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The Swiss Observer

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NEWS AT RANDOM

TO OUR SUBSCRIBERS.

The patience of our subscribers has been severely tried by our three weeks' silence and we hope they will acquit us of negligence if we have not replied to the numerous letters complaining about the non-receipt of our publication. After the sudden interruption through enemy action we had reason to believe that the damage would be repaired in a few days and that the printing works would return to normal activity.

It is our intention to go to press once in every fortnight only in order to lighten the heavy financial sacrifice caused by the lack of advertising matter and the high postage. The difficulty or inability of obtaining reliable news from our home country also suggests this course.

Trade negotiations between France and Switzerland were discussed by the Marseilles section of the Swiss Chamber of Commerce. It was pointed out that both countries were eager to facilitate the re-establishment of trade relations.

The Management of the Federal Railways has announced that the number of week-end passengers has greatly increased since the issue of cheap Sunday tickets.

Dr. Baumann, Head of the Federal Department for Justice and Police, speaking on the occasion of an assembly of lawyers, stressed the fact that a united and resolute people stood behind the Army. He also expressed the thanks of the whole Nation to the Army. Continuing, he said that the Swiss would bear themselves courageously and loyally in spite of tribulations and that the Press would continue to fulfil its duty of supplying impartial and neutral information. Furthermore, it had always been the custom for Switzerland to stand on a friendly footing with her neighbours.

The social democratic party of Canton Zürich assembled under the presidency of M. Henkeler. The president of the social democratic party, M. Oprecht, spoke in favour of the creation of a social democratic order and for the preservation of the freedom and independence of Switzerland.

The teacher's association made a resolution when it assembled in Olten, accepting the introduction of the preparatory military instruction.

The Borough of Zürich has authorised a number of credits for road constructions, etc., also a sum of about Frs.2,000,000 for School and gymnasium.

The President of the French Red Cross, M. Valéry-Radot, visited the International Red Cross in Geneva recently.

The General secretary underlined the importance of the collaboration of the Red Cross and the League of the Nation Red Cross.

The Federal Council undertook the examination of the second report on measures taken for the security of the country. The report was passed.

The annual report of the political Department was accepted, also that of the Department of the Interior.

M. Paderewski has left Morges for Lisbon, whence he will go to the United States.

M. Stampfli, Federal Councillor, spoke on the subject of trade relations with foreign countries, particularly with Germany.

An attempt to institute a coach service between Lisbon and Switzerland has not yet been successful.

Swiss Radio announced the other day that after consultation the Federal Council had decided that it was not necessary to effect any change in the relations between Switzerland and the Soviet Republic.

National Councillor Gafner, Bernese representative of the peasant party, and National Councillor Troillet, representative of the Valais have proposed to unite all the federal agricultural services under one management in order to help the peasants.

The federal military Department insists on the necessity for the construction of more air-raid shelters and for developing the anti-aircraft defences. Federal Councillor Minger, in a speech made the other day, voted thanks to the cantons for all they have done in that direction.

* * *

On the 23rd September a violent storm blew up over Frauenfeld and many orchards were damaged.

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The Swiss Radio announced that they are trying a shorter wave emission on 25.28 metres for mid-day reception, evening wavelength remains unchanged. The Swiss Legation would be interested if listeners would report on their various experiences.

* * *

The work on the double track between Milan and Domodossola has been continued and the lines between Arona Stressa Vogogna and Domodossola are nearly finished. It is likely that the second track can be used before the end of this year. This will constitute a great advantage, especially for goods traffic. The sector between Arona and Gallarate which measures 26 km., has to be left in its present condition for the time being. The preparations for the electrification of the whole line between Milan and Domodossola (125 km.) are going on and it is hoped that they will be finished by the end of 1941.

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The Federal Council has announced a Decree with regard to the protection of workers who have been doing military service. The Decree establishes that no worker can be dismissed during his active service period and during the seven days after his return to his job. In the same way, if notice has been given, but has not become effective by the time the soldier takes up military duties, its validity will be postponed for duration of his time of service. Exceptions can only be made if it is proved that employer has no means of offering work to his employees whatsoever.

* * *

In view of the various rumours published recently in foreign papers about partition plans regarding Switzerland, recent comments of the Italian press are of some interest. Reviewing the speech made by Federal Councillor Celio on the occasion of the opening of an exhibition in Locarno, the Italian papers have underlined a passage in which he mentioned that all our neighbours have carefully respected the independence of the Swiss Confederation.

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The *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* reports from Geneva that apart from the direct road route Annecy-Geneva which is open to goods traffic, a car-service has been established between Annecy and La Roche-sur-Foron. This has been necessitated by the interruption of the railway line between Annecy and La Roche after the dynamiting of the railway bridge Laignat in Savoy. It is hoped that this bridge will be re-opened by the end of October, at least for a limited traffic of goods.

The neighbourhood of the Swiss Legation (London) has been bombed during the last week more than once; and twice a bomb has done some damage to the building. For the time being the activities of the Legation continue at Montagu Place.

It seems to be the general opinion that the news received here via the Swiss radio stations is very often of a nature to induce the listener to switch off. It is evident that the Swiss announcers are compelled to broadcast certain news items which possess a foreign propaganda flavour obnoxious to us over here. Though we should not like to maintain that the English press reports on Swiss topics in an unbiassed manner we believe that such reports are genuine and free from outside interference.

The well-informed weekly "*News Review*," September 26th, dwells on the new "orientation" which manifests itself in our country:

In racially-tolerant Svizzera, Schweiz or Suisse, the people draw the line at Nazis.

Those German-Swiss who have grouped themselves openly under the Swastika have for years been banned as political fungus not natural to the soil.

Great was the alarm of Zurich's burghers when President and Foreign Minister Marcel Pilet-Golaz allowed Hitler to bore a series of holes in his country's traditional neutrality last week.

First he gave an audience to three Brown Sheep, Ernst Hoffman, Max Leo Keller and poet Jakob Schaffner. Effect was as if King George had received Sir Oswald Mosley at the Palace.

No one might have known anything about the meeting if the Swiss National Movement, which is the covering name for Nazis, had not issued a communique stating that the men had "informed the President about the movement's political aims."

"The conversation," the announcement explained, "lasted for one and a-half hours, and represents a first step towards a satisfactory solution of political conditions in Switzerland" — presumably the lifting of the Government's ban on the Party.

This typical Nazi firework was let off at the moment when a plenipotentiary meeting of national councillors was being held in Berne.

The *Neue Zürcher* reported a "strong degree of uneasiness" among them. President Pilet-Golaz's intention to have a friendly chat with the Nazis, it hinted, was known to the Government, but the text of the communiqué had "aroused some astonishment even with the President himself."

Astonishment grew to consternation when the head of the State next:

(a) raised the ban on Hitler's official *Voelkischer Beobachter*, with a wink at the fact that all Swiss newspapers are forbidden in the Reich;

(b) allowed the "German Labour Front" to stage its first open meeting in Zurich. Star speaker

was Dr. Otto Carl Albrecht Koecher, Nazi Minister in Berne.

Shocked as were the peace-loving Swiss, they saw no direct threat to their independence.

German troops no longer have any need to use their passes to overcome France. If they were to overrun Switzerland for the sake of its butter and cheese, they would be closing one of the few remaining trap doors through which goods can be smuggled into the Reich.

Using local needs as the excuse, cargoes can be imported through the port of Marseilles, in unoccupied France, and routed through Switzerland.

* * *

On the same topic the "*Evening Standard*," September 19th, says the following:

The action of Dr. Pilet-Golaz, the Swiss President, in granting an audience on September 12th to the leaders of the totalitarian Swiss Nationalist movement has aroused considerable criticism in political circles.

Four parties, representing 126 out of 191 seats in the National Council — the lower house — issued a statement expressing their "regret" for the President's action.

The declaration said that the parties were unable to understand why the audience to "representatives of a movement whose activity has been hitherto hostile to democratic institutions was justified by political necessity."

"Our political organisations have no need for any such 'appeasement.'"

A call for the President's resignation, in order to re-establish the confidence of the people and the army, was made by the Independent Minority Party.

The National Zeitung of Basle expressed surprise that Hitler's Voelkischer Beobachter was readmitted to Switzerland without a corresponding relaxation of the ban on Swiss papers in Germany.

* * *

A more temperate view is expressed by "*The Times*," September 24th:

The Swiss Federal Government have lifted the ban on the German Government's organ *Voelkischer Beobachter*, which has been prohibited since 1934 in retaliation for the refusal to allow the import of Swiss newspapers into Germany. Official circles in Berne state that no pressure was exercised, and that the decision was freely taken with a view to furthering good relations between the two countries. Meanwhile, the German ban on Swiss newspapers remains complete, and official circles explain that as Germany is at war the measure is purely military. But the German ban was decided on when Germany was not at war.

At the annual meeting of the Association of the Swiss Press in Berne M. Feldmann, a member of the National Council, urged the right of the Swiss people to enjoy freedom of opinion, while at the

same time taking into account State necessities. It was necessary that the State should help the Press in fulfilling its national task by supporting it with rapid and complete information, and by opposing desires and demands which ran contrary to the mission of the Press in helping the political and spiritual defence of the country. This last sentence refers to the suggested scheme for providing for some sort of permanent Press control by the State, or creation of some body which would guide the Press. Both schemes though very vague, have not met with journalistic approval here.

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The provision of the necessities of life is one of the most difficult problems in our country. Coal is, of course, in the front line and while huge quantities pass over the Swiss railway system into Italy an exorbitant price is demanded for the moderate requirements of our own country. According to "*The Times*," 25th September:

Important German coal consignments from the Ruhr Basin are daily arriving at La Chaux-de-Fonds, says the local newspaper *Effort*. In exchange for the coal Switzerland is to deliver 30,000 head of cattle to Germany, and 15 truck-loads had already left La Chaux-de-Fonds last Wednesday for Germany.

* * *

A Swiss trade mission has recently sojourned in London; its head was Dr. Keller, a St. Gall professor of economics. He was already in this country last November on a similar mission when he took contact with some members of the Swiss colony. "*The Times*," 17th September, has the following:

A Swiss trade mission — led by Dr. Keller, of the Department of Public Economy — has come to London for friendly discussions with the British Government. Earlier this year a War Trade Agreement set down the principles of Anglo-Swiss commerce, guaranteeing full freedom for Swiss commerce while prohibiting Swiss re-exports to Germany. It was working both profitably and smoothly until, almost overnight, Switzerland's position was changed. Italy's entry into the war, and the French collapse, made her an island of neutrality, set in the midst of countries either hostile to Great Britain or dependent on the enemies of Great Britain.

On the British side the problem is plain. How can we make sure that Germany does not benefit from Switzerland's still privileged position as a neutral? So far in the war the record of Swiss imports has provided one of the clearest answers to German propaganda. The Germans have wearied the world with tales that the British blockade is starving all European countries. In point of fact Swiss imports (like those of Denmark, Norway, and Holland until they were overrun) sharply increased from the moment the war crisis developed. While Germany was prating of a fresh and joyous *Blitzkrieg*, Great Britain warned the neutrals that it was going to be a long war, encouraged them to lay in stocks, and (always with the proviso against re-

exports to Germany) actually sent stocks or helped them to go to the neutral countries.

So far as Switzerland has been deprived of normal imports she has been deprived by Germany or by German-dependent countries. So far as she has benefited, she has benefited by British ships and by British help. In fact, four-fifths of the Swiss imports have come through the British blockade.

Swiss imports of wheat show that process the most plainly. In 1937 the countries now within the German Reich sent Switzerland nearly 30,000 metric tons of wheat. In the first 10 months of the war they sent 24 tons — less than a thousandth part of the previous total. From Europe as a whole Swiss imports of wheat fell from 228,000 metric tons (normal full year) to 130,000 metric tons. Yet, in spite of these falls, Swiss wheat imports greatly rose during the first 10 war months. That rise was due to a single fact. Imports coming from overseas — that is, from British territory or through the British blockade — rose from 228,000 (normal full year) to 454,000 metric tons. In spite of war, blockade, and every difficulty of transport, Switzerland bought 100,000 more tons of wheat than during a normal 10 months.

In other commodities the same rise can be noted — the same lie to German propaganda can be given. Textiles (of special value to the Swiss because of the worsened quality of woollen goods in the Axis countries) went up by 60 per cent. in the first 10 months of the war. Cereals as a whole increased by 300,000 metric tons over an average year; sugar by 50,000 tons; fruit and vegetables for canning and other staple foodstuffs by 110,000 tons; coffee, tea, cocoa by 900 tons; animal fodder by 150,000 tons.

As the Swiss consumption has not increased, her stocks must now be modestly like Pharaoh's granaries. At any rate, Switzerland, left to herself, has enough to maintain a good level of health and well-being in the country for many a long day.

Now, with Switzerland's external communications under enemy scrutiny or control, and with the increasing lack of foodstuffs and raw materials in the Axis countries (particularly in Italy) it becomes necessary to examine very carefully any supplies consigned to Switzerland from overseas. Although, when compared with German and Italian needs, Swiss stocks may be small, further imports — of necessity through enemy-occupied territory — must tantalize and tempt the unscrupulous enemy. It is to discuss the possibilities of meeting this situation, without risking a leak in the British blockade, that Dr. Keller has come to London.

Since then it has been officially stated that two cargo steamers loaded with goods destined for Switzerland have obtained right of way past Gibraltar for Italian ports.

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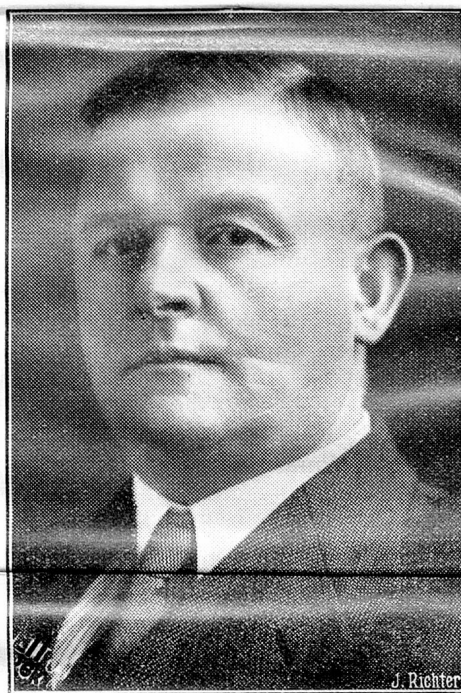
The "*Financial Times*," 6th September, brings this interesting item:

An attempt by the Swiss Aluminium Company of Lausanne — one of the world's leading producers — to transfer operations to the United States has been blocked by the Nazis, who are exercising a

strong influence on the Swiss Government, according to the "*Wall Street Journal*."

Official quarters in Washington believe that the Germans did not want production moved to a place where it was available to the British and that Germany has her own ideas about the company's future.

Company officials in New York revealed that there would be ample supplies of bauxite for aluminium production in the United States, but did not disclose their source.



FEDERAL COUNCILLOR STAMPFLI.

On the 18th July, Dr. Stampfli was elected to the position previously held by the now deceased Federal Councillor Obrecht.

Dr. Stampfli was born on the 3rd December, 1884, at Büren (Canton Solothurn); the son of a prominent local school teacher. He went to the Cantonal school and later distinguished himself, both in Zurich and Göttingen, in the study of economics, insurance and law. After 2 years in an insurance business in Karlsruhe, he turned to politics, and was in charge of the "*Oltener Tagblatt*" until 1918, although even in 1912 he had been elected to the Cantonal Council, where in 1922 he was elected President, and remained so until 1937.

From 1918 until 1921 he was the very competent secretary of the Solothurner Board of Trade. He then became secretary of the Rollschen Eisenwerke, at Gerlafingen, where he gave most of his attention to the welfare of the staff.

From 1931 he was for 2 years on the board of the Solothurner Kantonalbank, and served in several other administrative capacities both in commerce and in local state institutions. Outstanding talent, integrity, sincerity and practical ability contributed to his being elected to the Federal Council.