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The Swiss Observer

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EDITORIAL.

We wish to thank the many correspondents for their expressions of appreciation in our endeavour to maintain the regular publication of the S.O. in spite of the heavy loss of sales owing to mobilisation and the cancellation of advertising contracts. We appeal to our readers for their co-operation; there are many items of personal news coming to their knowledge which are of interest to the Colony and should be recorded in our columns.



NEWS AT RANDOM

A war-time railway guide came into operation on October 8th and shows very little reduction of the normal services.

About ten thousand compatriots from abroad have so far arrived in Switzerland — far less than was originally anticipated. It is now officially stated that Swiss residing abroad will be discouraged from returning unless personal reasons of livelihood make it desirable. The army command has granted dispensations freely so as to enable those holding positions in the country of their adoption to resume their former sphere of activity.

The import of petrol (Benzine) has so far not suffered any interruption and it is officially denied that a large consignment has been confiscated by one of the belligerents.

Zurich has already spent Frs.810,000 on air raid precautions and the expenditure of a further sum of Frs.130,000 has become necessary to complete the scheme.

Due to urgent demands by consumers the original rationing of coal has been considerably eased. The coal merchants are now authorised to deliver up to half of their actual stock; previously their holdings could not be reduced by more than 25%.

The Federal Council has limited the broadcasting of news bulletins to forty minutes per day, i.e. ten minutes for each of the four daily broadcasts. It has now been found that there is not sufficient genuine news available unless foreign items are unduly elaborated. A reduction of the allotted duration will probably be decreed.

The seasonal inundations in the Zurich Oberland have caused damage to public and private property to the tune of ten million francs.

With a view to preventing the leakage of military information the Federal Council has prohibited the export and sale of all maps and illustrated tourist guides. In the ban are also included photographs and private picture postcards depicting the topography of frontier regions.

The former Polish President Moscicki has with the consent of the Federal Council taken up his residence in the canton Fribourg; he acquired Swiss nationality as far back as 1908. In 1892 he was lecturing at the Fribourg university on natural history and chemistry.

The distribution of leaflets eulogizing the policy of the Soviets led to the discovery of a secret communist organisation in La Chaux-de-Fonds; a number of arrests have been effected. Communism is prohibited throughout the canton of Neuchâtel.

The endeavours of our national economy departments to increase the output of agricultural produce in order to reduce our dependency on imports have been crowned with very gratifying results. During the last 25 years or so we have become practically self-supporting as far as meat, potatoes and butter are concerned and we are to-day much better prepared in the economic field than in 1914. The following comparative figures represent the percentages of the total consumption :

	1911	1938
Wheat	19%	37%
Potatoes	87	97
Meat (all)	74	97
of which		
Beef	72	97
Pork	79	98
Mutton	35	95
Poultry	32	48
Eggs	50	64
Butter	72	99

National Councillor Fritz Joss died in Berne at the age of 53 from the after effects of a serious motor accident.

* * *

A credit of Frs. 100,000 is being sought by the Zurich municipal theatre in order to cover the presumed deficit for the 1939/1940 season.

* * *

General Henri Guisan is paying official visits throughout Switzerland specially to the frontier districts; he is received everywhere with great enthusiasm.

* * *

All the lorries and cars commandeered by the military authorities have to be supplied with snow chains; the value of any chains missing will be charged to the owners when these vehicles are restored.

* * *

Two militiamen were killed outright when the Simplon express crashed into a military lorry at the exit of the tunnel on the Brig side.

SWISS WAR FINANCE.

It is impossible to predict how far the war will affect Swiss economy and its principal branches. At present attention is fixed on the measures adopted by the Government for the safety and welfare of the country. It has been deemed necessary to take certain strict economic measures, apart from the general mobilisation of troops and auxiliary civil services. The National Bank has again put into circulation a certain number of Fr. 5 notes, to meet increased demands. These notes had never been definitely called

in, but were withdrawn from current circulation in 1923.

The position of the National Bank is most reassuring. The bank possesses about three milliards of Swiss francs in gold and covered foreign bills, that is to say, fifteen times greater than the gold reserve held in 1914. This reserve is sufficient to assure Swiss importation for two years, provided that prices do not rise too sharply. Otherwise the situation, as it stands, does not call for special financial measures.

Credit demands from the National Bank and demands for foreign securities have only amounted to approximately 20 million francs, which does not exceed normal economic needs. The Swiss franc is in no way threatened and the position of the banks is most satisfactory. So much so that at the present moment Swiss financial establishments have more than 700 million francs worth of convertible securities which they could sell to the National Bank.

Stock Exchange Gazette.

SWISS TRADE CONTROL.

The Federal Government of Switzerland has taken extraordinary powers to stop any foreign trade, whether imports, exports, or transit, that is not strictly compatible with Swiss neutrality. With its highly specialised industry the land-locked country must depend on the goodwill of its neighbours for the free passage of goods. In order to retain that goodwill and to avert the enforcement of an international control of Swiss trade, such as the country experienced in the last world war, the Government has made its own machinery of supervision as watertight as possible. The trade department of the Ministry of Economics has been empowered to issue orders and to enforce them by almost any means available. A special criminal court has been set up within the Ministry to deal with violations of the department's orders, which may be punished by fines, without legal limit, by imprisonment, and by exclusion from the granting of further foreign trade licences. Aliens guilty of offences against the trade control are made liable to deportation.

These prompt measures have already induced the French Government to grant important trade facilities to Switzerland. Shipments of oil and food which have arrived in French ports have been allowed to proceed to Switzerland since the outbreak of war.

Manchester Guardian.

A Telephone Conversation Overheard and reported in the "National Zeitung" (30/9/39).

"Hier Bundesrat Minger!"

"Jä, i weiss!", sagt die Telephonordonnanz und frägt weiter: "Und was wotsch?"

"Hier Bundesrat Minger!"

"Jo, sisch rächt, aber mach jetz kai Gschiss, mr sin pressant!"

"Hier Bundesrat Minger, verbindet Si mi mit em Kommando Soundso!"

"Du verd Chaib, i verbind di jo, aber hoffetlig verwütsche si di!"

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