage of a lull in the social affairs of the Colony, I had a welcome opportunity of reading at least three books dealing with "Ausland-schweizer," as we are termed at home; and for the benefit of my readers I will review them in these columns week by week.

I will make a start with the above booklet, which is very tastefully bound (full linen); it contains in its 237 pages the biographies of 33 eminent Swiss who lived, or are still living in foreign lands. If I am not mistaken, some, if not all of these biographies appeared at one time or other in various issues of the "Journal Suisse des Commerçants," and I consider it a very happy idea of the Verlag of the S.K.V. to unite them all under one cover.

This booklet has interested me greatly, and I have read it from beginning to end without a break; the life work of so many of our countrymen, their great achievements and successes in spite of often almost unsurmountable obstacles, hardships and disappointments provide exciting reading. The author has succeeded in presenting these biographies in a palatable manner, without any undue embellishment and without a trace of boasting.

The life stories of men like the Volkarts, Ilg, Tschiffeli, Escher, Schwarzenbach, Hoepfl, Ritz, Sir A. Theiler, Sir G. Guggisberg, Dr. Senn, Mme. Tussaud, to mention only a few, and their deep attachment to the land of their birth, in spite of countless honours which some of the countries of their adoption have showered on them, should fill

every Swiss with pride, and should act as a splendid stimulant for the younger generation to follow in the footsteps of these pioneers.

I can heartily recommend this booklet to my readers. They will, I am convinced, derive much pleasure as well as instruction from its contents, and one more inducement to procure this little masterpiece should be its modest price. It will be a worthy acquisition to any library be it large or small.

ST.

TWO PEOPLE BUILT SAFE MOUNTAINEERING.

By G.K.

At present there are one hundred and eleven official mountain aid stations in the Alps belonging to the Swiss Alpine Club. This astonishing number shows how far mountaineering has developed in Switzerland, since that dramatic climb of the Matterhorn by English people and Swiss guides. There are a further 200 information offices, exclusively engaged in reporting and receiving mountaineering news.

From these new statistics, it is easily seen that there need be no danger from avalanches and storms in Switzerland. Such accidents as there are, would appear to be due to climbers' own carelessness in not taking advantage of, or in disregarding information given out by the Swiss Alpine Club.

Both in summer and winter each of the numerous club huts contains equipment for rescue and they are regularly controlled to see that nothing is lacking. A complete list of them is available from the Secretary of the Swiss Alpine Club.

But a new development in Alpine rescue work is now used in Switzerland. This is the use of aeroplanes which may be demanded by the leader or a member of the Central Committee of the Alpine Club. This Committee incidentally supervises all rescue work.

There is no sport like mountaineering. With the amazing grandeur of Switzerland's terrains and the wonderful Alpine air, it has often been said that there is no place like Switzerland for mountaineering. But to this must be added the organized precautions for security which have just been outlined and which are not available in other countries. Evolved over a period of many years and, in part, owing to the suggestions of British people, they form a lasting reminder of the deep friendship between the Swiss and ourselves.

BEILAEUFIG GESEHEN.

Nachtleben.

Von Zeit zu Zeit werden die soliden Stadt-väter der Grossstädte um das Nachtleben besorgt, nicht weil es zu läppig blüht, sondern weil es wekt. In Paris, in Berlin und jetzt in Wien wiederholen sich die gleichen Bemühungen um das einschlaflende Nachtleben. Wo soll es denn auch herkommen? Das Nachtleben existiert ja nur vom Kräfteüberschuss des Tages; man müsste also mit der Sanierung des Tagelbens beginnen. Man berät und debatiert, und die Zeitungen veranstalten Enquêtes. In Wien wurde eine gemischte Kommission gebildet, die den Beschluss fasste, dass das Nachtleben gepflegt werden müsse, wie der Fremdenverkehr. Als die Berliner Friedrich Straße verüdet, hat man gleichfalls eine gemischte Kommission eingesetzt, um die Verhältnisse zu prüfen. Wenn das nicht hilft ... Man versucht, der nächtlichen Kärntnerstrasse einen Aufschwung zu geben, indem man Venus und Bacchus mit der ganzen Seriosität des Lebens zuliebe geht. Und das können die beiden gar nicht vertragen.

Nur ein Stückchen Zucker.

In Mähren hat ein Junge, der ein leidenschaftlicher Autofreund ist, eine Entdeckung gemacht. Er war in den Benzintank des väterlichen Autos wissenschafts- und spasseshalber ein Stück Würfzucker. Was kann da schon passieren? Nach wenigen Kilometern blieb der Wagen unbegreiflicherweise stehen und rührte sich nicht mehr. Die Kolben waren völlig verschmiert; das Stückchen Zucker hatte sich bei der Verbrennung karamellisiert und alles mir einer klebrigen Masse überzogen. Der ganze Motor musste stundenlang mit Wasser durchspült werden. Diese Entdeckung machte sich der originelle Knabe zunutze und zuckerte als nächstes den Wagen eines ihm unsympathischen Rennfahrers, der zu einer Preisfahrt startete, aber nicht ans Ziel kam. Nach diesem Erfolg bekamen die Autoreparaturwerkstätten gut zu tun. Schliesslich wurde der Lausbub erwischt und furchtbar verprügelt — nur wegen eines Stückchen Zuckers heulte er.

nek.

Nat. Ztg.