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The Swiss Observer

FOUNDED BY MR. P. F. BOEHRINGER.

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NEWS AT RANDOM

An animated controversy is noticeable in the Swiss press and among the political parties about the increase of the members of the Federal Council, suggested by the socialist party. Whilst there seems to exist no general demand for a larger "cabinet," the opinion is freely expressed that the replacement and election of a new Federal Councillor follows orthodox lines, thus making it difficult for other cantons and political minorities to secure one of the seven seats available.

Colonel Jacob Huber has been appointed Chief of Staff in place of Colonel Labhart, who has taken over the command of an army corps.

The position of compatriots residing in Germany has been raised by a question in the National Council. The Federal Council admitted that through the prohibition of Swiss newspapers in Germany the Swiss in the latter country had become somewhat isolated and alienated; official steps had, however, been taken to improve the Position as a result of which the ban had been lifted in favour of the "Schweizer Echo," the official organ of the N.S.H.

Contrary to a previous announcement it is now officially stated that none of the Swiss ordinarily residing in Southern Tyrol (Italian) are affected by the emigration decree.

During last year 2,093 foreigners have been naturalised in Switzerland. More than half (1,313) hail from Germany and about 25% (488) from Italy; two Britishers only are included in the total.

What has been described as the smallest electric motor in the world has been constructed by engineer Huguenin in Tour-le-Peilz; it contains 42 parts and weighs 0.06 grams.

A.R.P. structures are occupying the minds of authorities even in the canton of the Grisons, which

one might consider immune from this danger on account of its geographical position and altitude. Chur alone has spent under this heading something like Frs.300,000.

A former bank clerk and treasurer of several local societies and clubs in Colombier has been sentenced to nine years hard labour for having helped himself occasionally to small sums from the funds entrusted to his care; the aggregate of these helpings during the last ten years exceeded Frs.100,000.

The snapping of the rope was responsible for a serious accident when a party was negotiating the descent from the Dent de Lys. Three climbers were flung into a couloir with fatal results; they are the Rev. Davet, Chaplain from Fribourg, his twenty-four year old niece Davet, from Geneva, and a boy named Aubert.

Avalanches by order is the subject of a message distributed by the "Associated Press" to provincial papers; here it is:—

Given a certain quantity of snow conveniently placed on an Alpine slope, one officer in every Swiss Army mountain and field battalion knows how to greet an invader with avalanches.

By the command of General Henri Guisan, Commander-in-Chief of the Swiss Army, one officer from every battalion has been to an avalanche school, where for two weeks he learns all that Swiss

CITY SWISS CLUB.

Messieurs les membres sont avisés que

L'ASSEMBLEE MENSUELLE

aura lieu Mardi le 9 Avril au local du Club, Restaurant PAGANI, 42, Great Portland Street, W.1. et sera précédée d'un dîner à 7h. très précises (prix 5/-).

ORDRE DU JOUR :

Procès-verbal.	Election des Vérificateurs des Comptes.
Admissions.	Election des Fidei-commissaires du Club.
Démotions.	House Fund.
Rapport du Comité.	Réunion d'été.
Rapport des Vérificateurs des Comptes.	Divers.
Election du Comité.	

Pour faciliter les arrangements, le Comité recommande aux participants de s'annoncer au plus tôt à Monsieur P. F. Boehringer, 23, Leonard Street, E.C.2. (Téléphone: Clerkenwell 2321/2).

mountaineers and artillerymen can teach him about sliding snow.

There are two such schools — one near Davos and the other on the Weissfluhjoch, a mountain near Davos, some 8,500 feet high. Both have laboratories and film rooms.

It is almost impossible to go far into Switzerland without going through a mountain pass, and many such passes have steep sides which hold snow almost all the year round.

Students in the avalanche schools learn where to shoot at an Alp side covered with snow to start an avalanche in a certain direction. They learn, too, how to help the snow along by artificial means if avalanches are not in season. They even receive instructions about how to start an avalanche of rocks and dirt when there is no snow available. Instruction also includes courses on how to ascertain the danger of natural avalanches and how to delay them until such time as the enemy appears.

"There's one thing about an avalanche," said one of the instructors, "no matter how modern and how well-equipped an invading army may be, they would find it difficult to fight an avalanche."

NEUTRALITY AND ITS CRITICS.

When a country is engaged in a deadly war, public opinion soon becomes critical of the position of neutrals. Deeply convinced of the righteousness of their cause, the belligerents cannot witness without impatience the attitude of those who wish to remain out of the conflict. They soon feel inclined to twist the meaning of the Gospel's words, and to say that those who are not with them are against them, or, worse still, that neutrality is the child of fear. Thanks to the fair-minded statements of the Prime Minister and to the moderating influence of the principal papers, these feelings have only seldom found expression since September last. There have been, however, during the last weeks, a few speeches and articles which may be considered as danger signals. We cannot, in the light of previous experience, rule out the possibility that an anti-neutral prejudice may develop in this country. Such a prejudice might do a great

deal of harm and affect the deep sympathy which exists between the Allied and Neutral peoples. The United States, Italy and Japan are not so directly concerned. The situation of the smaller States of Western Europe is far more critical and far more likely to be criticised.

The political régime adopted by these small States enjoyed a greater prestige in the nineteenth century than it does to-day, because, after the Napoleonic wars, neutrality was acknowledged as the necessary complement of the balance of power. The political system in Europe depended on the relative strength of the large States and on the non-interference of the small States. Peace was maintained, on several occasions, because the aggressive Power realised that war involved too many risks, especially as long as Great Britain acted as arbiter between the parties. Any breach of neutrality was strongly discouraged, since it disturbed the balance. Switzerland requested to be granted perpetual neutrality at the Congress of Vienna. Fifteen years later, neutrality was imposed upon the new independent Belgian kingdom by the delegates of the five big Powers gathered in London. It was considered at the time as a somewhat utopian device for preventing a European conflict. Its remarkable success silenced the critics. The same status was applied later, on several occasions, as the best means of ensuring the independence of small and peaceful nations, while providing a political barrier between powerful rivals.

How is it that this régime which was so much in favour up to the end of the last century, and contributed to localise the Franco-Prussian War in 1870, is now looked upon by many people as a mere device to shirk political and moral responsibilities? The violation of the Belgian frontier in 1914 is no doubt a contributory cause of this change of outlook, but the main reason is the substitution, in 1919, of a general international organisation for power-politics, and of the League of Nations for the balance of power.

For twenty years we have ceased to think in terms of *Real Politik*, and have fixed our attention on the Covenant, its sanctions, its regional pacts and its collective security. The failure of these new systems is too recent to allow us to readjust our judgment to the present state of affairs, which is, from the historian's point of view, a return to the nineteenth century policy, an attempt to restore the balance which has been seriously upset by recent developments. Neutrality is no longer considered by the general public as a natural guarantee of independence and security for the small European States, but as an abnormal régime which is no longer justified by modern circumstances. People may recognise that small and exposed countries cannot be expected to take part in the present conflict, but at the back of their mind lurks the suspicion that failure to do so is a confession of weakness. These critics do not even appreciate the heavy sacrifices made by the Neutrals in order to ensure their selfdefence. The larger these forces, the more reason there seems to be for their being enlisted in the service of the "common cause." Disappointed at the break-up of the new system, people are reluctant to acknowledge again the old system. After the signature of the Briand-Kellogg Pact in 1928, Mr. Stimson declared that neutrality was "obsolete." It is now cold-shouldered by many who believed that this pact was not worth the paper upon which it was written.

SCHWEIZERBUND (Swiss Club)

74, CHARLOTTE STREET, W.1.

Annual Dinner & Ball

FRIDAY, 19th APRIL, 1940.

In the Chair :
THE SWISS MINISTER.

Reception 7.30 p.m. Extension till 2 a.m.

Tickets 6/6 each.