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NEWS AT RANDOM

In a message issued to the troops last week General Guisan said: "Nobody can conceive without horror a foreign occupation, and the Swiss can and must defend themselves. The topography of the country is a first-rate ally, and the new methods of warfare will not take the Swiss unprepared. The greater part of our defensive positions are in mountainous and wooded land and therefore concealed from aircraft and difficult for tanks to reach. To defeatist propaganda every one should oppose the spirit which animated the mountain-folk, who in 1291, when left to themselves, placed their confidence in themselves and in God. Thus will the country be strong and the Army quite ready. One order is ample: 'Hold fast!'"

* * *

The Federal Council is asking Parliament for a credit of just under 50 million francs to cover the cost of munitions and military equipment during 1941.

* * *

Special week-end tickets at single fare are issued to the families of mobilised soldiers who will be allowed to visit the paterfamilias wherever he may be stationed.

* * *

Another of those judgments which to us over here seem to be bizarre has been given by the Federal Tribunal; it concerns the church tax which is levied in most of the cantons for the benefit of the respective denominations with the limitation, however, that nobody is to contribute to a church of which he is not an adherent. In the canton Berne, limited companies have been so assessed; thirty-one of these companies appealed to our highest court to test the validity of the imposition. The appeal has been dismissed and business firms in addition to the individual members will have to pay this "Kirchensteuer."

* * *

Some fifty years ago the Bürgenstock railway constructed an extension to an existing water supply installation. The canton Nidwalden has now discovered that the company omitted at the time to apply for the necessary authority or sanction and decreed a fine of Frs.500. As the company refused to pay, the

Federal Tribunal had to adjudicate; it declared the imposition arbitrary and washed out the cantonal summons.

* * *

On the recommendation of the Federal Council most of the cantons have made the possession of identity cards with photo compulsory.

* * *

Women drivers in the several auxiliary services of our army are being handed the following notice when taking up their duties: "You are in the army now; leave lipstick and powder-puffs at home; bring scrubbing brushes instead."

* * *

The aviation accident in the Muota valley in which seven of our best pilots lost their lives in autumn 1938 is to be commemorated by a monument. A prize contest was opened for sculptors of the inner cantons to submit designs or models. Of the ten proposals submitted the jury awarded the first prize to sculptor Bläsi of Lucerne; the model depicts an alpine shepherd watching the sky with up-lifted arms as if to protect himself.

* * *

The German station in Basle being no more available for coal imports, this fuel now passes the frontier at Singen near Konstanz. The coal trucks are then despatched to Basle for distribution over the country in the usual way. Coal so re-despatched to the eastern part of Switzerland carries a correspondingly higher freight charge. The Swiss railway system is said to be extremely busy with goods traffic and on some of the electrified lines the old steam locomotives have had to be put into service again.

* * *

The schoolboys in Horgen (Zurich) collected in one day no less than 32 tons of waste paper.

* * *

A lorry carrying 30 soldiers came to grief on the road near Tiefenkastel (Grisons); Corp. Walter Secchi, from Zurich, was killed, six soldiers were badly injured and sixteen others slightly. The cause of the accident is not known.

* * *

F. E. Crowe, a leading figure in the international forwarding business, died in Geneva, at the age of 73. Born in Romford (Essex) he was educated in Basle where his father represented a number of English railway and shipping companies. The deceased was identified with the well-known firm bearing his name as well as the Transport A. G. Charles Natural, in Geneva. He was one of the founders of the British Chamber of Commerce in Basle, of which he was for a number of years president; his activities in furthering