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The Swiss Observer

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NEWS AT RANDOM

As none of the Swiss dailies have reached us for over two months some of the items in the following retrospect are gathered from English sources.

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On the 28th October Radio Schwarzenburg announced that the Swiss Federal Council had passed the ordinary preliminary state budget for 1942 to Parliament. The revenues amount to Sw.Frs.391,000,000 and expenditure to Sw.Frs.479,000,000 so that the budget shows a deficit of Sw.Frs.108,700,000. This is the usual budget for the ordinary administration. It does not include credits for measures resulting from the decree of 30th August, 1939, which gives special powers to the Council. In this way it does not include credits for military defence and for the provision of labour according to the decision of April 6th, 1939.

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A new federal loan of 300-400 million francs will shortly be issued. As there is still a great demand for investments a good reception is already assured, although the rate of interest will hardly reach 4%.

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The Finance Department announced in the sitting of the Federal Council of the 14th November that more than Frs.300,000,000 had been subscribed to the 3½% 35-year loan and about Frs.280,000,000 to the 2½% five-year loan.

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At the Swiss Federal Council's meeting on the 3rd November President Wetter made a statement on the purchase tax. He said Switzerland was the only country which had no such tax up till now, but the income from other taxes was so low that this tax would be necessary for the welfare of the State. The war profits tax would be increased for the whole of 1941, in order to bring the revenue to Frs.45,000,000 for 1941 and Frs.100,000,000 for 1942.

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The Federal Government decided during a meeting on the 31st October that the period for adopting the structure of joint stock companies and corporations to meet the requirements of the law will be extended until June 30th, 1944. This extension is granted because, owing to war conditions, foreign companies which have offices in Switzerland and Swiss companies with foreign capital, are not in a position to make the necessary arrangements owing to the absence of responsible parties.

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As in 1918, the Federal Council has now taken a decision regarding the exploitation of mineral deposits

in order to make good use of Swiss raw materials, announced Schwarzenburg on October 28th. Exploitation comes under the supervision of the Swiss Economic Department which has the right to order the testing of these mineral deposits and to lease important mines or deposits which are not properly exploited. They may also commission experts with the exploitation. The rights of the cantons are not affected by this decision.

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The Federal Statistical Department has just published a compilation which shows that for the year 1938 the income of the Swiss population amounted to 8,202 million frs. or 1960 frs. per head of the inhabitants. The highest income year was 1929 with 9,470 millions, the lowest 1935 with 7,430 millions. Of the total income of 1938, just about half (4,157 millions) was nett income of dependent producers (employed) 2,227 millions derived from interest on capital and the remaining 1,818 millions from the mixed income from independent producers (employers).

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As the Turco-Swiss Trade Treaty is about to expire, the two Governments have arranged to begin negotiations for a new Treaty. Discussions will take place in Ankara, where a Swiss delegation is expected.

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The issue of the Government Loan has somewhat overshadowed the conclusion of the Swiss-Spanish Trade Agreement, though the significance of the latter cannot be overrated in view of the importance of Swiss trade through Spain.

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Some of the numerous private railway lines in Canton Graubünden may be amalgamated with the Swiss State Railways owing to the difficulties arising from the present financial situation caused by the war.

CITY SWISS CLUB.

Messieurs les membres sont avisés que

L'ASSEMBLEE MENSUELLE

aura lieu Samedi, le 6 Déc. à 12.45 p.m. au Brown's Hotel, Dover Street, (near Green Park Tube Station).

ORDRE DU JOUR :

Procès-verbal.

Démissions.

Admissions.

Divers.

M. W. Preiswerk parlera des impression de voyage aux Etats Unis et au Canada avec projections lumineuses.

Déjeuner 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.

The recognition of Romansch as the fourth official language in Switzerland has caused the necessity of translating all important Federal laws into the two Romansch dialects. At the present moment the new Swiss Criminal Code is being so translated. Each of the Romansch speaking inhabitants of the canton of Grisons will be given a free copy of this great legal work.

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For months past the old town hall in Berne has undergone renovation and alterations, which will restore it to its original design. Over 300 workmen of 32 firms are at work to rectify a previous renovation which spoilt the beauty of the architecture. A few days ago all the firms and their employees were entertained to the usual "Aufrichti" in the Kornhauskeller by the cantonal authorities. The building will be re-opened in May next.

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The State Council of the Canton of Geneva recently made a decree regulating the use of outside aerials in Switzerland. Under the new decree all aerials must conform to one of the approved models, so far as public safety and the aesthetic aspect are concerned. All blocks of more than four flats are to have a communal aerial.

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The Swiss Association for the Tourist Industry held its plenary session at St. Gall. The Chairman reviewed the position in the industry last year. Dr. Ueckli, acting delegate on problems of unemployment (eidgenössischer Delegierter für Arbeitsbeschaffung) spoke on the problem of finding work for the unemployed, particularly in the tourist industry. He discussed the extension of the road system, the railway system of the Confederation and the question of connecting the Confederation with the future system of international air traffic.

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Direct goods traffic between Switzerland and Croatia is now being resumed via Germany and Italy.

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On the 28th October the Federal Transport Commission met in Berne to discuss questions arising out of the Motor Transport Regulations of 1938. The draft was approved of an additional article to the Constitution providing for the co-ordination of transport by rail, road, water and air.

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Favoured by the beautiful autumn weather the crop of sugar beet is now being gathered in the Swiss plains. The cultivation covered roughly about 10,000 acres, compared with 9,275 of last year. According to estimates about 10,800 railway trucks of 10 tons each and about 9,000 cart loads of beet will reach the only sugar refinery at Aarburg. Although the crop did not come quite up to expectation, the beet, however, gives an increased sugar content which is on an average of between 16-17.5%. This gives the grower a welcome increase in price for his product.

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In consequence of premature snow, school authorities have been requested to release their pupils for the completion of the harvest whenever possible.

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What importance is attributed to the navigation on the Rhine up to Basle is proved by the fact, that the agreed-upon quantity of coal obtainable through the

Swiss-German Trade agreement can only be imported on the water-way. Besides relieving the congestion on the railways, another advantage accrues to the country through the navigation, which consists of a considerable saving of transport costs amounting to several millions a year. During the last two decades of river navigation valuable experience in the organisation and management of overseas transport has also been acquired.

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Steadily increasing traffic on the Gotthard Railway has made the doubling of remaining single-track sections more urgent. Work on the Brunnen-Fluelen section, 8 miles long — at a cost of frs. 23,000,000, eight million of which will be contributed by the Swiss Treasury — is being speeded up. In this section there is one tunnel of over two miles long which is now expected to be completed towards the end of 1941. It is hoped that the whole section will be ready for service during the second half of 1942.

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At the end of last month the Federal Council decided to subsidise the action for assistance to the necessitous population. According to that decision the Confederation bears one third of the costs born by the cantons and communes. The assistance is given in the nature of fuel, tickets to purchase goods at reduced prices, contribution towards rent and even cash payments. Particular consideration is given to large families or needy families of soldiers, unemployed as well as families and individuals who are in difficulties caused through the war. The cost of this generous assistance to distressed will amount to many millions of francs.

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For the last 23 years the "Foundation for the aged" has annually made a collection of voluntary contributions to assist old men and women who are unable to provide for themselves and yet do not wish to become a burden to the Public Assistance. The collection last year, in spite of war and dearth, amounted to the record figure of 915,000 frs. to which sum must be added an amount of 2.5 million frs. from cantons and communes. The "Foundation" assisted nearly 39,000 people. Since 1918 it has spent over 48.5 millions in individual assistance, derived from its own funds as well as from public contributions. In this amount, however, the considerably larger expenditure of the Confederation for the care for old people is not included.

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The necessity of the times has obviously awakened the social conscience of a wide circle of the population. This does not only show itself clearly by the fact that all collections made for purposes of general public welfare meet with unexpected good results, but also in the interest shown towards social questions in general. The presentation of a request by the population of the canton of Zürich signed by many thousands of inhabitants demanding legal measures for the protection of the family is a sign of this new spirit. The Swiss Conservative People's Party, the political main organisation of the Catholics, is at the moment collecting signatures for a federal "Family protection initiative" which is as follows:— "The family as the foundation of the state and society enjoys in its establishment and its continuance the protection of the Confederation. Its rights and requirements are to be more

particularly considered in financial, economical and social politics. For the social security of the family the Confederation is to promote family, — child — old age assistance to independent as well as dependent producers, on the basis of compensatory insurances or similar institutions and if necessary, the Confederation is to establish such institutions of its own. The Confederation is entitled to support and to promote the necessary measures in favour of the family in respect of matters of settlement and dwelling arrangements. The execution of the decisions of the Confederation is in the hands of the cantons, but professional organisations, public or private associations may be co-opted.

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In the autumn of 1936 the voters of the canton Basle-Stadt adopted a law by which all persons in receipt of wages or salaries pay one centime for each franc thus earned. This tax which amounted annually to round 3 million francs was used to subsidise relief work, i.e., to employ the unemployed. Although the law was to stand for 10 years, a group of "dissatisfied" demanded the immediate repeal by organising an initiative. The request was subjected to a popular vote which took place on the 26th October, when the result was round 17,400 against and 11,500 votes for the initiative. The so-called "Arbeiterrappen" therefore remains. It is a satisfaction to find, that the confirmation of this measure was even more decisive than it was in the first instance.

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The "Committee for Assistance" under the patronage of the Swiss Red Cross has again sent a mission of doctors to the theatres of war as it did in the last war. The first mission consisting of 31 doctors and 30 nurses left Switzerland on 15th October for the battlefields in Russia. They travelled in two parties, one party went by train the other by motor car. The missions will be introduced to the respective military authorities by Colonel Bircher, former chief Medical Officer of the cantonal hospital in Aarau. This Committee is also considering further humanitarian actions in other countries, which have suffered through the ravages of war.

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On October 28th the Swiss Wireless announced that Swiss doctors belonging to a medical mission have now begun their work in the Smolensk region.

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Grievances about the rising cost of living are the subject of many meetings calling upon the Government to exercise a stricter control of prices and distribution; some speakers maintain that the rise in food prices is as much as 75% compared with the pre-war level.

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The Economic Department has issued regulations regarding the use of liquid fuel, gas and electricity as from 15th November. The use of electricity will be subjected to further restrictions. The lighting of streets will be restricted to give an economy of 30% as compared with the corresponding period last year. Shop window lights and various electric advertisements will be switched off at 20.30 and must not be switched on again before the evening of the next day. The electric power stations have to restrict supplies for this latter purpose, so that a saving of at least 15% will be achieved. The electric power stations will

carry out these measures under the supervision of the Department for War Industries and Labour Bureaux.

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The Federal Alcohol Office announced on the 30th October that owing to the increased difficulty in obtaining alcohol, it has been found necessary to reduce its consumption. As from 1st November the sale of spirits, stone fruit spirits, diluted alcohol, industrial alcohol and spirit for lamps has been reduced to 80% of the average monthly quantity consumed during the period of 1st July, 1939, to June 30th, 1941. Chemists and hospitals will be supplied as hitherto with surgical spirits to the full amount of their requirements. Firms buying alcohol and spirits from the Alcohol Office for purposes of re-sale are to supply their customers within the limits of their present supplies.

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The Office for War Industries and Labour announced on the same date that Charcoal used as fuel is to be rationed to secure just distribution and control of this material. As from 31st October, 1941, charcoal will be supplied only to holders of ration cards. Ration cards will be sent to drivers of charcoal-propelled vehicles within the next fortnight by the Timber Section of the Office for War Industries and Labour.

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The Department of War Industries and Labour announced that the second domestic coal quota of 35% of normal consumption for the middle of October was issued early to save railway trucks later when the lakes and the Rhine have frozen. There is no foundation for the rumour that the quota will be 50% of the normal consumption and consumers must take care to make the 35% last.

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Radio Schwarzenburg announced that as from the 6th November, 1941, fuel supplies for heating water will be fixed for the various consumers; consumers must adapt their needs to the quantities allotted to them. Supplementary allotments cannot be granted. Where an agreement exists to supply warm water obtained by means of solid or liquid fuel the consumer can only claim water one day in every fortnight.

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The Federal Authorities announce new regulations for the supply of tyres and inner tubes for industrial vehicles from November 8th. Tyres and inner tubes can only be bought and sold by special licence, for motor and electric lorries, coaches, agricultural and industrial tractors, motor and electrical carriages. The trade between owners of such vehicles is also con-



trolled. There will be a general census on November 8th. Between 3rd and 9th November all trade in these goods is suspended.

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The Department of War Industries and Labour is issuing the third clothing card, under the order of November 13th, 1941, which will be distributed with the food card. This covers the period to 31st December, 1942, and has 15 coupons for children born after 1st January, 1933, and 20 coupons for other persons. Whether more clothing cards will be distributed during 1942 depends on imports of raw material. The previous cards, which were to be valid until 31st December, 1941, will be valid until 30th June, 1942, so that both types of cards will be valid during the first six months of 1942.

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The Central Swiss Association of the Milk Trade met in Lucerne on the 26th October and the 400 people present agreed to a resolution against fixing the milk price for an entire year. A demand was made that the ration of cheese for agricultural workers and workers in heavy industries should be increased to 1 kg. per month.

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The annual report of the sugar factory Aarberg in the Canton of Berne, shows that this factory produces about half of Switzerland's present sugar requirements.

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Some years ago the viscose factory at Emmenbrücke near Lucerne tested a process to manufacture wool from wood which gave good results. To-day this factory produces 7,000-8,000 kg. of cellular wool per day, or about as much as 7-8000 sheep will produce in a year. The works in Heersbrugg—Widnau belonging to the same company will shortly open with a daily production capacity of 15-20,000 kg., which amount will be increased by another factory to be erected by Feldmühle Ltd., near Rorschach. The cellular wool serves to supplement the stocks of sheep wool at present in the country. The daily requirements of wool and cotton by the Swiss Textile Industry in normal times is about 135,000 kg. so that even now we are still far from a textile autarchy.

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The shortage of fuel has given a great incentive to coal-mining in Switzerland and new openings or increase of production are planned for the near future. At present Anthracite is mined in the Valais, where 3,500 tons were produced in July. An endeavour is made to reduce the ash content of the Valais bituminous coal (stone coal) by a modern treatment in order to increase its use. Lignite (brown coal) is produced in four mines, whereof the pits of Kandergrund in the Bernese Oberland and Sonnenberg near Lucerne produce about 1,000 tons per month. Near Boltigen and Erlenbach in the Simmental, work of sinking pits which are promising excellent coal is now in progress. Lignite is mined in the neighbourhood of Gotthalden on the lake of Zürich. Slate coal up to 9,000 tons a month is produced at Tagbau near Rüswil in the canton of Lucerne. Although the home mines produce only a very small percentage of the requirements, yet it is of the greatest importance to some industries, as it enables them to carry on.

Necessity is the mother of invention. Already during the last war a discovery was made that the pips of grapes contain an amount of about 10% of oil, which after refining can be used as table oil. Some engineering works have constructed a machine which separates the pips from the grapes-mare after distillation. By an order of the Federal Council the vine growers of the Valais have to deliver up their grape-mare to be "de-pipped" for oil production.

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At the present moment the world renowned engineering works of Escher Wyss in Zürich are building the 3 largest turbines in Switzerland. They are destined for the new Grimsel power works at Innertkirchen. Each of these turbines are calculated to develop 58,400 horse power. In the same works three Francis-Water turbines of 115,000 H.P. are being completed. They are the three largest engines of this kind ever built in Europe.

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The Bleriot airplane with its 70 h.p. Gnom Rotary motor with which the pioneer of Swiss aviation Bider made his record flights and which for a quarter of a century was stored in a shed, has lately been carefully repaired and overhauled. The well-known military flier Kuhn flew in it, without board-instruments, from Dübendorf to Spreitenbach, where the Swiss Aero club will keep it as a relic.

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A short time ago a tablet was fixed to the Post Office building in St. Fiden in the canton of St. Gall in memory of Joseph Greith, the Composer of the "Rütlilié," who lived in that house. The tablet bears the portrait of the Composer, who was born in Rapperswil in 1798 and died in St. Fiden in 1869.

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Towards the middle of October the Swiss radio reported that in the Portuguese ship *Corte Real* which has been sunk a valuable cargo of Swiss goods for export has been lost. The Portuguese Government has declared its intention not to transport foreign goods in future and thus the Swiss Government showed foresight when it created a small Swiss merchant fleet for Swiss exports. Referring to the sinking of the *Corte Real* Swiss postal authorities now announce that no Swiss mail was lost with the ship.

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Through the torpedoing of the Portuguese steamer "Corte Real" a considerable number of Swiss Watches went to the bottom of the sea. These were consigned to the U.S.A. as well as to other countries of the American Continent. The consignments had a value of several million francs.

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The sons and daughters of the late Mr. E. R. Huni in Paris, have established a fund in memory of their father, to be used to facilitate the re-patriation of Swiss in France who have lost their livelihood through the war. In this manner the work of the deceased will be continued; in the 50 years of his sojourn in the Argentine and Paris, he never relaxed to prove his loyalty and fidelity to his native land.

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Lisa Wenger, the talented authoress, died in Basle at the age of 83. Originally devoted to painting she obtained fame early in life by her literary efforts and obtained the coveted Schillerpreis for her novel "Der Rosenhof."