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The Swiss Observer

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HOME NEWS

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FEDERAL.

PROMOTIONS AND CHANGES IN THE SWISS ARMY COMMAND.

Colonel Ch. von Wattenwyl has been appointed to the command of the 6th Infantry Brigade.

Colonel v. Wattenwyl, who succeeds Colonel Schüpbach from Kirchberg, was born in 1884 in Berne. He entered the Federal Instruction Corps in 1914, since 1934 he has held the post of District Instructor of the 3rd Division. He was at one time commander of the 9th Infantry Regiment; and for some considerable time was attached to the General Staff.

He did service with the French, English and German Armies, and was promoted to the rank of Colonel in 1931.

Colonel A. Gübeli, hitherto chief of staff of the 5th division, is taking over the command of the 13th Infantry Brigade, from Colonel Comtesse.

He is a member of the Federal Instruction Corps (Artillery), and was born in 1885 at Herisau.

From 1921-23 he studied at the *Ecole supérieure de guerre* in Paris, and after having spent some time in the General Staff, was appointed to the command of the 10th Field Artillery Regiment; he was promoted to the rank of Colonel in 1933.

Colonel J. Gugger, is succeeding Colonel Constam, to the command of the 15th Mountain Infantry Brigade. Colonel Gugger was born in Berne in 1888. After having completed his studies of law he entered in 1914 into the Federal Instruction Corps.

From 1922-1924 he was at the *Ecole supérieure de guerre* in Paris, and in 1932 held a command in the German Army. Former commands which he held were those of the Infantry Battalion 31 and the 16th Infantry Regiment; he also served on the General Staff. In 1934 he attained the rank of Colonel.

Colonel J. Fischbacher, who takes over the command of the 16th Infantry Brigade from Colonel Guhl (Berne) is not an officer by profession. He was born in 1887 in Schwellbrunn (Appenzell) and is a member of the Management of the "Kantonal-Bank Zurich." For two years he was at the head of the Battalion 84 (Appenzell) and for some considerable time he was a member of the General Staff. He also held the post of chief of staff of the 6th division for three years. Since 1934 he has been in command of the 34th Infantry Regiment.

Lieutenant-Colonel E. Koller succeeds Colonel Hirt, in the command of the 2nd Cavalry Brigade. He was born in Hundswil in 1890 and entered the Federal Instruction Corps in 1916 (Cavalry). Lieutenant-Colonel Koller held until recently the command of the Dragon Regiment 6, he is also a member of the General Staff and served on the Staff of the 4th division. His appointment is, for the time being provisionally.

Colonel Paul Vollenweider, has been appointed Surgeon-in-chief of the Swiss Army in succession to Colonel Hauser. He was born in 1888 and studied medicine at the Universities of Geneva, Berne, Munich and Zurich. After having practised from 1919-1922 at Kleindietwil (Berne) he entered the Instruction Corps. (Medical Corps). Since 1929 he has held the post of Assistant to Colonel Hauser. In 1930 he was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel.

SWISS MOTOR SHOW.

The next International Automobile Salon at Geneva will be held from 20th-29th March, 1936.

SWISS NATIONAL BANK.

The latest weekly return of the Swiss National Bank as at December 23rd shows the gold holding unchanged at 1,391,000,000 Swiss francs. Discounts and notes in circulation, however, have increased by 26,300,000f. to 123,200,000 f. and 50,500,000f. to 1,333,000,000f. respectively. On December 23rd the National Bank total of short-term obligations were covered by 82.81 per cent. of gold.

GERMAN TOURISTS AND SWITZERLAND.

The German Government, it is reported, have forbidden Germans to spend their holidays in Switzerland.

Trouble has arisen over the working of the clearing agreement between the two countries. According to the agreement, the letters of credit of German tourists in Switzerland are to be paid by Switzerland from the sums owed by her for her coal purchases from Germany. German tourists were numerous, but coal purchases small, so that the advances made by Switzerland were not compensated, and on December 15th, the Swiss clearing office had advanced a total sum of 20,000,000 Swiss francs (£1,350,000). In order not to stop German tourists from coming to Switzerland for winter sport, the Swiss Government have decided to make a last advance of 5,000,000f. (£350,000) up to January 15th, as they cannot continue paying indefinitely their holidays to the German tourists, whom some newspapers call "Our very dear visitors." The action of the German Government in forbidding tourists is by way of reply.

SWISS BANKING.

During the third quarter of the year Swiss banks in general made some progress in liquidating their assets so as to make up for the decline of their liquidity caused by heavy withdrawals of deposits. They have realised part of their frozen German assets, at the cost of cutting a heavy loss on the registered marks they sold. At the same time, internal credits were also reduced. The withdrawal of deposits came more or less to a standstill but there was no sign of the return of the deposits withdrawn during the first half of the year.

JOINT-STOCK COMPANIES IN SWITZERLAND.

The nominal capital of public liability companies has been reduced, during the course of the third quarter of 1935, to 8,161,000,000 francs; at the end of 1931, it was more than 9,000,000,000 francs.

DEGREE OF ELECTRIFICATION IN DIFFERENT COUNTRIES.

If the proportion of houses electrified and the number of the inhabitants be compared, the figure for Switzerland is 99%, against 93.6% in France, 84.5% in Sweden, 75.3% in Germany, 74.7% in Holland, 56% in Italy and 43.7% in Great Britain.

IMPROVEMENT IN THE WATCHMAKING INDUSTRY.

During the first 9 months of 1935, the Federal Control Bureaux have stamped 283,000 gold, silver and platinum watch-cases, against 243,000 during the corresponding period of the preceding year.

ITALIAN JOURNALIST SENTENCED.

The Italian journalist Renato Lolli, brought with four others before the Swiss Federal Criminal Court on a charge of espionage, has been sentenced to five months imprisonment less the period already spent in detention, and 10 years expulsion from Swiss territory. Lolli and the others were accused of organising an espionage service in Germany on behalf of Italy.

OXFORD'S ICE HOCKEY DEFEAT.

The annual Ice Hockey match for the Aspeng Cup between the Oxford University team and the Davos Club, has been won by Davos by 6 goals to nil.

Davos led 3-0 at the end of the first period, F. Cattini scoring twice and H. Cattini once. H. Cattini scored twice in the next period and A. Morosani added the sixth. Davos won the match last year.

SWISS OIL COMPANY.

The Flüssige Brennstoff Aktien Gesellschaft has just been registered at Lausanne with the object of exploiting petroleum in the cantons of Neuchâtel and Vaud.

As soon as prospecting work on the surface is completed the Flüssige Brennstoff A.G. will form two new companies, the Neuchâtel-Vaud and Fopega, with Dutch, Belgian and Swiss capital.

PURE AIR.

We know that one of the most important therapeutic factors of mountain resorts is the purity of the air and its absence of dust and germs. In a Swiss resort of which the climate has been studied very carefully for many years, it has been calculated that a cubic cm of air contains only about 100 particles of dust, whereas the air of the big towns contains about 10,000.

KARL BARTH'S APPEAL.

Great interest is still felt throughout Protestant Switzerland in the appeal addressed on December 4th by Karl Barth in the *Basler Nachrichten* on behalf of the suffering Church in Germany. The article, described truly by Dr. E. E. Meyer as "Un vibrant appel," has been circulated all over the German and French-speaking cantons. The great theologian is not satisfied with a bold denunciation of German State methods in dealing with the Church. He reminds his readers that in the spiritual realm there is no such thing as neutrality; and he pleads with his Swiss brethren for generous aid to fellow-Protestants in their hour of trial.

WINTER HOTEL CHARGES IN SWITZERLAND.

Swiss hotels have made a further effort to attract visitors by lowering their ordinary "pension" prices by 10 per cent. The result has been a great influx of foreigners for winter sports, and a marked increase is recorded in the number of British and French tourists who came to spend the Christmas and New Year holidays in Switzerland.

Apart from the 10 per cent. reduction, 500 hotels in 122 winter resorts have adopted the "all-included" system, which enables a tourist starting from London to spend nine days (including the journey in Switzerland for £9 5s., which covers the journey, pension, lighting, heating, music, trips, kur-taxes, and taxes for skating rinks and tobogganing. In many resorts the "all-included" arrangement also enables the tourist to attend the lessons of the Swiss skiing schools.

With the assistance of the communes concerned, the Swiss Automobile Club and Touring Club have taken measures for keeping open the roads over the Maloja, Julier, Lenzerheide, and the Col des Mosses. The snow is cleared after every fall by powerful motor-lorries fitted with snow-ploughs and snow-screws, and the number of motor-cars using these passes increases every week.

NEW YEAR HONOURS.

Professor Alfred E. Zimmern, who has received a knighthood for political and public services, is Director of Geneva School of International Studies.

SWISS PAPERS PROHIBITED IN ITALY.

The following Swiss papers have been prohibited in Italy: "Der Bund," "Basler Nachrichten," "Thurgauer Zeitung," "St. Galler Tagblatt," "Aargauer Tagblatt" and the "Journal de Genève."

SWISS ADVERTISE BY FILM.

A number of Swiss insurance companies have combined to produce a public film dealing with children's savings boxes, and with thrift and insurance in general. The film is 3,600 ft. in length, and is said to have proved "very successful so far."

DAVIS CUP.

The Swiss Lawn Tennis Association has decided to enter a team to represent Switzerland in the Davis Cup tournament of 1936.

Last year, owing to lack of funds, Switzerland did not take part in the contest.

£213,000 GENEVA LOAN.

The city of Geneva has been granted a loan of Frs.3,200,000 (£213,300 at current rates) by the Swiss National Bank.

It will be recalled that the city of Geneva, which has been in financial difficulties for the past year, negotiated with the Anglo-European Corporation of London in October last with the object of taking up a loan of £800,000 in London.

Owing to the Treasury embargo, Geneva was not successful.

ALPINE TRAGEDIES.

Three young people were killed by an avalanche when on a skiing excursion in the Engadine, they were pupils of the "Kantonsschule" Zurich. (Fritz Wild, Bruno Frank and Werner Zurich).

LOCAL.

ZURICH.

The death is reported from Zurich of M. R. Hess, Professor at the "Töchtertschule" at the age of 67. M. Hess was for many years editor of the "Schweizer Stenographien."

Mme. S. Orelli, a *doctor honoris causa* of the medical faculty of the University of Zurich, has celebrated her 90th birthday anniversary on the 27th of December.

Professors Fritz Fleiner and Dr. J. Jacques Hess of the University of Zurich will retire on the 15th April, 1936. — Dr. Hans Brun, "im Bergli" a well-known surgeon has been nominated titular Professor of the University of Zurich.

BASLE.

Dr. H. David-Grossmann, from 1897-1910 member of the cantonal government has died at the age of 80. Dr. David was a member of the National Council from 1899-1908; he was for 8 years Vice-Chancellor of the Swiss Confederation.

Walter Dück, a student, and Jacob Grieder, a teacher, both of Basle, were caught by an avalanche on the St. Gothard. M. Grieder managed to extricate himself and reach Realp, but M. Dück has not yet been found.

GENEVA.

Mrs. Barton, who died in Brussels last month, has bequeathed her home, Villa Lammermoor, on the shores of the lake at Geneva, to the Swiss Confederation. The Federal Council has accepted the bequest, which was made on condition that Villa Lammermoor and the grounds should not be split up and that the beautiful trees should be cared for and preserved.

VAUD.

Dr. P. Demiéville, Professor at the University of Lausanne has celebrated his 80th birthday anniversary.

THURGAU.

The death has occurred in Frauenfeld of Dr. Adolf Brodtbeck, a noted dental surgeon, at the age of 69. Dr. Brodtbeck was made a *doctor honoris causa* of the University of Zurich in 1934.

AARGAU.

M. E. Trachsler, Manager of the Swiss National Bank at Aarau has retired from his post.

FRIBOURG.

Alfred Chuard, from Montet, who has been arrested under suspicion of having tried to poison his parents, — the father having since died, — has confessed to the crime.

GRISONS.

Two skiers, Mr. Guggenheim and his wife, of Zurich were buried under a mass of snow, which suddenly collapsed on them on the Piz Nair, near St. Moritz. Mr. Guggenheim managed to free himself, but when he succeeded in rescuing his wife she was dead, artificial respiration being applied in vain.

A BAD WORLD.

(ENGINEER 20, 12, 35.)

It is not often that we report in our pages the speeches of the chairmen of foreign companies to their shareholders. But the address which Dr. Schindler delivered at the annual meeting of the Oerlikon Company in Switzerland a few weeks ago deals so much more with the industrial economies of the whole world than with the immediate affairs of the company that we give a translation of it practically in its entirety. The author is well-known, even in this country, as an exponent of strong, but common sense views upon world economies, and as a confirmed opponent of more than moderate import duties. In this address he surveys briefly, simply, but effectively, the leading economic movements which have taken place since the war — and condemns them all. He speaks, of course, as a member of a nation which has suffered exceptionally by the depression in international trade and by the repressive policy which has been adopted and developed by countries obsessed with an extravagant desire for nationalism. But it is unnecessary to make much allowance for the effect which the plight of Switzerland must have had on his views. No doubt he would have been silent had Switzerland been prosperous, yet, nevertheless, there is scarcely an impartial economist who will deny the fundamental truth of any one of his statements and only a few, perhaps, who will not share his regret that the conditions of international trade and of less reliance on the State, which existed in pre-war days, are no longer to be found.

If we could imagine a perfectly intelligent being with unlimited power to effect his will taking into his hand the control of the economies of all nations, could we not say with considerable safety that he would not do a single one of all the things that are now done? His object would be to make the whole world act together in accord

for the benefit and welfare of all, and he would condemn a system of nationalism which, by its egoism, must, as Dr. Schindler foretells, in the end destroy the contentment of all. Would he not stand amazed at the sight of any nation of the world restricting, almost to the point of prohibition, the purchase of goods made by other nations and, in consequence, the ability of those nations to purchase its own products? Knowing that money is only profitable whilst it is in circulation, he would be moved to laughter or anger by restrictions which prevent the transit of money between nations. He would listen with attention, but impatience, to the plea of all nations that the economic condition resulting from the depression had obliged the imposition of exceptional measures, but he would surely add that any nation which planned for its own good even if it damaged its neighbour was pursuing a false path. All this is, in fact, the substance of Dr. Schindler's argument, and, as we have said, we believe that no unbiased economist will quarrel with it. Indeed, there will be general agreement with the principle whilst there is a general agreement to disregard it. "I am convinced," says Dr. Schindler, "that we have reached the limit of what can, in the long run, be borne, and have even exceeded it. ... We must not allow ourselves to be led deeper into the morass through illusions of State help. We must rather strive to recover free intercourse in trade and to bring to an end the restrictive economic system; we must aim at stable currencies, at economy in industry, and in the sphere of public administration, and finally, at a policy of long-term trade agreements with moderate tariffs, in spite of the outcry of opposing interests. There is in the long run only one effective means of promoting exports — that is by facilitating imports. It is only when industrial countries are prepared to buy from the agricultural countries the surplus production of the latter and the agricultural countries to take, in return, the products of the industrial countries, that sound economic conditions can be restored throughout the world."

There is a resemblance not very remote between the industrial conditions of Switzerland and Great Britain; both have owed in the past their prosperity to their export trade, and both suffer by anything that hampers the free movement of that trade. In one sense, we suffer and are suffering more than Switzerland because our great mercantile marine was, and still is, in great part rendered idle by the determination of every country that counts on the globe to restrict imports, and, as far as is possible, to satisfy by its own efforts its own requirements. Admittedly, many of them, this country included, have been forced into that policy by the acuteness of unemployment, but it is at least questionable whether the very means which have been adopted almost universally to increase employment have not checked it by the restriction of international trading. Happily, there is no economist in the world who does not recognise that unscalable tariff barriers are a disadvantage to every one, and there are, therefore, always some grounds for hoping that when another World Economic Conference is held means of lowering them, and thereby of facilitating that free flow of trade and money upon which the true prosperity of all nations depends, may be found. Dr. Schindler's clear-cut description of the reactions of present world economic movements may help to open the road to that reformation.

VOYAGE DE SAUSSURE HORS DES ALPES.

(Par Charles Gos. 1 volume in — 8 couronne avec 8 illustrations horstexte reproductions de gravures de l'époque, br. fr. 3.75, rel. fr. 6.25. Editions Victor Attinger, Neuchâtel.)

Tournant le dos aux "glacières de Chamouny" et aux Alpes, un homme, le baromètre à la main et le marteau du géologue en poche, descend pensivement vers les douces plaines d'Italie: c'est Saussure, Horace-Benedict de Saussure, l'illustre savant genevois, l'homme du Mont-Blanc. ... Mais cette fois-ci, Saussure n'est pas équipé pour la montagne. Marc-Auguste Pictet l'accompagne, et les deux amis voient bientôt surgir dans le lointain ensoleillé les horizons méditerranéens.

Séduit par le pittoresque imprévu de ce voyage hors des Alpes, M. Charles Gos s'est complu à suivre le gentilhomme-montagnard (ce mot charmant est de Sainte-Beuve) dans ses pérégrinations en plaine. Avec verve et humeur, il nous raconte les multiples aventures qui marqueront les différentes étapes du célèbre auteur des *Voyages dans les Alpes*, en Italie, sur la "Rivière" et en Provence. De Genève à Genève à pied, à cheval, en chaise de poste ou en felouque, Saussure ne cesse de penser au Mont-Blanc. Et si vous voulez savoir comment il faillit ne jamais le conquérir, renversé par un coup de mistral, sur un toit, en Arles, lisez ce récit plein de finesse et de la plus délicate fantaisie.

LEMBO TICINESE.

Un'ondata di gelo è entrata nel mio cervello — ogni idea è trasformata in un ghiacciaio: livido, rigido, ostinato, che non vuol sciogliersi in un scorrevole, chiaro articolo per lo "Swiss Observer." Per fortuna che non devo vivere con il ricavo del sudore della ... mia penna, starei allegra! E se fossi un reporter di professione, temo che le mie notizie arriverebbero ben rancide e ricoperte da uno spesso strato di muffa, ai lettori! Ma lo "Swiss Observer" ha una ricca messe di interessanti articoli, così che non ci perde nulla se manca il mio... tutto al più chi ne va di mezzo è la Posta ... che perde l'affrancazione per un mio scritto ... non scritto! mentre la ferrovia, beata lei, se ne va via più leggera, senza "tanto" peso ... Povera ferrovia! quando penso a lei, un certo qual senso di melanconia mi prende. ... Così generosa, così servizievole (non badiamo, via, ai suoi numerosi "suffi" ...) e sta così malaccio! E anemica ... anemica ... anzi la Radio l'altro giorno, descriveva le sue condizioni come quasi tragiche, nonostante i continui, enormi sforzi dei suoi capi per salvarla. Non bastano le comitive portate dalla "Migros" con il suo Piano Olberghiero (che ha funzionato in modo lusinghiero), non bastano le riduzioni invernali che permettono di viaggiare dal sabato al lunedì a prezzo ridotto; riduzioni sui riduzioni ... ma! sfido qualsiasi matematico a sciogliere questo problema: "date continue riduzioni dimostrano aumento." Se si riducono le entrate, come aumentarle? Va bene! Si fa per invogliare la gente a viaggiare, e se molti viaggiano, anche a prezzo ridotto, si arriverà a un guadagno ... ma la gente preferisce starsene dov'è ... e allora?

E poi, ecco che tra capo e collo, arrivano impensate, grosse spese che servono a disorganizzare ancor di più la cassa delle Ferrovie Federali. E valanghe cadono qua e là, sulle linee ferroviarie, ne intralciano il servizio, richiedono lavoro di sgombero, sorveglianze straordinarie... come quella caduta giorni or sono tra Osogna e Biasca, che per un vero miracolo non fece vittime. Una "soffice palla di neve" che interruppe il servizio ferroviario, obbligandolo a deviare, a mezzo autovetture, da Osogna, via Tragna, a Biasca e viceversa, per diversi giorni — e che per poco non travolgeva un treno ed un casello. Purtroppo altra, caduta nel Locarnese, dai Gradiccioli, sorprende una pattuglia di guardie di confine e faceva una vittima; a Vogorno un giovane, andato alla ricerca di capre, veniva travolto da valanga ed il suo cadavere è ora gelosamente custodito dalla neve, in un burrone, solo a primavera potrà venir rintracciato — gelido sepolcro per gelida morte! E la neve, così aspettata, così entusiasticamente salutata dagli amatori di sports invernali, dai bimbi ... così candidamente innocente, che vien giù quieta quieta, soffice come piuma, che tramuta la natura in un meraviglioso quadro, con tutte quelle sue caratteristiche speciali, con quelle bizzarre forme che imprime alle cose, con quelle tinte azzurre, delicate, delicatamente soffuse di rosa, d'arancione; questa neve come sa essere crudele — precipitando con boati sinistri, cupi, all'improvviso ... rovinando tutto, reclamando vittime! Anche la natura, non solo l'uomo, sa essere perversa! Anche la natura sa essere ipocrita ... Neve bella, lieve ... neve terribile, schiantatrice!

E n'è venuta molto quest'inverno. Di solito, da diversi anni, si passava Natale senza neve, ora, invece, ne abbiamo qui una buona dose. Certo che Natale sarà più "in carattere" e le tante cartoline che gireranno per il mondo portando auguri, illustranti paesi avvolti in candido manto, corrisponderanno a realtà ...

I piccoli abeti incominciano a far comparsa in città, nei paesi: entrano di rimpiattino nelle case; attendono di essere vestiti a festa con candeline, con palline colorate, con fili d'oro, d'argento ... I nasini rossi dei bimbi si schiacciano contro i grossi vetri delle vetrine, ove sono esposte ogni genere di ... tentazioni! E quanti sospiri di desiderio, quante lacrime di rinuncia amare ... Quanti piccoli esseri che purtroppo già imparano che le vita è dura, ingrata! Poveri piccini innocenti che girate per le vie, illividiti dal freddo, dalla fame ... poveri genitori che salutate un altro Natale triste ... accompagnato dalla crisi, dalla disoccupazione!

Natale! Suonate liete, campane! Suonate a festa. Sappiate almeno voi, garrule e argentine, infondere un pò di speranza in anime desolate: rincorate voi chi dalla vita ha solo amarezza ... benedite le lacrime dolorose ... sorreggete chi se ne va, nella vita, con un fardello troppo pesante ...

Suonate a distesa ... per chi gioisce ... per chi piange ... E Natale! Gesù Bambino, nel Presepio, povero, umile, sorride a tutti ... tutti benedice!

E. G. L.

Lugano, Natale 1935.