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The Swiss Observer

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HOME NEWS

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FEDERAL.

NEW SWISS TAX NEXT YEAR.

The Swiss Federal Council's 1938 Finance Bill, which will be submitted to Parliament at its next session, makes it evident that it is the Council's primary aim to put the financial house in order, even if this means heavy sacrifices for certain groups of the population.

In the first place the Council demands the prolongation for one year of the measures approved by Parliament in 1933 and 1936, so that a definite financial policy can be worked out. By the end of 1938, it is pointed out, a number of problems, such as the ultimate effects of the devaluation of the Swiss franc and the reorganisation of the Federal railways, can be better surveyed.

The crises tax on income is to be dropped. On the other hand, a new tax of 1 to 5 per cent. on increases of capital is to be introduced. Such increases must, however, amount to at least 10,000 frs., and the capital is to be not lower than 50,000 frs. Only private persons are to be affected by this measure.

Despite various demands the Federal Council has refrained from taxing or confiscating profits derived from the devaluation of the Swiss currency, but the new tax will, more or less, curtail such profits.

The Council is of the opinion that subsidies should be cut still further. The various provisions in this direction will represent a saving of 60,000,000 f.

Taken as a whole, the measures will secure additional revenue of 131,000,000 f., while expenditure can be reduced by 92,000,000 f. Thus, the emergency measures provided for in the Bill will mean a yield of 223,000,000 f.

Expenditure and revenue will both be below 500,000,000 f.

FEDERAL COUNCILLOR OBRECHT TO VISIT PARIS EXHIBITION.

Federal Councillor Obrecht, on the invitation of the Swiss Chamber of Commerce in France, will attend a Banquet at the Swiss Pavilion of the Paris exhibition, on Saturday, July 31st. He will be the principal guest at the 1st of August celebration, held on Sunday at the Swiss Pavilion. Amongst the Swiss artists, who will take part in the programme are Grock, Marcel Simon, Trudi Schoop and members of the "Cornicheon" Cabaret from Zurich.

SWISS AUTHORS HONOURED.

The French "Académie des sciences morales et politiques" has awarded the "Prix Joseph Du Teil" (Fr. 2,500) to M. Ed. Chapuisat, a former Director of the "Journal de Genève" for his book "Le Général Dufour"; and the "Prix Chaix d'Est-ange" (2,000 frs.) to M. Henri Naef for his work "Les origines de la Réforme à Genève."

ROAD ACCIDENTS IN SWITZERLAND.

During the first three months of this years, 3,670 road accidents have been reported, of which 117 proved fatal. The figures for the same period 12 months ago were: 3,373 injured and 109 killed.

4th INTERNATIONAL AVIATION MEETING IN ZURICH.

The official opening ceremony of the 4th International Aviation Meeting in Zurich took place last Sunday at the Hotel "Baur au Lac."

M. Motta, President of the Swiss Confederation, who was accompanied by Colonel-of-Division Bandi, chief of arms (Waffenchef) of the Swiss Flying Corps, was introduced to the numerous Foreign teams which are competing. He then addressed the sports gathering extending to them a hearty welcome on behalf of the Federal and Cantonal authorities.

DUTCH PREMIER VISITS M. MOTTA.

M. Colijn, the Dutch Premier, who is on a holiday visit in Zurich, has paid a visit to M. Motta, President or the Swiss Confederation.

GERMAN AIR ACE CRASHES.

M. Udet, the well-known German Air Ace, who is taking part in the International Aviation Meeting in Zurich, crashed during his Alpine flight, on the Uttigut near Thonon, his machine was completely wrecked, but Udet escaped with slight injuries.

It might be recalled here that Udet was the first man to land a 'plane on the frozen lake at St. Moritz and the first to land and take off from an Alpine glacier. It was he who flew within 20 feet of the north wall of the Eiger, and spotted the frozen bodies of the German climbers who perished there two years ago.

COMMERCIAL BANK OF BASLE SCHEME.

The reorganisation plan of the Banque Commerciale de Bâle (Basle Commercial Bank) having been approved by the Swiss Supreme Court, the bank is now in a position to reduce the authorised share capital of Frs. 75,000,000 (about £3,410,000) to Frs. 13,950,000 (£634,000).

Each issued share of Frs. 500 (£23) will be written down to Frs. 100 (£4 10s.). This step will enable the bank to attain a sound basis.

In accordance with the scheme the bank now announces the issue of new shares to bearer of Frs. 100 each totalling Frs. 3,550,000 (£161,000). Present share-holders holding four old shares have the right to one new share. The new shares are being issued at par plus 2½ per cent. tax.

A second issue of shares amounting to Frs. 2,500,000 (£114,000) is arranged at the same terms, preference being given to subscribers holding the bank's bonds and to creditors whose claims fell under the moratorium which has now come to an end.

The lists close on 31st August.

DAMAGE BY CLOUDBURSTS OVER LAKE THUN.

There were cloudbursts on the north shore of Lake Thun, bridges were carried away, and the railway was cut in several places, the roads were blocked with gravel, hotels in Gunten were flooded, and at Merligen two girls were carried away by a spate and disappeared. Troops were called out from Thun to help the inhabitants to save their houses and furniture.

EUROPEAN SAILING CHAMPIONSHIPS.

Great Britain did not do well in the European sailing championships, which were begun at Zurich last Monday, with races in the 22 square metre. Binneglass, the British yacht, sailed by the well-known yachtsman Stewart Morris, finished fourth in each of the two races, and at the end of the day was placed fourth on aggregate. After winning the first race and finishing first in the second, the Hungarian boat, sailed by Tibor de Heinrich, was disqualified in the latter on an objection by the Italian boat which had finished third. Switzerland was given first place. Italy second, and Morris moved into third place, but this did not affect the general classification of the British boat. Switzerland are first, Hungary 2nd, Great Britain, fourth, and Italy fifth.

HELVETIA CLUB
1, Gerrard Place, London, W.1.

A Grand Dance

will be held in the club house on
MONDAY, 2nd AUGUST 1937
commencing at 8.30 p.m.

celebrating the
Swiss National Day
(1st AUGUST 1937)

— Cabaret and other attractions. —

Admission by ticket only, 2s. 6d. each.
Closing 2 a.m.

UNEMPLOYMENT IN SWITZERLAND.

At the end of June there were only 50,830 unemployed in Switzerland, compared with 59,973 a month earlier. At the end of June, 1936 there were 75,127 out of work.

SWISS JOURNALIST EXPELLED.

Dr. Franz Klein, correspondent of the "Basler Nachrichten," a leading Swiss newspaper, has been expelled from Italy because of his criticisms of Italy's foreign policy.

IN MEMORY OF GOETHE.

On the occasion of a performance of Goethe's *Faust* at Strasbourg last month the Prefect of Strasbourg handed to the representative of the Goetheanum, Dornach, Switzerland, the Goethe Medal, decorated with a portrait of Goethe and the arms of Strasbourg University. The Goetheanum, near Basle, is one of the largest theatres in Europe and one of the most imposing monuments to Goethe. It is used for special performances all the year round, especially in August. It was erected by the late Rudolf Steiner.

BANK FOR INTERNATIONAL SETTLEMENTS.

The fifty-seventh board meeting of the Bank for International Settlements in Basle was opened by Sir Otto Niemeyer. In his report on the monthly situation as at June 30 he pointed out that with a balance-sheet total of 703,800,000 Swiss francs the bank could look back on a prosperous activity in its dealings in gold as well as in its clearing business with the central banks, which have considerably increased their deposits.

Dr. Trip, governor of the Bank of the Netherlands, gave a report on the gold embargo in Holland and on the reopening of the loan market for foreign debtors. A first loan has been granted to the city of Oslo.

Dr. Bachmann, president of the Swiss National Bank, gave a report on the favourable reception given to the Swiss loan of 150,000,000 Swiss francs, which was over-subscribed five times.

M. Labeyrie, governor of the Bank of France, was not yet in a position to make a statement on the French franc, which will depend on the effect of the special decree issued by the French Government against tax evasion and export of capital.

SWISS ELECTRIFICATION

Of all railway electrification systems in the world, that of Switzerland is probably the best known to the ordinary man, for few of the vast number of holiday-makers visiting that country fail to remark on the cleanliness and punctuality of travel, and the more observant of them notice also the high speeds up the heavy grades on such routes as the Gotthard and Loetschberg. Sections of the Swiss Federal Railways were electrified before the war, but it was in 1923 that a programme of general electrification was begun. The work has been carried on more or less continuously ever since, and 1,320 route miles, or 73 per cent. of the Federal system, are now worked electrically on the 15 kV. single-phase system. Approximately 85 per cent. of the train-mileage and 90 per cent. of the ton-mileage are worked by electric traction, and it is calculated that the economy effected by electrification now amounts to fr. 10.6 millions yearly, excluding the additional saving, due to the devaluation of the franc, through the recent rise in the price of coal. Energy for the electric line is obtained from two large hydro-electric generating plants, the Amsteg-Ritom group on the St. Gotthard route, and the Barberine-Vernayaz group, located amid the outlying buttresses of the Mont Blanc range, in the extreme south-west corner of Switzerland. These two groups have an installed capacity of approximately 208,000 kW., and generate most of the 518,000,000 kWh. of current used by the Federal Railways yearly. It is not only the Federal lines which are electrified; the two biggest private railways—the Berne-Loetschberg-Simplon (with its associates) and the Rhaetian—are worked electrically throughout their length, and numerous smaller adhesion and rack railways are operated by a.c. or d.c.

R.G.

ALPINE CLIMBING

The beginning of the Alpine climbing season was delayed this year by the abnormal masses of snow which have covered the mountains. Mont Blanc (15,781 ft.) was climbed on skis as late as June 20. Intense heat during the first three weeks of June freed the lower Alps, but the higher remained uneasy and unsafe. Then unsettled weather prevailed, causing a drop in temperature; snowfalls were again abundant in the higher regions, but climbing conditions were

good on those rock peaks whose steepness does not allow snow to hang very long.

The real climbing season began last week, though somewhat hindered by violent thunder storms. Nearly all the big peaks have been climbed since then, and conditions are generally reported to be good, as the glaciers are covered with snow, except in their lower parts, and the rock mountains are comparatively dry.

The first crossing of the season of the Zinal Rothorn (13,855 ft.), from Zinal to Zermatt, was made on July 5 by MM. J. Hayoz, of Vevey, and M. Buro, of Sierre, with the guide F. Theytaz. The first ascent of the Dent Blanche (14,318 ft.) was made yesterday week by a Swiss tourist and the guide J. Georges, but abundant fresh snow rendered the ascent difficult. On July 3 four climbers, MM. G. Luy, E. Anker, F. Veuthey, and M. Rossey, of Monthey, ascended the north wall of the Cime de l'Est of the Dent du Midi (10,434 ft.).

The north wall of the Eiger is this year the goal of at least four parties of German, Austrian, and Italian climbers. Two unsuccessful attempts have already been made, in the second of which the guide lost his life. After the catastrophes which occurred on this vertical rock wall in 1935 and 1936 the Berne Cantonal Government forbade climbers to attempt it, but the ban was found to be illegal. The Berne authorities, however, have relieved the local guides of the obligation to rescue marooned or injured climbers on the Eiger. Those in charge of the rescue-post must warn intending climbers of the danger. Nevertheless, the devotion of the Alpine guides is so great that they will never refuse to assist their fellow-climbers. This was shown when the Grindelwald guides rescued one of the Salzburg guides who was marooned on the Mittellegi ridge a few days ago.

SWISS ARMY COMMANDS

The commands of the new Army units coming into force at the end of this year, will be as follows:

- 1st Army Corps:** Army-Corps commander Colonel Guisan; under his command will be: 1st Division, Colonel of Division Combe, 2nd Division, Colonel of Division Borel, 3rd Division, Colonel of Division Graffenried, 10th Mountain Brigade, Colonel Schwarz.
- 2nd Army Corps:** Army-Corps commander Prisi, under his command will be: 4th Division, Colonel of Division Scherz, 5th Division, Colonel of Division Bircher, 9th Division, Colonel of Division Tissot, 11th Mountain Brigade, Colonel Buhler.
- 3rd Army Corps:** Army-Corps commander Miescher, under his command will be: 6th Division, Colonel of Division Constam, 7th Division, Colonel of Division Lardelli, 8th Division, Colonel of Division Gübeli, 12th Mountain Brigade Colonel Hold.

LOCAL.

BERNE.

Watches to the value of 12,000 frs. were stolen from a watch manufacturing firm at Bienne.

FRIBOURG.

At Salvenach died at the age of 58, M. Peter Benninger, a member of the National Council since 1928. The deceased was a Justice of the Peace and held the rank of major of infantry in the army.

Dr. Séverin Bays, Professor of Mathematics at the University of Fribourg has been elected rector of the University. Professor Bays holds the rank of colonel on the General Staff, he is also a member of the Grand Council of the canton of Fribourg.

The University of Fribourg has conferred the degree of *doctor honoris causa* upon M. Charles Koch, a member of the Superior Court of the canton of Aargau.

ST. GALL.

An unknown donor has sent amounts totaling 10,000 frs. to various charitable institutions of the canton of St. Gall.

The death is reported at the age of 63 of M. Jakob Zäch, since 1929 "Bezirksammann," and for many years a member of the "Kantonsrat." The deceased has played an important part in the political sphere of the canton of St. Gall.

The late Mme. Reust from Rapperswil, has left her house, valued at 50,000 frs. to the community of Rapperswil, to be used as they think fit.

THE SWISS GRAND-PRIX MOTOR TRACK AT BERNE.

The racing course on which the Swiss Automobile Club is to carry out its fourth annual meeting on August 22, was built in 1934. The Bernese round track has been invariably pronounced by foreign experts as *one of the most beautiful and satisfactory motor racing grounds on the continent*, if not of the whole world. Numerous indeed are its qualifications to that effect. Its situation in the immediate outskirts of the town allows it, first of all, to be reached in few minutes, either on foot, by tram or motor car. The track is laid out through one of Berne's most beautiful city woods, the Bremgarten forest, and nevertheless affords all along an open view from the favoured standing places, as well as from the many stands erected.

From the racing view-point, the Bernese round track excels as a trial field of the first order, inasmuch as it allows maximal speeds to be effected on the straight sections, besides possessing many curved portions, on which a driver's skill is seriously put on trial. Some of the curves give occasion for a good deal of braking and switching. It may at all events be affirmed that on the Berne Grand-Prix track, it is ever for the best driver on the best machine to win.

The Bremgarten round track at Berne forms a closed circular course of 7,280 meters (about 4½ miles). It consists (excepting a stretch of about 800 meters) of well-built public roads, which have, in addition, been specially prepared in view of racing requirements. Appropriate modern materials have been employed and broadenings up to a minimum of about 9 yards effected.

The longitudinal section of the course shows a maximal gradient of 9.14%. It is situated in the handicap stretch by the "gravel-pit." The variation in altitude between the lowest and highest points of the entire track amounts to 66.1 meters.

Spectators find sheltered accommodation in a large stand with about 4,500 seats. This structure contains also refreshing rooms, offices and a spacious press room with telephone cabins and telegraph apparatus. In building the racing stand, 200 tons of iron work have been employed. A number of minor stands are also made available in view of the spectacular events which the great races of August 21 and 22 promise to be; seating accommodation is thereby provided for over 10,000 spectators.

Facing the main stand, are the extensive rows of competitors' boxes, the tanking stations and timing cabin, spectators being thus afforded a commanding view of the whole proceedings. The boxes are in a retreated position in regard to the track, which avoids the possibility of stationing drivers interfering with the progress of the race. For the protection of spectators, a reinforced concrete wall, 2.2 meters in height, has been erected in front of the great stand, and further protective fixtures are guaranteeing the safety of the public all along the course.

The Bremgarten racing course has been established at a total cost of 900,000 Swiss francs, but the city of Berne now possesses a first rate sporting institution which, without exaggeration, may be said to suit its purpose ideally.

D'HEIMAT.

S'isch nume es chlys Mätteli
Im einsame Tal,
Druf blüet tusig Blümeli;
Rot, gälb, wyss und blau
Lueget sanft eim i d'Auge-
Tief lüchtets its Härz
U zeige mit de Chöpfli
Zum Licht, himmelwärts.
Viel heimeligs G'sum u stille Rege
Verbreytet a wohlīgi Ruch,
Wär da nid cha d'Sorg chly ablege
Dem fallt gwüss d'Schuld sälber zue.

H.E.

"LA FONDUE."

"What's a fondue?" Occasionally, I have been asked this question, by an innocent English person back from a trip to the mother country. Naturally that person was not to know through what mental and intestinal anguish, I always undergo whenever somebody breathes this magic and potent word in my ear.

For it has always been my opinion that the "fondue" is the most advanced dish in our civilisation, the apex of culinary discoveries and the ninth wonder of the world!

To make a good fondue it needs thought (with the pepper), patience (with the bread), prudence (in the choice of the cheese), initiative (with the kirsch) and in fact all the qualities to make the perfect husband!

Of course, attempting to explain to anybody else but a Swiss, what a fondue is to us, is about as futile as attempting to explain a game of cricket to a Frenchman!

"L'union fait la force" and especially when it comes to cheese. Why what holds our democratic cantons together? La "fondue" of course.

Some time ago (after my 199th fondue) I made the acquaintance of a Welshman, who claimed to know what a fondue was. After an heated argument, his fondue turned out to be a common Welsh Rabbit! Upon explaining further about our national dish he exclaimed: "Why, but that's a barbarian's dish." At this flagrant insult, my legs seemed to flag under me and I had to clutch the nearest object (it happened to be a mug and a real at that!) for support.

Needless to say, that very person, ate a few months later, in my kitchen, the very thing he had condemned and reviled.

This typical example simply proves, that we Swiss, although possessing no empire or Abyssinias, excepting Liechtenstein, have nevertheless 'l'esprit colonisateur.'

Last year, a dozen Swiss and little me, celebrated the 1st of August with a fondue. This happened to be in Germany, and we had invited some of the close partisans of the 'fureur' to partake this dish (or rather cauldron) with us.

My respect for their taste was enhanced that evening, for these guests of ours (who had provided the drinks) appreciated our bubbling attraction so much, that they began a cheating match by dipping all out of turn their forks plus bread in the cheese! Order was soon restored, however, when we drank to the health of their supreme chief, this kept them out of mischief for a few minutes.

I have heard it said, that the last war (not the Ethiopian massacre) was one to end all wars. Since people are disinclined to believe this statement, why not arrange an international fondue to end all strife, and bring once more everlasting peace on this miserable world of ours? Of course how forgetful of me, it might mean competition and unemployment for the "Société des nations" and that would never do!

Although I have yet to find 5 ft. 6 of England that will be evermore Swiss, the choice of a tombstone has given me no trouble whatsoever, for, strictly in confidence, my "casserole" will have served a twofold purpose. On it is already inscribed the following epitaph: "Ci-git dessous celui qui a mangé dessus. K.I.P. (Kirsch in plenty.)

(JEREMIAH).

NEWS FROM THE LEGATION.

Mme. Paravinici, wife of the Swiss Minister, has left London for abroad. Like many other people, she is including Salzburg in the places she will visit, but first she has gone to Carlsbad. About the middle of next month she will leave for Salzburg, where she will be joined by her husband. Later they will go to Berne.

Drink delicious "Ovaltine"
at every meal-for Health!

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SWITZERLAND 5000 feet

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C. F. EICHER, Manager