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The Swiss Observer

FOUNDED BY MR. P. F. BOEHRINGER.

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NEWS AT RANDOM

During the course of the week August 21st-28th, British aircraft have flown over Swiss territory three times on their way to Northern Italy. The Federal Council met on August 27th to discuss these repeated violations of Swiss neutrality and decided to instruct M. Pilet-Golaz to make fresh representations to the British Government. M. Pilet-Golaz asked the British Minister in Berne to call upon him and requested him to draw the attention of his Government to the seriousness of the situation, pointing out that these repeated incidents constituted negations of assurances given previously to the Swiss Minister in London. M. Thurnheer has at the same time been instructed to make a new demarche to the same end.

The General Staff has made it known that during the night of 26/27th August violations occurred over a very wide area, extending from Geneva to Bellinzona. Anti-aircraft batteries opened fire in various places and some people were injured by shrapnel. The *Times* Geneva correspondent reports the incident as follows, under the date of August 27th:—

“Numerous British aircraft flew over Switzerland last night. The alarm was sounded three times, and the population went into shelters as ordered. Anti-aircraft guns were in action in the Berne district and in Thun, where the railway station was slightly damaged by falling splinters.

Commenting on this new trespass, the *Journal de Genève* says that such violations are inadmissible, as they are not the result of error. “If Great Britain intended to create difficulties for Switzerland she would not act differently.” Apprehension is expressed in some quarters here that these repeated trespasses might induce some neighbouring Power to decide to defend Swiss neutrality and to take the country under its “protection.” The semi-official paper *Der Bund* of Berne wrote: “To the indignation caused by the violation is added the painful realization that it does not seem possible to reckon on a promise.”

* * *

The Swiss radio announces that rumours that coffee, tea and soap were to be rationed in Switzerland

resulted in provision shops being practically bought out and for a time there was panic buying of these commodities.

The Ministry of Food has issued a reassuring statement in which it is pointed out that action of the kind described is unnecessary and that the hoarding of certain products like coffee is a punishable offence.

* * *

Endeavours to bring about intimate co-operation between the various political parties are being made everywhere. It is announced from St. Gall that the Liberal Democratic party has appealed to the other parties, inviting them to study ways and means which might be helpful in this direction.

* * *

100 Swiss Officers participating in an instruction course recently ascended the Great Aletschhorn (4195m.). Starting from the Jungfraujoch they descended to Oberaletsch and thence to Brig. This is the first time that the Aletschhorn has been climbed by a big military formation. (*Basler Nachrichten*, Aug 15th.)

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Telephone communications between Switzerland and Norway have been resumed.

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After a rainy summer, August brought rather better weather for climbing expeditions in the Swiss Alps. Appenzell especially, was a favourite with excursionists at the beginning of this month. On one Sunday alone as many as 2,500 people travelled by funicular railway or on foot. The Hohenkasten had 1,000 visitors on the same Sunday and the Schaeffler 500. Over the week-end August 3rd and 4th, the Appenzeller railway transported 6,700 passengers; St. Gallen Gais Appenzell the same number, whilst

CITY SWISS CLUB.

La séance à été renvoyée

au 1^{er} octobre.

one electric line from Appenzell to Weissbad Wasserauen carried between 5-6,000 visitors. Apart from these, at least 3,000 cyclists toured the canton and all the innkeepers agreed that they had not seen such an influx for many years.

* * *

Restrictions on movements of foreigners in England.

The Defence Regulations made under the Emergency Powers Acts of 1939 and 1940 conferred upon the Minister of Home Security the right to declare by order any area in the United Kingdom to be a "Defence Area."

The whole of England is now a "Defence Area," and it is therefore the duty of every person to comply with any orders or instructions given by or on behalf of the Regional Commissioner for the purpose of meeting or hindering any actual or apprehended attack by an enemy. This includes any orders as to the removal of persons or property out of a certain area. It also includes power to issue orders regulating or prohibiting the entry of persons, vehicles or animals into such areas. All such orders are subject to the control of the Minister of Home Security.

Apart from numerous references to the air raids on Italy which have evidently been facilitated by crossing Swiss territory there is little news in our English contemporaries that deals with Swiss events. Some importance is attached to renewed tension with the Axis powers whose main grudge seems to be the assertion that the Swiss dailies reproduce rather freely "English news." We have received Swiss papers (about three weeks old) and a careful perusal certainly does not bear out this accusation, in fact the news from the other side occupies generally much more space due to the fact that two official communiqués figure against the English news. In some editions of a Geneva daily the German news is printed in bold type. Generally speaking the leading political articles are absent and we cannot fail to observe a tendency to refrain from utterances likely to hurt the susceptibilities of our friends across the Rhine. The following from the "*Manchester Guardian*," August 27th, probably explains the cause of the supposed tension :

The Nazi press and radio are once again using threatening language against the Government and people of Switzerland. The offence on this occasion is the appearance in various well-known newspapers, such as the "*Basler Nachrichten*," the "*Neue Zürcher Zeitung*," and now, apparently, the "*Journal de Genève*," of dispatches from their London correspondents reflecting the truth about the German air raids on England. That sort of thing, naturally, is most inconvenient for Goebbels and his lie-mongers who are out to inculcate all over the Continent the notion that, owing to the trail of destruction, the British people are giving way to panic and the whole life of the community is being dislocated. The same newspapers are also taken to task for failing to get excited about the "periodical violation of Swiss neutrality by aircraft of the R.A.F." The Swiss are not easily browbeaten. The authorities may have had to tighten up the press censorship and to take a number of illiberal

measures designed to preserve the formal status of neutrality. But everyone knows that the Swiss people, wedded to the cause of freedom, is no more neutral in thought than the American. With an Army of 600,000 mobilised and the protection of geography, with a civic tradition so deep-rooted that every man is his own Home Guard and takes his rifle with him to office or workshop, Switzerland will not give up her liberties tamely, sorely as she is tried.

* * *

Here is another article in a similar strain from the "*Evening Standard*," August 26th :—

Political observers in Switzerland are anxiously seeking to discover what plans the Axis may have in store for the only democratic republic left in Europe.

The Swiss like their little Confederation, and have no desire to exchange it for foreign control or totalitarian government.

Even now, most military observers believe the Swiss would not only fight if invaded on one or all frontiers, but would fight well.

Under existing circumstances the Axis Powers would not have to use guns and munitions to force the Swiss to submit to their dictates.

The Swiss not only live on world trade, they must import food and fuel for their 4,000,000 inhabitants.

Switzerland's only communications go through Germany, Italy or France — now occupied or in the power of the Axis.

If the Axis chose to squeeze, to cut off all communications leading into Switzerland, they could do so.

Foreign observers believe the Axis may deem Switzerland, with certain minor changes, a good political unit to keep as it is, guarding the passage of the Alps.

Italy, they say, certainly has an interest in keeping an independent State of tough mountain folk guarding most of her frontier.

Most Swiss agree now that much must be changed in the Switzerland that continues to exist amidst a Totalitarian Europe. The collapse of France has brought a number of movements to the fore.

Pro-Nazi groups, banned before the war, are distributing their propaganda secretly through German-speaking Switzerland.

Several "all-Swiss" movements have been started, including the Gothard League, in an effort to unite Swiss movements into a strong national movement.

Most important of all has been the less spectacular unification of old federal Council or Government of Seven.

Even the Swiss Socialists buried their political differences and joined with all the Conservative parties, so that the seven Federal councillors have the power to speak for the nation.

Foreign observers point out that the Press censorship has been tightened, although Swiss papers still have access to the publish the despatches of a

British news agency, as well as those of the official German, Italian and French news agencies.

But newspapers which were violently anti-Nazi before the war began have tempered their editorials. Some have been banned and copies of the newspapers seized.

The Swiss know that the future, whether the war is long or short, will be hard for them, but they are apparently willing to make any sacrifices for their continued independence, however restricted it may be in the future.

* * *

A report from the Geneva correspondent of "*The Times*," August 24th, seems to herald hard times in the coming winter:

In consequence of the economic situation, the Swiss Government have decided to impose new restrictions, principally with the object of reducing imports. The petrol ration is to be discontinued from next month for two classes of private motor-cars, involving about 4,000 vehicles.

Next winter, owing to the scarcity of fuel, shops will be allowed to open only from 8.30 a.m. until 7 p.m., and all cafés and restaurants are to close at 11 p.m. In all factories, offices, and schools heating will be stopped for 48 hours on Saturday and Sunday. From yesterday, the sale of certain foodstuffs is prohibited until October 13th, so as to save some of the stocks on which the country is now living, and to compel the public to use fresh vegetables and fruit.

* * *

The "*Manchester Evening News*," August 20th, sounds a very encouraging note about the effectiveness of our air force. If as stated our Government has paid as much as £13,000 for aircraft there are still some jolly war profiteers about, considering that the best English machines cost barely half that amount:

Switzerland's Air Force could give a good fighting account if the country was attacked from the air.

Switzerland is prepared. Its army is ready, and for a tiny country, ringed with the Alps as fortresses, it has a formidable air force.

The country has realised the need of air power as it has seen its powerful neighbour, Germany, annex adjoining countries.

Millions of pounds have been spent on enlarging and improving the Swiss Air Force.

In November, 1938, the Swiss Federal Government ordered from Germany a number of machines of the fighter type. These, now in use, are fitted with 1,100-h.p. engines and have a speed of 334 m.p.h., and can reach a ceiling of 15,000 feet in less than five minutes.

Each machine cost £13,000.

Since then the Swiss air force has been enlarged and a number of training machines were purchased both from this country and America.

Promotion in the Swiss army and air force is rapid. In the former any recruit can rise from the ranks to become a battalion commander.

Aeroplane manufacture has become an important armament industry in Switzerland.

In February last year the Federal Government decided to build an aeroplane factory at Zurich. Here, military and civil machines have been made.

* * *

Most of us are probably prepared to spend the last penny — if it has not gone west before — to celebrate our survival when this war is over, but the following from the "*Tablet*," August 24th, does not seem to involve any personal sacrifice. We prefer the offer of a member of our Colony to present new hats to some of his friends in a certain eventuality.

Supporting their democratic Government, in defence of the freedom and independence of Switzerland, the Swiss Hierarchy has issued a joint Pastoral Letter on the occasion of their annual conference, held in Solothurn this year, under the chairmanship of Mgr. Bieler, Bishop of Sitten. Not only in a military, but even more so in a spiritual sense, the pastoral says, must the neutrality of Switzerland be preserved.

The Bishops of Switzerland have made a vow to undertake a pilgrimage to the tomb of Blessed Nikolaus von der Flueh, near Sachseln, after the war, if their country is not only spared its ravages, but also can maintain its political and religious freedom. At the same time Mgr. Jelmini, Apostolic Administrator of the Canton of Tessin in Lugano, has informed the faithful of a vow he has taken with the full consent of his cathedral Chapter to build a votive church for Blessed Nikolaus von der Flueh, if Switzerland is spared the ravages of war and can preserve her freedom and independence.

BUNDESFEIER-ANSPRACHE DES GENERALS.

1. August 1291, 1. August 1940: Zwei Daten, Marksteine unserer Geschichte, die beide durch die "Arglist der Zeit" gekennzeichnet sind, heute wie damals.

Vor wenigen Tagen trafen sich auf dem Rütli die Kommandanten der Truppenkörper unserer Armee. Auge in Auge mit ihrem General versammelten sich 650 Offiziere aller Waffen, jeden Alters und jeden Grades, Angehörige verschiedener Religionen, Berufe und Sprachen, aber alles Brüder, alle geeint im gleichen Gedanken: zu dienen . . .

Auf dem blauen Hintergrunde des Sees flatterte die eidgenössische Fahne, das Wahrzeichen unserer staatlichen Unabhängigkeit; es war die Fahne des Urner Bataillons, begleitet von vier stämmigen Soldaten der Urschweiz, Nachkommen jener, die vor sechseinhalb Jahrhunderten auf dem gleichen Stück Boden den Eid geschworen haben, der uns heute noch bindet.

Die Landschaft sprach zu unsren Herzen und zu unserm Geiste. Diesem einzigen Fleck Erde entstieg ein wunderbarer Ruf: es war der Appell der Vorfahren, die sich zusammengefunden hatten, um uns den Weg zu ebnen.

Soldaten unserer Heimat, am Tage, da das 650. Jahr des eidgenössischen Bundes beginnt, ist es mir ein Bedürfnis, zu jedem einzelnen von euch zu sprechen.