

Zeitschrift: The Swiss observer : the journal of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK

Herausgeber: Federation of Swiss Societies in the United Kingdom

Band: - (1940)

Heft: 947

Rubrik: Prepaid subscription rates

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The Swiss Observer

FOUNDED BY MR. P. F. BOEHINGER.

The Official Organ of the Swiss Colony in Great Britain.

Telephone: Clerkenwell 2321/2.

EDITED WITH THE CO-OPERATION OF THE LONDON COLONY.

Published every Friday at 23, LEONARD ST., E.C.2.

Telegrams: FREPRINCO, LONDON.

VOL. 22—No. 947.

LONDON, 13th JANUARY, 1940.

PRICE 3d.

PREPAID SUBSCRIPTION RATES.

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(Swiss subscriptions may be paid into Postscheck-Konto Basle V 5718).



NEWS AT RANDOM

Dr. Marcel Pilet-Golaz, the new President of the Confederation, had a busy time on New Year's day. The first caller to offer him the compliments of the season was General Guisan; he was followed by the heads of the local administration in Berne who rolled up in turn at the Palais Federal in the traditional two-in-hand landaus. Then came the diplomatic corps with their retinue and picturesque uniforms including the papal Nuntius, Msgr. Bernardini. The spectacle which lasted nearly three hours was, of course, witnessed by thousands of bystanders.

* * *

The fear that petrol rationing and high taxation will result in a large number of cars being withdrawn from service has prompted Colonel Henri Valloton to make a spirited appeal to all motorists. He maintains that it is a patriotic duty to renew licences and keep cars in a proper state of repair as they represent a valuable reserve at the disposal of the army command in case of an emergency. In addition, the bulk of the 50,000 men employed in the motor trade are likely to keep their jobs.

* * *

At their first meeting last week since mobilisation the local council of Mézières has elected by acclamation General and Madame Guisan honorary citizens of the commune; the General was born in Mézières.

* * *

One of the smaller halls from the National Exhibition in Zurich (Küchliwirtschaft) is being acquired by Schwyz which has for over thirty years been debating the question of building an assembly room. The hall will hold over a thousand people and is to be erected on a concrete foundation.

* * *

A sum of Frs.150,000 has been bequeathed to local philanthropic institutions by Frau Dietrich-Wild who died recently at St. Gall, at the age of 84.

* * *

The "Höllegg," a spot between Alpnachstad and Stansstad on the lake of Lucerne, was the scene of a

tragic accident. The wife of Director Zimmermann, of the Pilatus railway, was driving home late at night on an icy road, when, passing this dangerous bend she lost control of the car. A search party found the car the next morning embedded in the lake with the bodies of Frau Zimmermann and her nine year old son.

* * *

The students at the Zurich university made a collection in favour of the Finnish Red Cross and handed the amount to the Finnish Consul as a Xmas present.

* * *

The Swiss Legation at Bryanston Square is now receiving the final touches caused by the change-over. The departure of the retiring Minister has been delayed on account of an attack of influenza which confined Madame Paravicini to her room. In the meantime M. and Mme. Thurnheer are spending a few days at the near-by Dorchester Hotel and this is how a reporter of the "Evening News" (January 8th) hails the arrival of the new Minister:

"During the black-out last evening, a car drove up to the Dorchester with M. N. Thurnheer, the new Swiss Minister, and his wife. They had come from Tokio by way of Berne, and it was their first glimpse of war-time London.

Eager to see more than they had from the windows of the taxi during their drive from Victoria station, they borrowed the hotel porter's torch and walked round the block while their luggage was being taken up to their suite. And during this short tour of Park-lane, the new Minister got a piece of grit in his eye and decided to return to the hotel!

It was in their suite that I talked to the newest member of London's foreign Diplomatic Corps. M. Thurnheer, short, kindly, with close-cropped moustaches, speaks English without an accent. So does his wife, who is tall, of fair complexion, and very lovely; she is likely to prove an excellent hostess.

I asked if this was their first experience of a black-out, and they told me that they had been in two others — a try-out in Tokio and one in Berne.

M. Thurnheer is a professional diplomat. Just after the outbreak of the last war he was sent to the Swiss Legation in Berlin. This time he is going to see the war from the other side.

"Whenever I come to London," he said, "I feel I am coming home."

His wife added: "We always spend our holidays here and have already a host of friends."