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The Swiss Observer

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NEWS AT RANDOM

The Federal Council has designated Prof. Haab (Basle) to take the place of the late Prof. W. Burkhardt at the permanent tribunal at The Hague; the other three Swiss members are Prof. Eug. Borel, Prof. Max Huber and Federal Judge Plinio Bolla.

The National Council has passed by 71 votes to 33 the Finance Bill which introduces a number of special taxes for a period of ten years to pay for the cost of the present mobilisation; features are a capital levy and a sales tax of 2%. The bill has encountered considerable criticism which explains the many abstentions among the 187 National Councillors.

Over 1,100 Exhibitors booked practically all the available space at the 24th Basle Fair which was opened last Saturday in traditional Basle festival weather, snow and rain being the "ordre du jour." The attendance during the first few days is said to exceed last year's figures though buyers from Great Britain will be generally missing.

Possible evacuation from town districts along the Rhine frontier is bringing temporary prosperity to some of the Alpine valleys; in the Obersimmenthal, for instance, all the holiday hostels and summer chalets have been let out on short leases.

Federal Councillor Vallotton, who it will be remembered spent some time in Finland during the Russian invasion, has tabled a question in the lower chamber asking for the reasons why the communist party and its activities has not been prohibited. In the meantime the publication of the bi-weekly, "Pilori," edited by the irresponsible Georges Oltramare, has been suspended for three months by order of the military press control. This Geneva communist excels in glorifying bolshevist maxims and occasionally hurls tirades against Great Britain. Responsible for the present interdiction is an article in the last issue when he ridiculed Swiss neutrality; "when accounts will be settled in Europe" he stated "the world will remember that Switzerland consistently worked against a peaceful settlement."

Railway traffic to and from Berne was temporarily interrupted when a large timber yard (G. Lanz) in Ostermundigen caught fire. The local fire brigade had to call in the help of the motorised unit from Berne and were also assisted by a company of soldiers.

An amount of Frs.300,000 in addition to oil paintings and valuable Asiatic curios has been bequeathed to his native town St. Gall by Ernst Schürpf; the interest is to be applied by the local museum authorities towards the purchase of paintings.

Another large industrial concern in the eastern part of our country, the Aluminium A. G. of Neuhausen, has transferred its administration further south, the offices being now at Lausanne-Ouchy.

A veteran of the frontier occupation of 1870/71, Giovanni Bernasconi, has died in Bioggio at the age of 94.

Frau Obrecht-Emch, the wife of Federal Councilor Obrecht, died in Berne at the age of 56½ after a prolonged illness.

The managers of a Basle building society ("Spadag"), founded some six years ago, were each sentenced to $2\frac{1}{2}$ years imprisonment for having circulated fictitious balance sheets, thereby inducing small investors to deposit their savings or take up shares.

Nearly 800 Swiss mail bags containing postal matter to South and Central America were destroyed or lost in the Italian S/S Orazio, which recently came to grief in the Mediterranean.

Fire broke out last Sunday in the Stadtkirche, Glaris, while a catholic service was in progress. The roof, choir and aisle became a prey of the flames leaving only the two steeples intact. The church was built soon after the great fire in Glaris in 1861 at a cost of Frs.650,000 for the use of both confessions — catholic and protestant.

AN INTERESTING BROADCAST.

We understand that the B.B.C. programme of April 20th contains an item entitled "Music from Geneva." This is in charge of Mr. A. J. Symons, a British author, who is an ardent collector of Swiss musical boxes and possesses some of the finest specimens. This concert is timed to be on the air at 3.10 p.m.