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# The Swiss Observer

FOUNDED BY MR. P. F. BOEHRINGER.

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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

Anglo-Swiss trade relations earned him the Order of the British Empire (O.B.E.).

\* \* \*

As there is no immediate prospect of the postmen mobilised for active service returning to do their rounds, many of the local postal authorities are training members of the fair sex for this purpose. In Berne and Zurich petty-coated letter carriers with soft felt hat adorned with the post horn and wearing a water-proof cape have already made their appearance.

\* \* \*

Several violations of Swiss territory by German aircraft have been confirmed by the army command. On June 1st German bombers were seen over the Jura, one of them being shot down by a Swiss patrol and came to earth at Tessenberg (Lignières); soon afterwards another one was attacked and descended in flames over French territory. On the following day, Sunday, another German bomber was shot down near Yverdon. On Tuesday afternoon, June 4th, our air forces chased another squadron of German fliers of which two or three are said to have crashed on the French side of the frontier. One of our own pilots, Lieut. Rudolf Rickenbacher, was shot down and killed. In these encounters five German airmen lost their lives; after a military ceremony in Neuchâtel they were transported under a guard of honour to the German frontier. In the early hours of Wednesday morning (June 5th) a number of bombs were dropped on the road from Kreuzlingen to Tegerwilen, causing damage to the surface. An investigation is proceeding, but the occurrence is connected with the allied raid on the near-by Zeppelin base in progress at the same time.

\* \* \*

*The following is taken from the English press, no official confirmation from Swiss sources being in our possession.*

"The Times," June 10th. Just before noon on Sunday, a Swiss observation aeroplane was attacked by surprise by six German machines and shot down near Alle. Its two occupants, both officers, were killed. The attack took place over Porrentruy, 10 miles inside the Swiss frontier. Shortly afterwards a German squadron was seen over Saignelégier, in the same region, flying southward. To-day also, during a fight above the Chasseral mountain, 10 miles west of Bienne, one of the best Swiss pilots, Lieutenant

Homberger, was hit in the lungs by two bullets, but succeeded in landing on the nearest aerodrome. He is expected to recover.

A German machine which flew over Porrentruy was compelled by Swiss chaser aircraft to land in the Jura mountains, north of Solothurn, and its two occupants have been interned. Another German machine which crossed the frontier was chased into the Solothurn Jura and compelled to land near Triengen, where it burst into flames.

"Daily Telegraph," June 12th. Four persons were killed and 19 injured when unidentified 'planes dropped bombs in Switzerland to-day. An Army communiqué stated:

"Early to-day there were several violations of Swiss territory by foreign 'planes. So far as can be ascertained one bomb dropped near a school at Renens, Lausanne, and several others were dropped near Dailens. Five bombs were dropped near Geneva."

The bombs near Geneva dropped in the working-class suburb of Carouge, near the French frontier. The drone of 'planes aroused the curiosity of residents, who left their beds to find out what was happening. A Swiss soldier and a woman were killed and 18 persons were injured.

## WHAT WE THINK.

The entry of Italy into the War has made matters for Switzerland considerably more difficult. As in 1914/1918 she is now surrounded by warring nations, a little oasis amidst a wilderness of desolation and destruction.

No doubt our Federal Government in Berne can be trusted to guide our country firmly and wisely in these troublesome times, and without fear or favour. Whilst we have no misgivings on this score it would be foolish to disguise the fact that there are dangers ahead, both in the economical and political sphere, and that it will require cool heads and steady hands to steer the ship of state through the stormy seas ahead.

There are the vital questions of food, minerals, coal and oil. Up till now supplies have been obtained through Mediterranean ports, both French and Italian, but it remains to be seen how long these routes can be kept open, likewise the artery from the Balkans through the Vorarlberg and coal from Germany.

Doubtless, Switzerland has accumulated as much stock as possible of all these things, but unless arrangements can be made for supplies to be maintained regularly the economical position of Switzerland would soon become precarious.

Whilst Switzerland will resist any infringement of her neutrality with all her might and to the utmost limit of her economical and military resources, let us hope and pray that she may be kept free from actual warfare and all the horrors and misery this would entail.

In these difficult times, our thoughts naturally go out to our kith and kin in the dear old Homeland to whom we send fraternal greetings and our most ardent wishes for a safe deliverance from all difficulties

F.I.

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