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The Swiss Observer

FOUNDED BY MR. P. F. BOEHRINGER.

The Official Organ of the Swiss Colony in Great Britain.

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NEWS AT RANDOM

At 5 o'clock of the morning of August 29th, 1939, the frontier protection troops which were called up the previous evening took up their positions. The following day the Federal Assembly which was summoned in all haste, entrusted the Federal Council with full authority to act quickly and energetically in the interests of the country and with 204 out of 229 votes elected the then Corps-Commander, Colonel Henry Guisan as Commander in Chief of the Swiss Army. On the 2nd of September the whole of the Swiss Army was called to the colours and the Federal Council issued at the same time the declaration "that the Swiss Confederation will maintain and uphold the inviolacy of its territory and of its neutrality which by the treaties of 1815 and its supplementary agreements were considered as being essential in the interests of the whole of European politics.

Since then two years have passed during which the army with changing components has without interruption kept guard over the country. Day by day the work on its perfection as well as the completion of the defences of the country went forward. The lessons taught in the various theatres of war were rapidly adapted to Swiss conditions and the training of the soldiers accordingly extended. Many thousands of Swiss soldiers of all ranks have already as many as from six to seven hundred days of active service. As long as the war rages in Europe, so long will the Swiss army remain firmly vigilant.

Swiss exports for August show a decrease in value of 13,000,000 Swiss francs against July. The quantity exported has, however, increased by 638 truck loads. This means that the exports consisted mainly of moderately priced, but bulky goods.

Taking foreign trade for the year, imports have decreased in quantity by 30 per cent. by comparison with the period January to August, 1940, approximately 172,000,000 Swiss francs and 11,000 trucks in quantity.

Customs receipts for the first six months of the present year amount to 82.2 million francs compared with 143.1 million for the same period last year.

Among the many official regulations issued with a view of maintaining the strictest neutrality and eliminating indications of partiality is one which prohibits a Swiss to attend a meeting or manifestation primarily intended for foreigners.

Our Consulates in France, Belgium, Holland and Norway have been closed by order of the army of occupation.

According to the Federal Council's report, trade payments with France are still governed by the temporary "Clearing" agreement of October, 1940. Negotiations are proceeding for the payment of credits due for goods in transit, which credits were due before the coming into force of the temporary agreement. Further negotiations are taking place for the settlement of outstanding credits due for Swiss goods already delivered. On the other hand, it is no longer possible to freeze the credits of either country in the territory of the other. Finally, an agreement has been reached for the payment of insurances. This benefits Swiss insurance companies in France.

The Swiss bankers held a meeting at Lugano on the 14th September at which 200 delegates were present. The representative of the political department pointed out that his department has created a special liaison office with the banks.

Sunday cycling is now forbidden throughout the country; the reason is stated to be the restriction in the use of rubber tyres.

Hallau (Schaffhausen) has received Frs.70,000 for the foundation of an old-age home under the will of Frau Elisabetha Ermell-Bopp who died recently at the age of 90.

By an overwhelming majority of about 122,000 ayes against about 15,000 noes the electors of the canton Zurich have sanctioned the construction of a new

CITY SWISS CLUB.

Members and Ladies and all Friends are cordially invited to attend a

LUNCHEON (6/6)

on Saturday, October 4th, 1941 at 12.45 for 1.15 p.m.
at the DORCHESTER HOTEL, Park Lane, W.1

Guest of Honour: LAWRENCE HOWARD, Esq.
the distinguished writer and film-producer who will speak on
HENRI DUNANT and his Friends and their struggle for the
establishment of the Red Cross.

Please reserve your seats not later than October 2nd, 1941.
H. BINGGUELY, Secretary, 167, Clapham Road, S.W.9.
Phone: RELiance 4150.

cantonal hospital for which a credit of 50 million francs is necessary.

Little interest was shown by the voters of the canton Neuchâtel when they approved of a proposal to unite the "Eglise Nationale" and the "Eglise Libre." The religious contest which has been carried on since 1873 has thus come to an end and the new decree which comes into force at the beginning of next year will place the protestant and catholic churches on the same footing.

Geneva will commemorate next year the 2,000th anniversary of its foundation. The pièce de resistance of the celebrations will be a historic play featuring the life and landmarks of the Calvin City from Roman times to the present day.

If the cost of living in Switzerland at the end of July 1914, at the beginning of the first world war, is taken as 100, the index figure at the end of June 1941 is 174.8. During the second quarter of 1941 the prices have risen by 6.8 per cent. This is the sharpest rise experienced in any one quarter since the beginning of this war. In July the increase was another 1.3 per cent.

A rise of 30 per cent. in the cost of living is one of the problems which has to be faced by Swiss authorities. Salaries of Bank officials, etc., have already been raised by 10 per cent.

Delegates of the Agricultural Association held a meeting on the 14th September and Dr. Wahlen reported on the work of cultivation. The fields under cultivation have been raised from 185,000 hectares to 270,000, thus almost completing the increased agricultural programme. The next phase will include another 7,000 hectares still to be farmed and there will be new allocations of 33,000 hectares. The carrying out of the programme depends to a great extent on the provision of labour; provision of machines, manure, and grain for sowing having already been fulfilled. The whole nation must interest itself in cultivation, and it is intended to make the non-agricultural population become interested in allotments so that they can become self-sufficient. Reduction of stocks of cattle may be slowed down by intermediary cultivation and by the use of fodder from silos. The head of the Wartime Food Office pointed out the necessity of gradual transition from non-vegetarian to vegetarian food.

The National Council met recently to discuss the question of prices and salaries. It was decided that prices should be controlled and fines for infringements thereof be imposed. The Federal Council is of opinion that the increase in the cost of living must be offset, at least partially, by increases in salaries and bonuses, taking into consideration family responsibilities.

On September 17th, the Federal Council resumed its deliberations on the problems of prices and wages. A message was sent to the Cantonal Councils on the laws forbidding the establishment of new stores.

On the 17th September, the Federal Council also received a delegation from towns who pointed out that it would be possible to do without supplying cheap

provisions to families hard hit by the war, if milk and bread prices were stabilised, if the Federal Council would grant subsidies to towns, and if fruit and potatoes at reasonable prices were made available.

On the 19th September, it was announced that the milk price for producers is to go up by two centimes per litre. In spite of considerable increase in grain bread prices are to remain stable.

At the opening of the Lausanne Fair on the 18th September, Federal Councillor Stampfli made a speech emphasising the necessity for rigorous control of Swiss economy.

Cheese — in normal times one of our main export lines — has now been rationed and the ration is just slightly higher than what we are allowed in this country, viz. one pound (metric) per month. Our country is in proportion to its size and to the quantity and quality the largest producer of cheese in Europe. But the consumption of cheese has increased enormously caused by the rise in prices or rationing of other victuals, whereas at the same time the production of cheese diminished through the decrease in the number of cattle which became necessary through lack of feeding stuffs. To this must be added that cheese of all kinds represents a desirable article of exchange for goods from various European States.

Latest statistics show that our dairy farms produced during last year 27.68 million quintals (Zentner) of milk, about 2.6% less than in the previous year; the value of this quantity is given as 632 million francs or 10.5% more than before. The average return of the 910,000 cows included in these figures was 2,970 kg. some of the best breeds (Braunvieh and Fleckvieh) producing as much as 4,286 kg. per cow.

The first group of a host of invalid soldiers from neighbouring States, numbering several thousands have arrived during the last few days. Nearly 200 French ex-soldiers and non-commissioned officers suffering from pulmonary diseases have arrived at the world renowned health resort Leysin. At the present moment negotiations are in progress with other States to extend hospitality to invalid soldiers or ex-soldiers of the various armies in Swiss health resorts. They will arrive in groups of 1,000 at a time and during their stay are placed under the jurisdiction of the military code. The cost of the treatment will be refunded by the respective Governments. The most difficult problem will be the provisioning of the invalids.

With the introduction of the navigation on the Rhine from the North sea to Basle and more particularly since the creation of a Swiss sea-going flotilla, a new occupation has opened its field to the youth of Switzerland. It is that of a ship's apprentice and sailor. The Schweizerische Reederei A.G. Basle has a training ship "Leventina" in service already for a few years to enable future seamen to start a three years' apprenticeship with a theoretical as well as a practical course, after which they are sent to a Swiss boat to complete their training. Up to now four of such preparatory courses with 41 participants have been successfully completed.

On the Gotthard Railway, which is the most important north-south communication through Switzerland there are still some places where there is only a one line traffic. One of these places is between Flüelen and Sisikon on the lake of Lucerne, another between Rivera and Taverne near Lugano. On the last named track work is in progress to lay a second line of rails, whereas between Brunnen and Flüelen new tunnels are being cut. The line under construction has a tunnel of just over two miles (3,375 m.) and will cost a round 10 million Swiss francs, the extension Sisikon Flüelen will cost another 13 millions. At the present moment the gallery through the Axenberg on both sides of the mountain has reached about 1,300 m. in length so that the opening of the line may be expected by the autumn of 1942.

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The Swiss political Department announced on September 12th, that the planes which flew over Swiss territory during 10-11th September have been identified as English bombers. The Swiss Minister in London has been requested to point out the gravity of this infringement of Switzerland's neutrality and to ask that strict orders should be given to avoid a repetition.

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It is stated that the British Government paid £67,000 for damage caused by R.A.F. planes at Renan and Geneva earlier in the year.

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At a recent meeting of Swiss Educational authorities it was proposed to hold a Swiss Educational Exhibition in Geneva. The Cantons are asked to contribute towards a Swiss historical atlas.

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Lausanne's 22nd "Comptoir Suisse" was opened on the 13th of September, 1941. Two Thousand exhibitors are participating, an increase of over one-third compared with last year. At the beginning of this month, Swiss exporters met in Lausanne to discuss ways and means of fostering Swiss exports after the war. It was agreed that Switzerland would have to take into account the relative importance of the European countries, without neglecting her considerable overseas markets. With regard to the scarcity of raw materials it was said that Swiss industry must not be left to die. Some way must be found of saving it. Switzerland is to participate in the Fairs at Marseilles and Lyons. At Marseilles, she will have stands devoted to textiles, watch-making, precision-machines, literature and tourism. In Lyons she will have stands devoted to watch-making, metal-work, textiles, fancy needlework, the chemical industry, and Franco-Swiss intellectual relationship.

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The four-track railway line from Berne to Wielerfeld was officially inaugurated on September 6th, replacing the two-track line which had been the most used of the whole Swiss Railway system since 1940. The 1.5 km. approach line (Zufahrtslinie) was begun in 1937 and crosses the Aare by a bridge 150 metres in length. 1,300 tons of scrap iron were salvaged from the old two-track line. Before the war, the total cost was estimated at 15.7 million Swiss francs, ten millions of which were to be found by the Swiss Railway, three million by the Federal Government and the remainder by the Canton and City of Berne.

It was announced on September 18th, that another shipment of Swiss goods had arrived in America from Lisbon.

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Swiss Federal Railway receipts have increased, as well as expenditure, during last month. Passenger service takings amounted to Francs 15,200,000, goods service takings to Francs 22,400,000. Expenditure totalled Francs 21,200,000 leaving a balance of Francs 17,800,000.

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The Federal Census which is supposed to be taken every ten years and which was due last year will take place on the 1st of December this year. A clerical staff of about 300 will be required. The compilation of the cards and the dissecting of the particulars will be carried out at Geneva where the Federal Statistical Department will open a special office for this purpose.

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Plans for a new gigantic power station in the Gotthard region have just been published. The scheme advanced by private initiative seeks to harness the water power of the Reuss and part of the Hinterrhein at an expenditure of about 8800 million francs. A tremendous dam 200 metres high would be erected in the Schöllenen Schlucht below Andermatt and the artificial lake so created would engulf such beauty spots as Andermatt, Hospental and Realp. The scheme which is estimated to secure over 1½ million H.P. of electric energy is fiercely opposed by the people of Uri especially those living in the Urserental.

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Work on the electrification of the 34 km. long sector Auvernier — Les Verrières (Canton Neuchâtel) has now been commenced; it necessitates the lowering of the track in the 12 existing tunnels. The new line is expected to be ready for traffic in about a year's time.

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Legationsrat W. von Burg who has been in charge of the General Consulate in Vienna has returned to Berne to await a more important appointment; his place has been taken by Legationsrat W. Rüfenacht. M. de Bourg was for a number of years with the London Legation during which time he took an active part in the life of the Colony and his departure in 1938 was deeply regretted by his large circle of devoted friends.

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At the Delegates' Meeting of the Swiss Hotel Association in Lausanne under the chairmanship of Dr. Seiler (Zermatt) a resolution was passed calling upon the Federal Government to enforce a uniform tariff thus eliminating the detrimental cutting of hotel and "en Pension" prices.

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An explosion during mine throwing exercises at Habkern near Interlaken caused the death of three members of the territorial command II; their names are: Lieut. Hans Gräub, a teacher in Hirschhorn Gunner G. Eggimann of Gondiswil and Gunner Hans Ammann of Melchnau.

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On his 103rd anniversary Johann Zurflüh in Menzingen was the recipient of an official presentation from the Regierungsrat of the canton Zug.

Eight pupils of the "Ecole mécanique et d'Electricité de Neuchâtel" lost their lives when visiting in the course of a conducted school excursion

the Rhone Glacier. Disregarding warnings they overstepped the safety zone and were caught and carried away by heavy ice boulders which suddenly and unexpectedly detached themselves from the solid mass. A company of gunners stationed in the neighbourhood were able to render first aid and extricate other members of the party.

In the excavations of the ruins of Vindonissa — the old Roman fortress at Windisch near Brugg — so far over 18,000 antique coins have been unearthed testifying to a lively business time during the Roman occupation.

The last volume of the Swiss family names book has now been issued. It has been compiled from official records and contains the names and civil status of every Swiss citizen.

The lure of the mountains is responsible for the death of a 67 years old alpinist who with younger friends was climbing the Luisin near Martigny when he lost his hold and made a fatal fall; the victim is André Wavre, a distinguished lawyer in Neuchâtel and a director of several large undertakings.

What is described as Europe's highest garden is the proud achievement of John Lemm, the landlord of the restaurant on the Weissfluhjoch near Davos. John Lemm is a former champion wrestler who some forty years ago fought for the European Championship at the Shaftesbury Theatre in London (The Editor of the S.O. happened to witness that performance).

In Zurich four workmen have been sentenced to one to four weeks' imprisonment for hoarding and secretly distributing communist literature.

The cause of the explosion on July 10th in the Neuchâtel station is stated to be the self-ignition of fireworks accumulated for the first of August celebrations. The fire spread over to other stores particularly a small quantity of synthetic dynamite. The whole of the goods depot has been completely destroyed and a number of adjacent private houses badly damaged; a railway shunter was killed outright and many people were injured two of them seriously. The damage exceeds a million francs.

Colonel Otto Weber, in charge of the St. Maurice fortifications (Valais), lost his life in a motor accident near Evionnaz; his army chauffeur Walter Clarer shared the same fate. Colonel Brigadier Schwarz was slightly injured.

Colonel Bernhard Füglistaller died in Basle at the age of 71. Until his retirement he had been for many years a member of the Grosse Rat; he was chairman of the well-known brewery concern founded by his father (Warteck).

The constant research for "Ersatz" has brought into being new industries notably the utilization of cheap woods. Under a process recently perfected substitutes are obtained for petrol and Diesel oil as well

as various by-products, such as fuel gas and materials used in the manufacture of dyes and disinfectants.

The chimes opening the First of August celebrations broadcast from Beromünster came from the former Klosterkirche of Wagenhausen (near Stein am Rhein) the belfry of which is believed to have been built before 1291.

The mining operations in the Fricktal stimulated by war conditions have resulted in an export of iron ore of 112,600 tons, over 50% more than in the year 1939.

TWO BUSY COMPATRIOTS.

The following is reprinted from the "World's Press News," August 28th; similar appreciations have appeared in other English periodicals and it would seem that our two compatriots are well-nigh the "enfants gâtés" of the M.O.I.

Latest of the neutral journalists in London to be attacked by the Germans is G. J. Keller, president of the F.P.A. here, and London correspondent for the Swiss Telegraph Agency and the *Basler Nachrichten*.

The attack was made through the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, which had many unpleasant things to say about Mr. Keller because he was the man who arranged the luncheon at which Anthony Eden and Sikorski, the Polish Premier, met and made important statements on the Soviet-Polish relations. Maisky, the U.S.S.R. Ambassador, was also present.

In addition to the usual personal abuse, the German paper said that Mr. Keller's part in arranging the function put Swiss neutrality in a precarious state.

As usual, the relatives of the person attacked are also open to some threat from the Germans. In Mr. Keller's case his father is an M.P. and a former Speaker of the Swiss Parliament. He is, therefore, an especially good target.

Another Swiss journalist here who has been attacked from time to time is Dr. H. W. Egli, correspondent for the *Zürcher Zeitung*. After the Coventry blitz, Dr. Egli reported that the shopping and living centre of the city had been hit, but not the industrial parts, and that the bombing had all the appearance of being indiscriminate.

This aroused the Nazi Press, which, among other things, stated that Dr. Egli was in the pay of Churchill. At the M.O.I. Dr. Egli complained that if he was, he had not yet seen any money, whereupon an M.O.I. wag, with great ceremony, paid him for his work — a farthing.

Mr. Keller has previously been attacked for his stories about indiscriminate bombing, the fact that convoys still pass up and down the channel despite Nazi claims to the contrary, and articles which have stated that British morale is very good. It seems that anything which is contrary to German claims must expose the writer to abuse.

The Nazis, of course, have the names of all neutral journalists in Britain and keep a close check on their work. They use attacks in the German Press upon individuals with the hope of suppressing accurate news and comment from Britain.