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The Swiss Observer

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NEWS AT RANDOM

The following news items are collected from a variety of sources as since our last issue no newspapers have been received from Switzerland the latest daily being dated January 7th.

A report of the Department for Public Economy, concerning old age pensions and social services recently came up for discussion by the Federal Council. The Government have a sum of Frs.18,000,000 at their disposal for such purposes, covering the period up to December 31st, 1941. From then on up to 1945 the funds at their disposal will not exceed Frs. 12,000,000. This sum represents in part the income under the Old Age Insurance scheme and Frs.4.5 million are expected from the administration of the alcohol monopoly. The Federal Council have invited the Department for Public Economy to submit proposals as to the best use that could be made of the available funds.

Customs Revenue in January 1941 show with 13.6 million Francs a reduction of 6.8 million Francs as against January of the previous year. In the same way the loss in December 1940 compared to the previous year amounted to 12.3 million Francs. The comparison between the yearly income of 1939 and 1940 shows a reduction from 305.3 million to 230.6 million respectively.

The Federal Council has authorised a Grant of Frs.4,250,000 for the construction of granaries.

The new Finnish Minister, M. Tapio Voionmaa, was received in audience on the 14th March by Federal President M. Wetter in the presence of M. Pilet-Golaz, Head of the Political Department.

M. Max Nef, until now Bernese editor of the Thurgauer Zeitung, has been made Head of the newly created "Office de Liaison" between the Government and the Press.

The 1940 report of the Swiss Federal Railways shows an unexpected profit of frs.13,300,000. The sum of frs.181,000,000 figured on the credit side of the accounts and frs. 167,000,000 on the debit side.

The Federal War Transport Department will soon be able to place another ship at the disposal of Swiss Overseas Trade. The ship in question is the Villa Franca, which will sail towards the end of March/beginning of April and will carry cargo via Lisbon.

In a speech made on the 21st February, Dr. Rossi mentioned that the Federal expenses for the year 1940 amounted to 2 milliard 8 million Francs. In conjunction with this he stressed the fact that taxes in Switzerland were still less heavy than abroad, where the State demands up to one third of the income.

On the 11th March the Department for Public Economy ruled that no new shops must be opened.

M. Henri Martin, our Minister in Warsaw until the collapse of Poland, has been appointed Swiss Chargé d'Affaires at Lisbon.

Though diplomatic relations do not exist between our country and Russia a trade agreement has been concluded after many weeks of protracted negotiations. The exchange of goods is to amount to over six millions £ sterling in the first year on each side, but it requires a good deal of imagination to visualise regular traffic under existing conditions. We shall export tools, instruments and machinery against cereals, oil products and cotton.

A proposal to restore the free and unrestricted distillation of wines and spirits has been rejected by a national plebiscite which took place on Sunday, the 9th inst. The voting was not as convincing as expected, there being 452,076 against and 301,658 in favour of the change. The monopoly enjoyed by the State will therefore continue.

CITY SWISS CLUB.

Messieurs les membres sont avisés que

L'ASSEMBLEE GENERALE ANNUELLE

aura lieu Samedi, le 19 avril à 12.45 p.m. au Brown's Hotel, Dover Street, (near Green Park Tube Station).

ORDRE DU JOUR:

- | | |
|--|---|
| Procès-verbal. | Election des Vérificateurs des Comptes. |
| Admissions. | Election des Fidei-commissaires du Club-House Fund. |
| Démissions. | Proposition du Dr. Arpel secondé par Mr. Wuethrich concernant Swiss Observer. |
| Rapport du Comité. | Divers. |
| Rapport des Vérificateurs des Comptes. | |
| Election du Comité. | |

Dejeuner à 1.0 h. précises. Les participants sont priés de bien vouloir s'inscrire au plus tôt auprès de Mons. H. Bingguely, 167 Clapham Road, S.W.9 (Téléphone: Reliance 4150).

Le Comité.

A slight reduction in the existing rations will come into operation on April 1st and will effect among other foodstuffs, rice, flour and oil. At the same time restaurant ration cards will be introduced, i.e., a holder of an ordinary ration card can have the whole or part of it exchanged against 160 restaurant coupons; two of these coupons will have to be surrendered for a lunch or supper consumed at a hotel or restaurant.

A sum of eight million francs has been earmarked by the Federal Council to meet the cost of converting about a 1,000 lorries to the use of coal gas. The owners are expected to refund the amount so advanced — about Frs.7,000 per lorry — in instalments.

Work on land has been made compulsory for certain sections of the population; unemployed in particular will be called up for agricultural service. According to latest figures there are about 11,000 registered of whom a third are over 60 years of age.

Grape sugar in liquid form is now being sold to replace beet sugar.

The liberal, radical and evangelical parties of Canton Basle have united for the "Grossratswahlen."

In Zurich the Borough Council has accorded a grant for the extension of the use of electricity for cooking.

Radio Beromünster informed us on the 22nd February that Dr. Junod had gone to Besançon as delegate of the International Red Cross to visit English Internees. Many have already been released and it is expected that several hundred more will be allowed to leave in the near future. The Germans have accorded Dr. Junod every facility for inspecting conditions.

A new cantonal hospital is to be constructed at Zurich at an estimated cost of nearly 50 million francs.

The mail and goods service between the Ticino and Italy seems to be somewhat capricious a delay of ten to fifteen days being the rule if any. Telephone communications are evidently under German control; when the Italian Customs at Como are rung up the reply is "Hier Zollamt Como." Consignments of fruit and other Italian produce usually arriving through the Simplon have been held up.

As from the first of this month rye has been added to the flour for making bread in Switzerland; the percentage is stated to be a minimum of five per cent.

A case probably unique in Swiss marine affairs came before the English Court of Appeal. It concerned a charter party in connection with one of the many Greek steamers in the service of the Schweiz. Rederei A.G. For a neophyte it is difficult to follow the intricate arguments which deal with a disputed point of jurisdiction. The Swiss concern was the loser to the tune of nearly £38,000; a full report appeared in "Lloyds Gazette," March 5th.

Pending a final settlement of the claim for damage done in Zurich last December by bombs the Federal

Council is advancing 40% of the estimated sum (about Frs.500,000); this will allow immediate payments to the sufferers concerned.

The municipality of Zurich has decided to use tramcars for food transport in the early mornings so as to economise petrol.

The statistical office of the Town of Zurich has ascertained that the general price in the cost of living has risen by 18.5% since August 1939.

The price of liquid fuel is to go up again. As from the 17th March Benzine will cost 82 centimes per litre as against 75 centimes. The higher price will be enforced in the case of Petrol, heating oils, etc. The maximum retail price has still to be fixed, and is likely to work out at 4/10 per gallon.

M. Eduard v. Steiger's place in the Executive Committee of the Swiss National Bank has been filled by Ständerat Dr. Kloeti of Zurich. M. Max Gafner will take his place in the "Regierungsrat" of the Canton Berne.

The association of Swiss Postal Employees has demanded a revision of salaries. They contend that the rising cost of living has not been sufficiently taken into account.

The Association of Swiss Vintners met on the 26th of February. The question of adapting their industry to the present situation was discussed.

The amount of Pro Juventute Stamps and Cards sold last December came to 11,350 and 250,000 respectively. Proceeds totalling Frs.939,000 were obtained from the sales.

At the beginning of February Swiss papers published a Swiss Red Cross appeal for woollen underwear to be placed at the disposal of the medical services of the Swiss Army.

The central Committee of the Association of Womens Rights met in Berne on the 16th March. The Committee decided to address itself to the Federal Authorities on the ground that during the mobilisation for the defence of the Country only men had been called upon, whereas women had been completely overlooked.

To commemorate the internment of the Bourbaki Army in Switzerland General Guisan placed a wreath on the Monument of General Herzog in the presence of Federal Councillor M. Kobelt.

Much attention is being given to the winning and treating of Swiss Sheep wool. A number of courses are to be held in Zurich for the instruction of wool experts, animal breeders, etc. A similar course is to be organised in Lausanne later on.

To recover the increased cost of raw material and transport the Swiss tobacco manufacturers have decided to increase the price of the retail "Stumpe" packet by 5 cts. (about 10%).

At the annual general meeting at Basle of the Swiss Bank Corporation a dividend of 4% was declared, as against 4½% for the previous year.

Owing to lack of the appropriate fuel several crematoriums are being equipped for electrical operation.

The resignation of M. Andreae, Director of the Zurich Conservatory, has been accepted at his own urgent request. Karl Tobler has been appointed in his place.

Dr. med. Otto Isler, who died recently in Frauenfeld, has left over Frs.10,000 to charitable institutions.

Dr. Paul Linder, a local lawyer, died in Basle at the age of 70. For several decades he officiated as Norwegian Consul; he was a critic and collector of paintings and amongst his personal treasures is a large number of the early (then little appreciated) works of Ferdinand Hodler.

Dr. Werner Kobelt, a distinguished lawyer and leader of the local liberal party, died in St. Gall at the age of 53.

National Councillor Robert Grimm has recently retired from the Presidency of the socialist-democratic party of the Canton Berne, a position which he has held for the last 30 years. His successor is Ernst Reinhart. M. Grimm holds an important position in the Federal Committee charged with the supply of fuel.

In December of this year celebrations in honour of Paracelsus, who died 400 years ago, will take place in Einsiedeln. Dr. Etter is to be Honorary President of the Committee charged with preparations.

The Institute for Art and Research of the "Landsausstellung" 1939 has decided to make an award of Frs.12,000 to Willy Burkhart, the Composer.

Thanks to two large bequests — Frs.100,000 from Frau Maria Steiger-Trümpy and Frs.50,000 from Judge Chr. Streiff-Ritter — the oldest citizens of Glaris will receive a regular annual pension; the interests from this fund will be divided equally without consideration of sex, income or religion.

The captain of the Winterthur fire brigade, Hans Hofmann, received fatal injuries when attending with his company a conflagration which totally destroyed the inn "Zum Rössli" at Aesch. The owner of the tavern, Ulrich Siegenthaler, was absent on military service.

The activities of the notorious Arthur Fonjallaz, a former colonel in the Swiss army, have come to a timely end by the judgment of the Swiss Federal Court at Lausanne, which sentenced him to three years' imprisonment for espionage. The case was heard in camera and several others, among them two Germans, received minor sentences. The "Evening Standard" (March 1st) adds the following: "Fonjallaz lived in a handsome villa at the side of Lake Geneva, and received many visitors. He travelled a great deal in Germany and Italy and once tried to form a Fascist organisation in Switzerland.

Eighteen months ago he was arrested on the Swiss-German frontier while attempting to reach Germany.

His son was also arrested, together with several other Swiss and foreigners, amongst them pretty women.

The son and another accused were acquitted because of lack of proof. Several others, mainly foreigners, were condemned to serve sentences of from six to twelve months in prison after which they will be expelled.

Coal deposits, so far neglected, are being worked by Polish miners near Sion in the canton Valais; they are recruited from the 13,000 Polish troops interned in our country.

British mining experts from South Africa are said to be investigating the supposed discovery of a gold reef near the Lukmanier Pass in the Grisons.

A new society for the exploitation of minerals from the Fricktal has been founded.

Somewhat startling statements are attributed to Dr. Carl Brüscheiler by the "Catholic Times," February 21st; it reads as follows:

"The Catholic population of Switzerland now almost equals the Protestant in number, says Dr. Carl Brüscheiler, head of the Federal Bureau of Statistics at Berne, in a review of recent population trends.

While at the turn of the century there were 266 births annually to every 1,000 married women capable of child-birth, the average to-day is only 125. The minimum required to maintain at least a stable population level would be 170.

No less than 30 per cent. of the married couples in Switzerland are childless; 2 per cent. have only one, and another 20 per cent. only two children, while at least three would be required to maintain population stability.

As far as church membership is concerned, there were 185 children born to every 1,000 Catholics, 130 to every 1,000 Protestants, and 75 to every 1,000 Jews.

The danger from avalanches in the mountains has diminished considerably in view of the dry weather. However, there is still danger of smaller snowslides on overhanging slopes.

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