

Zeitschrift: The Swiss observer : the journal of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK

Herausgeber: Federation of Swiss Societies in the United Kingdom

Band: - (1941)

Heft: 990

Rubrik: News at random

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The Swiss Observer

FOUNDED BY MR. P. F. BOEHRINGER.

The Official Organ of the Swiss Colony in Great Britain.

Telephone: Clerkenwell 2321/2.

EDITED WITH THE CO-OPERATION OF MEMBERS OF THE LONDON COLONY.

Published Monthly at 23, LEONARD STREET, E.C.2.

Telegrams: FREPRINCO, LONDON.

VOL. 23—No. 990.

LONDON, JULY 25th, 1941.

PRICE 6d.



NEWS AT RANDOM

A satisfactory balance-sheet for 1940 has been presented by the Swiss Federal Railways, the profit and loss account closing with a credit of 13.4 million francs (5.9 million more than the previous year); the profit is to be used towards depreciations unsatisfied from former years.

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The Federal Food Department has made an order subjecting the sale of new products not sold or manufactured before September 1939 to official sanction. This is to stop the charging of exorbitant prices for articles outside the existing rationing or coupons scheme.

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Thanks to intense cultivation the agricultural area has been increased this spring by 50,000 hectares to 275,000 hectares; it is hoped that by draining marsh land another 34,000 hectares will be added in the course of this year.

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The Federal War Food Office has ordered Egg Producers to see that an equal distribution of eggs is achieved. The same applies to wholesalers and retailers. All eggs not used for home consumption must be handed over to the state by producers and the people are asked to use eggs sparingly. Retailers are also requested to serve their regular customers first and not allow excessive quantities to be bought by any one person.

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The Federal War Food Office also announced that as from the 7th July, milk was to be delivered to consumers on the basis of last year's deliveries. Any necessary adjustment in the quantity, would, of course, be made.

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The Federal War Food Office has announced a decision whereby no butter producer has a right to his butter coupon, as it is judged that persons engaged on butter production obtain sufficient for their own use. All surplus production must be ceded to the Federal Government.

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The quest for "Ersatz" has led to the extraction of lubricating oil and soap fat from coffee grounds; an 80-ton dump of such grounds has already been accumulated at Basle.

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The collection of waste suitable for re-manufacturing is having very gratifying results. In the canton Berne alone the accumulation has produced since the

beginning of this year 140 railway trucks of ten tons each of suitable raw materials.

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As the shipment of goods from Portugal to Genoa continues to fall short of requirements a lorry transport syndicate has been called into being. Swiss lorries will carry goods from the Portuguese frontier through Spain to the French frontier and it is intended to earmark a hundred vehicles for this service. A few hundred railway trucks were reserved for this traffic by the Spanish authorities but it was found that they all required repairing; this work is being undertaken in Switzerland. Goods sent by rail through Spain will have to be re-loaded at the French frontier into normal-gauge trucks.

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On the 10th July it was announced that the Federal War Office had concluded an agreement with the German authorities in respect of goods destined for Switzerland, coming from Greece, Turkey, Iran and eastern Europe.

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An initiative launched by the "Landesring" seeks to reform the National Council on the following lines: The members of the Council will be reduced from 187 to 139 by allotting one member for every 30,000 inhabitants instead of 22,000 as at present; the official intermingling of lists (Kumulation) shall be disallowed; membership of the National Council shall be limited to twelve years; every member shall disclose before election his directorships. In submitting these proposals to Parliament the Federal Council recommends rejection the more so as in these troublesome times a controversy on constitutional matters should be avoided.

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On Saturday, July 19th, it was announced that a new Germano-Swiss agreement had been signed with validity until 1942. Details thereof are not yet known.

CITY SWISS CLUB

The Committee announces that the August meeting has been cancelled and that the next Monthly Meeting has been fixed for Saturday, September 6th.

Members are reminded that the President will be pleased to meet them any Tuesday for lunch at Browns Hotel, Dover Street, W.

In contrast to the decrease in marriages and birth-rate in the war years 1914-1918 statistics show hardly any difference in the rate of births, marriages and deaths in Switzerland since 1937 to date. The birth-rate fluctuates very little whilst the death-rate is on a gradually increasing scale. The statistics also show a steady increase in the number of marriages.

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The Conseil d'Etat in Geneva is introducing a bill abolishing the quorum which so far was requisite for giving legal status to any resolutions taken. This is to counteract the obstructionist tactics of the groups controlled by Nicole who at some of the councils of local communes of the canton render proceedings impractical by their deliberate absence.

* * *

Lively scenes characterised the opening session of the new Grosse Rat at Basle. By custom the presidency should have gone tacitly to National Councillor Fritz Schneider, the local socialist leader who was Statthalter (Vice-President) in the former Council. A liberal member raised an objection demanding a poll and another member of the socialist party was elected to the fauteuil; he however declined the honour on the ground that his party could not accept dictation as to the name of the candidate when it was obviously entitled to the chair. In the end the liberal G. Hanhart was elected unanimously the socialists refraining from voting.

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The cantonal elections in Solothurn on the 23rd June ended in a victory for the Liberals. The number of members of the Government is to remain unchanged, i.e. at 5 and will be composed of 3 liberals, 1 catholic conservative and 1 social democrat.

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The constitution of the Grosse Rat of the canton Grisons remains practically unchanged the whole of the 99 members having been re-elected with the exception of three socialists who now hold six seats only.

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Naturalisation in the canton Aargau is to be run on strict business lines if an official proposal submitted to the Grosse Rat finds favour. According to this tariff applicants are divided into three categories: Swiss who after ten years' residence are by law entitled to the franchise, Swiss lacking the residential qualification and foreigners. In the first category the minimum charge is Frs.100 and in the third the maximum rises to Frs.3,000.

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The autobus service in Berne has undergone considerable curtailment on account of the shortage of petrol (Diesel). Experiments have been made with a home-produced gas obtained from wood; though the results are not entirely satisfactory, fourteen of the existing buses are to be adapted at a cost of Frs.10,000 each as otherwise the service would have to be suspended.

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Fribourg boasts a deficit of two million francs for the year 1940 though Frs.600,000 had been budgetted for; unforeseen war expenditure is stated to be the cause.

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The Post Telegraph and Telephone Central Bureau announced the suspension on the 24th June, 1941, of

all letter and parcel post to Soviet Russia, inclusive Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia until further notice. Post for China, Japan, French Indo-China and Thailand will go via New York and San Francisco, post for Iran via New York, British Indies and Costanza, Istanbul.

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The Swiss Society for cultural and economic relations with Italy met in Zurich on the 30th June in the presence of M. Agostino, delegate of the Italian National Bank. After a brief survey of traditional economic and cultural relations between the two countries, M. Agostino said that these depended largely on geographical factors. By commercial developments to date these factors had been proved favourable, M. Agostino continued, and the will to make them successful was certainly alive.

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All soldiers on active service have to relinquish all radio apparatus, apparatus for the recording of sound or photography, microphones, etc., by Federal Decree. They are to be handed in to the nearest Post Office and must not be bought or sold by a soldier, nor may they be imported or exported. Any transgression of this decree is punishable by martial law.

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The Census of the population, originally ordered for December 1940 will now take place in December 1941. The indexing is to be done at Geneva and about 200 to 300 employees will be needed.

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A special five-francs piece commemorating the 650th anniversary of the 1st of August has been struck by order of the Federal Council and will enjoy legal tender throughout the country. The design on the avers is by sculptor Suter, from Basle, whilst the revers goes to the credit of sculptor Luc Jaggi of Geneva.

* * *

Small consideration for the interests of the younger generation seems to have been displayed by the voters of Chur (Grisons) when they turned down a proposal to construct a new gymnasium at a cost of about Frs.600,000; the scheme was warmly sponsored by all the political parties and sports circles.

* * *

This year's first of August stamps — on sale since June 15th — depict the armorial bearings of the first three cantons on the 10cts. stamp (sold at 20cts.); it is designed by Paul Bösch who is also the author of the Bernese jubilee stamp. The 20cts stamp (sold at 30cts) is the work of Charles L'Eplattenier and portrays the Hohle Gasse at Küssnacht.

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All trips to the Rütli for the 650th anniversary of the Confederation were staggered this year, by request of the Swiss Federal Railways. Groups and parties intending to travel there had to book at least four days in advance; this to enable the Swiss Federal Railways to cope with the rush of visitors.

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The traditional celebrations in commemoration of the battle of Sempach were held on July 7th. They were attended by a number of high officers and by members of the Lucerne Government as well as many people who had come from all over Switzerland.

The town of Berne has presented Zurich with a bear for its Zoological Gardens.

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The short life of the Zoological Garden in Geneva came to an inglorious end when the Federal Tribunal upheld the decision of the cantonal authorities calling upon the owners to dispose of the animals or destroy them within a given time. The Zoo was originally founded by private initiative in 1930 and taken over in turn by two companies but the Genevois never took kindly to wild animals kept in captivity. The undertaking could not free itself from financial difficulties with the result that the inmates were badly fed and kept in unhealthy conditions and environments. In response to complaints from animal lovers an enquiry was ordered and a feeding diet imposed upon the management which, however, did not improve matters. Towards the end of last year the local police intervened and instituted proceedings.

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An ambitious Geneva bank clerk has suffered badly through the frustration of his political aspirations. His terms of employment with a local bank forbade him to take any active part in politics under the penalty of immediate dismissal. When in November 1936 a new Conseil d'Etat had to be elected he was invited by the "Action Genevoise" (a synonyme for the "Landesring" directed by National Councillor Duttweiler) to stand as a candidate. He was assured that representations by this powerful new party would secure him re-instatement and if this were not possible an equally lucrative appointment elsewhere was promised to him; the election was a disappointment and he found himself without "honour" and employment. In due course he sued National Councillor Duttweiler for damages in lieu of unfulfilled promises. He claimed Frs.200,000 but the Zürcher Obergericht awarded him Frs.20,000 only; on appeal the Federal Tribunal has now confirmed the judgment of the lower court.

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The level-crossing at the Corcelles-Peseux station (Neuchâtel) was the scene of a fatal accident when the watch manufacturer Flotron from La-Chaux-de-Fonds and his friend Robert Guye from Neuchâtel lost their lives. Their car was caught on the track by an express train. The subsequent enquiry showed that the gate-keeper had fallen asleep thus omitting to close the barrier.

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Three soldiers, including an officer, were killed and two others injured near Interlaken during exercises with flame throwers.

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During the night of July 14-15th heavy hailstorms did much damage to crops in Switzerland, especially in the Canton of Berne. In Konolfingen the gardens were still white as in winter and hail stones lay so deep on the ground that lorries were unable to pass. In some districts of Basle-Land and the Murtén region 70% of the crops are said to have been wiped out.

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On July 9th an explosion occurred at the station in Neuchâtel in the Goods office. The force of the explosion scattered many goods parcels, killing one of the Depôt workers and slightly injuring a number

of people. A fire was started but this was quickly put out. The cause of the explosion is still unknown and investigations are proceeding. Munitions and carbide are stated to be stored in the railway sheds.

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The April-Bulletin of the Swiss Federal Railways honours Frau Anna Morf-Angst by giving her photograph and stating that for 53 years she had been a regular and constant traveller on the line between Nürensdorf (formerly Hüntwangen) and Winterthur. Every week she carries her farm produce to the market in Winterthur.

* * *

Belated reports from India announce the death at the age of 41 of Mr. Walter Hollenstein from Winterthur; he has been one of the managers of Messrs. Volkart Brothers in Calcutta for the last 14 years. He and a friend went elephant hunting and shot one of the beasts; when, however, the deceased carefully approached his quarry the latter rose and gored Mr. Hollenstein before the other members of the party could render help.

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Dr. Mario Ferri, a former cantonal judge, died at Lugano at the age of 66; he was one of the founders of the socialist party in the Ticino.

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Friedrich Knie, senior director of the Swiss National Circus, died in a Zurich hospital after a short illness at the age of 57. Born in Frauenfeld he followed the family tradition and acquired international fame as circus proprietor and animal trainer.

SWISS NATIONAL DAY CELEBRATION

650th ANNIVERSARY OF THE FOUNDATION
OF THE SWISS CONFEDERATION

AUGUST THE FIRST

1291 — 1941

THE SWISS MINISTER, Monsieur W. Thurnheer, and the Committee of the Swiss National Day Celebration EXTEND A HEARTY WELCOME TO ALL SWISS, their families and friends to take part in

A GREAT PATRIOTIC RALLY
at CENTRAL HALL, WESTMINSTER, S.W.1
on SATURDAY, AUGUST THE SECOND
at 2.30 p.m. sharp (doors open at 2 o'clock)

ADMISSION FREE (no tickets)

Special Church Services in the National Languages will take place on Sunday following (see *Forthcoming Events*).