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# The Swiss Observer

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## HOME NEWS

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### FEDERAL.

#### A BIG DEFENCE LOAN.

The slight improvement recorded in Swiss foreign trade during the first quarter continued in April and May, but it is small. Imports totalled 91,456,223 francs in April and 88,602,496 francs in May, a drop of about 12 per cent. over 1935, due to import quotas. Exports totalled 68,634,881 francs in April (a rise of 300,000 francs over 1935) and 68,927,817 francs in May (a rise of 3,400,000 francs over 1935). The watchmaking industry is improving its position every month, and the machine industry seems to be improving slightly. The trade agreement concluded with the United States has so far had no great effect on Swiss-American trade.

The two Chambers of Parliament have approved the Government's proposal to issue a loan of 235 million francs for national defence. The day before the vote the Socialist Congress sitting in Zurich had by a small majority decided to oppose the re-armament scheme, and this decision, which was contrary to the opinion of the leaders and Socialist deputies in Parliament, involved the resignation of the Committee of direction of the Party. The discussions in the Socialist Congress show that the breach between moderate and extreme elements has widened. The extremists consider that the Socialist Party should be a party of opposition and form a common front with the Communists; but towards the end of the Congress a proposal for a union with the Communists was defeated by a big majority.

Federal Councillor Herr Obrecht, chief of the Department of Public Economy, recently issued a report in which he declared himself opposed to the State control of business, but favourable to a collaboration between private undertakings and Government organisations. The country's economy, he said, should pursue two objects: the maintenance of agricultural production and the recovery of lost foreign markets. He suggested in the first place the appointment of a consultative committee of representatives of the principal branches of industry, with whom, as Minister of Public Economy, he would study the various aspects of the economic problem. He proposed in the second place that the power be granted to him of taking any urgent decisions without waiting for the approval of Parliament. By these means the Government might succeed in bringing down Swiss prices to the level of other countries so as to foster the export trade, while remaining opposed both to devaluation and to complete deflation. In fact, Swiss prices are generally rising; and the cost-of-living index, which was 129 (1916 = 100) at the end of 1935, is now 130, and the index of wholesale prices has also risen.

No definite decision has so far been reached about the reorganisation of the Federal railways, the position of which is growing worse week by week owing to the persistent decline in passengers and goods traffic. The accounts for 1935 show a deficit of 58,722,860 francs, which was only exceeded in 1921 when it reached 72 million francs; and the railways' debt is now well over 3 billions of francs. During the first quarter of 1936, receipts totalled 63 million francs, against 68 million francs in 1935; while expenditure totalled 52 million francs, against 58 million francs last year.

#### DEFENCE PLANS IN SWITZERLAND.

A new organisation of the Swiss army was approved by the Federal Council last week.

The reform is thorough. Three new corps have now been created: the "Grenzschutz" for protection of the frontier, the "defending divisions," and the "marching divisions."

The Grenzschutz is for all soldiers living in the immediate neighbourhood of the frontier, and is destined to man the fortifications, traps, and other arrangements, by which a surprise assault by a motorised enemy is to be frustrated. They know their posts and tasks and can be mobilised at the shortest notice.

Switzerland has no standing army, but the idea is to mobilise the Grenzschutz in time to prevent a surprise invasion. Under its protection the defence proper will be organised by the "defending divisions," whilst the "marching divisions," which are recruited from the central regions round Bern and Lake of Lucerne, will be kept in reserve and sent to the points of danger. "Fewer men, more machines" is the leading principle everywhere. Besides the "marching divisions" there will be special "fight brigades," consisting of cavalry, artillery, and cyclist companies, whose number has been greatly increased of late. There will also be special "gas companies" to fight the effects of poison gas. Of the 235,000,000 francs granted for new material, a large portion will go to the air arm, whose strength will be nearly doubled.

The protection of the civil population against poison gas is being organised by the private "Luftschutz," a volunteer organisation similar to and based on, the local fire brigades.

#### PROPOSED NEW SWISS TREASON LAW.

The Swiss Federal Council proposes to add to the penal code a provision making it possible to prosecute anyone who menaces the independence of Switzerland. It would enable the Federal Attorney-General to prosecute anyone who, in Switzerland or abroad, carried out any irredentist or other such propaganda against the Federation.

#### MORATORIUM FOR SWISS BANK.

Société de Crédit à Lucerne, better known as the "Creditanstalt in Lucerne," has been granted a two years' moratorium.

#### TOUR DE SUISSE 1936.

The "Tour de Suisse" cycle race was won by Henri Garnier (Belgium), the second was G. Deloor (Belgium). The final result is as follows: 1st: Belgium (Garnier, G. Deloor, A. Deloor); 2nd: Switzerland (Amberg, Blattmann, Egli); 3rd: France (Level, Rinaldi, Louvion); 4th: Germany (Thierbach, Umbenhauer, Roti).

#### PRODUCTION OF ELECTRICITY.

It is estimated that a capital of two billion Swiss Francs is invested in the production and distribution of electricity in Switzerland, without taking into account the stations which are employed exclusively for the railways. In 1935 the production of electrical energy amounted to 5.7 billion KW. hours and the consumption was estimated at 1,050 KW. hours per inhabitant. 99% of the housing accommodation is connected with the network of electrical distribution. Switzerland thus occupies first place in the use of electricity in Europe, followed by France with 93.6%, Sweden 84.5%, Germany 75.3%, Holland 74.7%, Italy 56% and Great Britain 43.7%.

#### LOCAL.

#### ZURICH.

Dr. Hermann Moser from Mels-Weissstannen (St. Gall) at present head of the bacteriological Dept. of the American Hospital in Mexico-City, has been nominated Professor of bacteriology at the University of Zurich, and Director of the Institute of Hygiene, in succession to Dr. W. Silberschmidt who is retiring.

#### BASLE.

The Steamer "Bernina" met on her return from London, — which took eight days, — with a great reception. Members of the cantonal government, of the Chambre of Commerce, and high officials of the Schleppschiffahrts-Genossenschaft were present when Captain Kwak of the "Bernina" stepped off the boat, to hand over a letter from the Swiss Minister, Monsieur C. R. Paravicini in London to M. Motta.

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The death has occurred in Basle of Dr. A. Barth Walser, who was for more than 25 years a teacher of the French language at the "Basler Humanistischen Gymnasium."

#### GRISONS.

M. Gustav Bener, since 1918, Manager of the "Rhätischen" Railway is shortly vacating his post on reaching the age limit. M. Bener has rendered great services to the company during his many years as Manager.

#### GENEVA.

Msgr. Marius Besson, since 1920, Bishop of Lausanne, Geneva and Fribourg, has celebrated his 60th birthday Anniversary. Msgr. Besson, was, previous to his appointment as Bishop, Professor of History at the University of Fribourg.

#### BERNE.

The late M. Aeschlimann from Thun has left an amount of 10,000 frs. to the "Sekundarschule" Langenthal and 100,000 frs to the Gemeinnützigen Gesellschaft Zurich.

\* \* \*

Open-air William Tell performances will be given on Sunday afternoons at Interlaken, throughout the summer season from July 12th until September 13th. While the auditorium with its 2,000 reserved seats is covered, the stage itself, with a group of authentic-style dwellings, occupies delightful natural setting. There is ample space for the 350 actors which participate in the folk-scenes, as well as for the fine cattle returning from alpine pasture grounds and for the hunters on horseback. All the costumes were designed by the late Rudolf Münger, the well known Swiss authority on heraldry. Interlaken is famous as the tourist metropolis of the Bernese Oberland and is an ideal starting point for classical excursions by train to Jungfraujoch, Schynige Platte, Mürren, Harder and numerous other points of view.

#### LUCERNE.

The steam driven Vitznau-Rigi rack-and-pinion railway near Lucerne, the oldest railway of its kind in Europe, is to be electrified. It was built from 1869-71 by N. Riggibach, and climbs the 4½ miles distance, from 1,444 feet a/s to 5,905 feet a/s, in one hour.

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The 22nd International Concours Hippique will take place at Lucerne from July 4th—12th. This year the famous Lucerne equestrian manifestation assumes the rôle of a pre-Olympic Horse Show, preceding the Olympics at Berlin.

The Lucerne Horse Show is under the patronage of the chief of the Swiss Military Department, Federal Councillor Münger, while Colonel Favre will be in charge of the jury. A series of brilliant social and sports attractions will be an added feature of the programme.

#### NEUCHATEL.

Mme. Victoire Theurillat, of Neuchâtel, the oldest inhabitant of Switzerland, celebrated her 103rd birthday on Friday. Every day she takes a short walk in the country alone.

#### FRIBOURG.

From June 1st—October 14th there will be daily organ recitals in the Cathedral of St. Nicholas at Fribourg. This picturesque town was founded in 1178 by Berthold IV of Zähringen and has in the course of the centuries become noted for its unusual architectural beauty and as a centre of learning. Fribourg occupies a rocky height, almost surrounded by the river Sarine, and it has therefore quite naturally developed into a town famous for its many bridges. These spans furnish an eloquent portrait of the evolution of bridge construction, for they include the old covered variety, the daring suspension type and the ultra-modern stone and concrete styles. Ten fountains of the 16th century adorn the streets, and handsome old public buildings, together with ramparts and towers, are landmarks which delight all lovers of ancient art and architecture.

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