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The Swiss Observer

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NEWS AT RANDOM

The Federal Tribunal has rejected the appeal of Dr. Zander against the judgment of the Zurich high court sentencing him to 18 months imprisonment for conducting a secret news agency in favour of a foreign power. He was the leader of a national socialist group styling themselves "union of loyal confederates" (Bund treuer Eidgenossen). In another case our highest tribunal reversed an award by an ecclesiastical body in the canton of Zurich. In assessing the amount of the church tax (Kirchensteuer) the whole of the property of a married couple is taken into consideration though each one may have a separate estate. As it happened the husband was a protestant and the wife a catholic and they both appealed against the whole estate being taxed for the benefit of a particular denomination. The Federal Tribunal decided that under the Swiss Constitution nobody can be forced to subscribe to a religious community of which he is not a member.

* * *

In spite of the war the Swiss Federal Railways are recording over two million francs increase in their revenue for the month of September as compared with 1938. Unfortunately the budget figures for 1940 just published anticipate a net loss of over 25 million francs. Of the estimated 338 million revenues 110 million francs are earmarked for interest on loans. Considerable savings in working expenses have been effected and this policy is perhaps best illustrated by the fact that in July 1920 the staff employed numbered 40,498 while in July this year the figure was 27,448, and this with a constantly increasing railway net. By the end of next year the railways will operate 506 electric and 359 steam locomotives, 3,523 passenger coaches and 16,753 baggage and goods trucks.

* * *

Minister Charles L. E. Lardy died in a Bernese clinic at the age of 64; he was the son of the distinguished life-long minister in Paris. The deceased began his diplomatic career at the Swiss Legation in London in 1898. After spending four years in Tokio as our Minister he was appointed to Stockholm in 1924 from which post he recently retired.

The divisions in the socialist parties of Geneva and Vaud have led to the appearance of a new party paper "Le Peuple," which is financed and directed by Nicole's former associates. Surprise has been caused in the Swiss press in view of the official ban on new publications.

* * *

A further rise in the price of petrol (Benzine) which has recently been increased from 42 to 50 cts. per litre is expected on account of the heavy transport expenses. The bulk of the oil emanates from Rumania and is transhipped at Genoa for Switzerland.

* * *

What was once considered a precious trophy has come to an untimely end. At the international rifle competition in Finland in 1937 our compatriots won the "prix d'honneur" which consisted of an 18 months old brown bear. The latter was with appropriate stateliness, ushered into the famous bear pit of our capital to be a constant reminder of the achievement of our riflemen. However the new boarder showed little inclination to ingratiate itself with the existing family and soon manifested a ruthless dictatorship incompatible with the democratic spirit of the Bernese bruins. The prize bear has now been shot and peace and civility has been restored to the "Bärengraben."

* * *

The budget for 1940 of the canton Zurich anticipates a deficit of over 13 million francs; the extraordinary expenses due to the existing emergency are included in the estimate. A 120% increase of the basic "Staatssteuer" is proposed.

* * *

The president of the New York World Exhibition, Mr. Grover A. Whalen, paid an official visit to the National Exhibition in Zurich. Our good relations

CITY SWISS CLUB.

Messieurs les membres sont avisés que

L'ASSEMBLÉE MENSUELLE

aura lieu Mardi le 7 Novembre à 5.30 h. précises au Restaurant PAGANI 42, Great Portland Street, W.1.

ORDRE DU JOUR:

Procès-verbal.

Démissions.

Admissions.

Divers.

Le souper est facultatif et les participants sont priés de bien vouloir s'inscrire au plus tôt auprès de Monsieur P. F. Boehringer, 23, Leónard Street, E.C.2. (Téléphone: Clerkenwell 2321/2).

Le Comité

with America and the advantage of these great exhibitions to international solidarity formed the themes of the traditional speeches.

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In order to finance the cost of the mobilisation an amount of 200 million francs is being placed by the Confederation with the Swiss banks in treasury bills of one to three years at an average rate of 34%.

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It is now officially stated that all Swiss mobilised from abroad are to be paid their travelling expenses from their foreign domicile to the Swiss frontier. They are also entitled to the cost of the return journey as long as their army papers are in order and up-to-date.

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A shortness and consequent high prices of pork has induced the Confederation to send an official to Belgrade to arrange for the wholesale importation of pigs into Switzerland.

* * *

The "Kunstmuseum" at Berne has organised a unique exhibition of masterpieces from the local and Basle museums; the latter at the outbreak of hostilities were removed from Basle to a place of safety. This picture gallery includes works by the two Holbeins, Arnold Böcklin, Hodler and Koller.

* * *

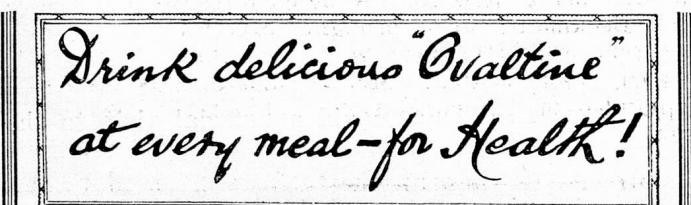
Exceptional damage has been caused this year by hailstorms and farmers have received over four million francs from the insurance company.

* * *

The indiscriminate despatch abroad of small postal packets (maximum two kilos) is being considerably curtailed; such articles as coffee, tea and woollen garments have to be excluded.

* * *

After eight weeks deliberations an agreement has been reached with Germany to regulate commercial relations between the two countries. The fact that under the clearing treaty of last June Germany has incurred a liability of about 65 million Swiss francs has aggravated the difficulties of the Swiss negotiators. Both governments are anxious to restore normal



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conditions and somewhat complicated means have been devised to gradually reduce this adverse balance so that the old accounts of the Swiss exporters can be liquidated.

* * *

The Bernese Oberland is threatened with the gradual extinction of the chamois presumably due to the absence of new blood.

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According to news published in the Irish press, M. von Gunten is the official horse buyer of our government; he is said to have examined about 500 "troopers" in Irish centres and selected 200 horses for transport to Switzerland. This is what the "Irish Independent" (25/10/39) states:

One of the difficulties about this consignment was that, owing to the war, special permission had to be obtained from the British Government for the export of horses bought in Northern Ireland. Special arrangements had also to be made with the authorities in Britain and in France for the transport of the animals to Switzerland.

An Irish dealer, who accompanied M. von Gunten and his associates, Capt. Egli and Capt. Ramus, stated that during their two weeks' tour they had been on the road at 7 o'clock each morning, and had been examining horses by lantern-light in remote country lanes until late at night.

The prices given ranged from £50 to £70.

On a visit here in August M. von Gunten bought a large consignment of troopers and five horses for officers. The latter animals included Wise Girl, which, ridden by Mr. Maurice Bamber, of Ballymena, won the Civilian £100 Jumping Championship at this year's Horse Show.

M. von Gunten said that the Swiss authorities had been delighted with the jumpers which he had bought on his last visit.

They had all been doing very well, and some of them would undoubtedly be leaders at the Army and other jumping competitions in Switzerland next year. He hoped to return in January for another consignment of troopers.

* * *

General elections took place throughout Switzerland during the last week-end. The majority of candidates were returned unopposed. Owing to mobilisation and delays in transmission, final results are not yet available. In a number of districts, notably Basle and Berne, the distribution of certain electioneering leaflets was stopped by the army command.

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An ominous news item has been circulated by Reuter's in the English press. It states that our Government has decided to send a circular letter to the cantonal authorities containing instructions as to how the population should act if our country were invaded.

* * *

The Italian extension of the Gotthard line from Chiasso to Boghera — 66 miles — was opened to traffic last Saturday, the electrification having been completed. It is now possible to travel by electric railway from Basle to Reggio, the extreme south of Italy, the whole distance being over 900 miles.