

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: 989

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.

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

Telephone: Clerkenwell 2321/2.

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

Telegrams: FREPRINCO, LONDON.

VOL. 23—No. 989.

LONDON, JUNE 27th, 1941.

PRICE 6d.

TO OUR SUBSCRIBERS.

Our subscribers will have gathered for some time that the financial aspect of our publication has been a source of considerable anxiety to the Publisher. If we have carried on in a limited measure it was due to the hope or anticipation — justified we thought — that some positive encouragement would be forthcoming from our authorities in Berne. We certainly acknowledge their sympathetic attitude but it has become clear that the continuance of the "Swiss Observer" remains entirely dependent upon the practical support of our Colony. We have no intention of launching a general appeal but we believe that by increasing the subscription rate we shall survive the present difficulties. The price of the S.O. will in future be six pence per copy, i.e. 6/- for 12 issues and it is our intention to go to press monthly.



NEWS AT RANDOM

On June 4th Federal Councillor M. Pilet-Golaz spoke in the National Council on Switzerland's foreign relations. He began by saying that the general public looked upon news and foreign policy from their own individual point of view, but reminded the members of the Council that the Government had to take Switzerland's neutrality into consideration in all their decisions and to act thereon. M. Pilet-Golaz said that the situation was not as dark as some appeared to think, although he had to warn his listeners that food supplies would become increasingly difficult as it was likely that more and more parts of the world would become involved in the war. It was only to be expected that the peoples waging war or on the verge of war could not always fully understand Swiss feeling, but as a whole one could say that Swiss relations with foreign countries were correct and amicable and could be termed fairly good. America, for instance, who was inclined to look upon Europe as a whole, had always taken special heed of Switzerland's needs and Switzerland could only hope that this consideration would continue, even if and when circumstances changed completely.

M. Pilet-Golaz added that the British Empire, although involved in a struggle for life and death, had always shown much understanding for Switzerland.

The Head of the Political Department then spoke of our relations with France and of French attempts to overcome her defeat. He said that the traditional spirit of friendship between France and ourselves was still alive and difficulties, where they arose, must be

ascribed to certain new developments in France. With Italy, he added, we had just concluded a new economic agreement and during these negotiations our neighbour in the South had shown much understanding for our needs, as he had done from the beginning of the war. Switzerland's trade relations with Germany had always been considerable and continued to be of extreme importance. Summing up, M. Pilet-Golaz said that our relations with Germany were most correct.

At regular intervals, Switzerland had had delicate economic negotiations with Germany. This was easily explained because they were weighty to-day — weighty in the sense that on the shoulders of Germany there rested a great part of the European Continent, weighty in a sense for Switzerland, which, owing to its geographical position and its needs, required raw materials. The negotiations had always been speedily concluded, although the major partner to the contract was busy elsewhere on more important enterprises. A firm attitude must be taken against false and regrettable rumours, which mostly did not emanate from Swiss soil and must be refuted. Switzerland had always tried to maintain good relations and to maintain her traditional policy of independence, freedom and neutrality. Understanding between nations was no empty word. Switzerland must show that it could also be translated into deeds.

* * *

Switzerland's problem of access to the sea is naturally greatly occupying the minds of the Federal Council and from a report in the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, published on May 22nd, one gathers that the development of river traffic has again been recommended. The Federal Council has decided to get in touch with the French Government, suggesting that negotiations be resumed for the development of the Rhone shipping. Discussions on this subject date back to the year 1918, when France started to connect them with the regulation of the water level of the Lake of Geneva with a view to facilitating its own electric power output. This proved to be a serious handicap and the French-Swiss Commission which met last time in June 1939, was never able to make much progress. From the Swiss side the contention has been heard frequently that the French do not really care for the development of Rhone shipping, but it looks as if there would now be a better chance to bring about some agreement. The fall of the Genissiat is just now in the process of being developed and it should be possible to do this with some regard for shipping. It is expected that the consideration of a tunnel, connecting the Rhone with the lake of Geneva will become a serious proposition, all the more so since France has begun to show some interest in connecting Savoy with the Mediterranean by way of the Rhone. This plan

seems about to be surveyed, but the geographical conditions have not yet been explored.

In the second place, the connection between the Lago Maggiore and the Adriatic was discussed. In this question there has been an exchange of opinions and advice from a technical point of view between Rome and Berne which have made it clear that the Italian Government favours this plan.

Since the beginning of the war, the work on the Strasbourg-Kehl-Istein section of the Rhein has been interrupted, but the German Government has been approached recently and it is to be expected that they will start again.

No new rationing measures have been introduced since we last went to Press, but it is felt everywhere that the strictest observance of those already in force is imperative. With a view to enforcing the measures and, to punish those who do not comply with them, the Economic Department some time ago created a special commission, whose duty it is to keep a watch on rationing and, if necessary, to impose penalties. As a rule the verdicts of these courts are not published, except in very bad cases, to underline, so to speak, the determination of the Economic Department to prevent any evasion of the rationing regulations. Following the introduction of two meatless days per week, Hotels, Restaurants and Canteens have been advised to adopt simpler menus than hitherto. As in England they are no longer allowed to serve more than one meat dish and where two courses are provided and one consists of meat, it is prohibited to serve fish or shellfish. In this way those in charge of rationing hope to be able to save 32,000,000 kgs. of meat per annum.

The cantonal voting on the "Reval" initiative (a repeal of the monopoly enjoyed by the Government for the distillation of spirits) was as follows. The plebiscite took place on Sunday, March 9th, and the end result was published in our March issue.

Cantons	For	Against
Zürich ...	34,062	89,946
Bern ...	47,508	63,326
Lucerne ...	34,021	9,253
Uri ...	3,750	1,712
Schwyz ...	10,478	2,194
Obwalden ...	3,412	660
Nidwalden ...	2,987	608
Glaris ...	2,449	4,326
Zug ...	5,030	1,631
Freiburg ...	11,130	11,282
Solothurn ...	15,599	11,545
Basel-Stadt ...	4,943	30,287
Basel-Land ...	7,811	8,567
Schaffhausen ...	2,344	9,842
Appenzell A.-Rh.	3,681	5,980
Appenzell I.-Rh.	1,221	1,000
St. Gallen ...	23,197	32,408
Graubünden ...	4,578	16,058
Aargau ...	33,703	28,749
Thurgau ...	8,135	20,268
Ticino ...	8,167	8,774
Vaud ...	22,654	53,869
Wallis ...	7,987	10,062
Neuchâtel ...	1,471	14,678
Genève ...	1,340	15,051
Total ...	301,658	452,076

The government loan of 300 million francs offered for subscription last month has been twice applied for during the first few days. About half is in the form of 3½% obligations with a currency of 12 years and the remainder 3% six-year treasury bonds.

Very satisfactory traffic returns are recorded by the Swiss Federal Railways due entirely to the rationing of petrol and the withdrawal from operation of about half of the registered motor vehicles. Competition of road traffic has practically been eliminated.

Contrary to expectations a bill to establish old age insurance in the canton of Zürich has been vetoed by the electors there being 49,000 for and 85,000 against. The proposal was supported by practically all the political parties.

A new Grosse Rat was elected in the canton Thurgau; its composition is about the same as in the former council the liberals and farmers holding the majority.

In the election for the Grosse Rat in Aargau the socialists, who before held 62 out of 186 mandates lost four seats whilst the Landesring (the new party controlled by Duttweiler) increased their strength from three to eight.

In the canton Vaud the citizens practically re-elected their representatives in the Grand Conseil the communists alone not finding any favour.

The Bâlois have returned the Grosse Rat without any of the former communist members, their 15 seats having gone to the Landesring which has thereby raised its force from five to 21 partisans.

Most of the cantons and towns continue to close their accounts with more or less substantial deficits. A notable exception is Glaris which thanks to retrenchments shows only Frs.32,000 on the wrong side whilst a deficit of over Frs.404,000 was originally budgeted. Great disappointment has been caused by the retirement of Gemeindepräsident Dr. Joachim Mercier after more than 20 years occupancy of the highest office in Glaris. — Appenzell I.-Rh. has actually managed to exhibit a surplus of Frs.226 in the accounts for the 12 months to December 1940.

The canton Valais balances the fiscal year 1940 with a surplus of nearly Frs.100,000.

Berne thanks to an increase in taxation has been able to close the municipal account with a surplus of over Frs.32,000 though the budget anticipated a deficit of over two million francs.

The underground hospital at Basle has now been completed and opened to the public. It is primarily intended for air-raided casualties and can deal with about 500 slight cases at a time and 180 operations during the day.

A Trade Pact is stated to have been concluded between Italy and our country. "The Times," June

5th, Geneva Correspondent telegraphed the following illuminating comment:—

New trade agreements have been concluded in Rome between Switzerland and Italy which lay emphasis on the traditional economic collaboration between the two countries. That collaboration is based on the importance and value of the exchanges which are nourished by the work of the Swiss colonies in Italy and of the Italians residing in Switzerland. It recognizes the necessity for Switzerland to maintain her export trade, and for that purpose Italy renews her assurance that Swiss goods for export may find means of transit through Italy, and especially through Genoa.

The tonnage so far under the direction of the Federal Shipping Office at Basle amounts to about 140,000 tons of which about 60,000 tons is in the service of the Lisbon-Genoa transshipments. A new steamer of 9,650 tons gross has recently been acquired from Panama and is to be named the "Dent du Midi." On the other hand the "Sabina," a chartered ship flying the Spanish flag, and carrying a cargo of maize and oats was sunk by mine or torpedo in the Mediterranean.

The postal service over the alpine roads and passes is to be reduced to a minimum owing to petrol shortage the most vital connections being maintained only. Hikers will therefore have the time of their lives.

The Federal Council is recommending a scheme for reclaiming marsh land in the St. Gall Rheintal the cost of which is estimated to be about 25 million francs.

About two thousand delegates from all parts of our country attended a meeting at Zurich styled the "Eidgenössische Sammlung" under the chairmanship of Dr. Robert Tobler. It re-affirmed the 26 points of the former "National Front" and demanded freedom of speech and propaganda so as to enlighten our people in the principles which "entitle Switzerland on historic grounds to demand its appropriate place in the new Europe."

The judgment in connection with the regrettable incident at the children's home Monrevers in Fribourg when eleven infants lost their lives through being inoculated with a poisonous serum instead of a diphtheria vaccin has caused some disagreeing comment. The court proceedings brought to light a lamentable slackness in the handling and control of toxins and antitoxins in the bacterial laboratory. The director Dr. Maurice Arthus was acquitted; two of the assistants, Lt.-Col. Henri Perrier and Melle Adeline Charrière were sentenced to three months imprisonment "avec sursis" for "imprudent" homicide.

A new Federal topographic institute and printing works have been officially opened on May 9th by Federal Councillor Dr. Kobelt, at Wabern near Berne. New official charts and maps of the country are being issued though none of them will be available to the public during the present emergency.

The Swiss watch industry is celebrating this year the 200th anniversary of the death of its founder

Daniel Jeanrichard. Born in 1665 at La Sagne (Neuchâtel) he was a blacksmith by trade and managed to repair a watch that some stranger brought to his smithy; this — so the records tell us — set him thinking with the result that he devised and made the requisite tools and in due course produced a watch of his own manufacture. He later on settled down in Le Locle opening an atelier where a number of workmen were taught the intricacies of his new trade.

Over 1,600 Swiss students inscribed at the Zurich university were mobilised during the last winter term only 4.5% of the total being exempt from military service.

The constant growth of administrative offices deemed necessary to carry on the functions of our Confederation has brought about an acute shortage of suitable accommodation in Berne which the existing building restrictions cannot remedy. On the other hand there are many towns in our country with large buildings standing idle mainly on account of war conditions — notably where League of Nations activities were centered — and many of the places so affected have voiced a demand for housing some of the departments. The question is being discussed in the present session of our Parliament. Opposition to this "decentralisation" is raised by Bernese interests which are naturally disinclined to allow some of these lucrative positions to be apportioned elsewhere.

A special postage stamp to stress the vital necessity of an increased cultivation of the soil is now being sold throughout Switzerland. It was designed by the well-known Ticinese sculptor Aldo Patocchi of Mendrisio and illustrates agriculture. Of a 10 cts. denomination it is larger than the ordinary size.

One of the industries still flourishing is the manufacture of bicycles, something like 160,000 machines being turned out annually. It is estimated that the number of cyclists exceeds one million so that saturation point as far as home market is concerned may be reached in the near future. It is only about ten years ago since cycle making was taken up in Switzerland, the demand then relying chiefly on imports from England.

CITY SWISS CLUB.

Messieurs les membres sont avisés que

L'ASSEMBLEE MENSUELLE

aura lieu Samedi, le 5 juillet à 12.45 p.m. au Brown's Hotel, Dover Street, (near Green Park Tube Station).

ORDRE DU JOUR :

Procès-verbal.
Admissions.
Démissions.

Proposition de
changement de Statutes
Divers.

Déjeuner à 1.0 h. précises. Le lunch sera suivi d'une causerie par l'écrivain suisse bien connu M. Robert Crottet. Les participants sont priés de bien vouloir s'inscrire au plus tôt auprès de Mons. H. Binggely, 167, Clapham Road, S.W.9 (Téléphone: Reliance 4150).

Le Comité.

Prof. Ernst Laur, the distinguished secretary of the Swiss Farmers Union, who is so closely identified with every movement to advance agriculture in our country, celebrated on March 27th, at Effingen (Aargau), his seventieth anniversary in the best of health.

* * *

Former Federal Judge Arthur Couchepin died in Lausanne at the age of 73. Born in Martigny (Valais) he studied law in Sion and Berne and joined his father's legal practice at the age of 24. He was elected a member of the Federal Tribunal in 1916 which he presided in 1935/36.

* * *

States Councillor Dr. Fritz Hauser died at the age of 57 at Berne, where he had been attending the parliamentary session; he had been ailing for some years and succumbed to a sudden attack before the arrival of the doctor. The deceased, a fervent though unconventional socialist, was already actively interested in politics when at the age of 22 he was a teacher at the Basle Primarschule. Five years later during which time he had advanced his education by self-tuition and obtained the doctorat, he was elected to the Grosse Rat; his rise to political honours was quick and uninterrupted, in 1937/38 he was president of the National Council. Dr. Hauser's death constitutes a great loss to Basle where he was extremely popular among all parties.

* * *

A fatal street accident has robbed Geneva of a widely known and respected patriot in the person of Dr. Henri Dutrembley; for the last 42 years he had been the devoted medical practitioner at the Asile de Loëx. In his younger years he was a zealous alpine climber and a champion rifleman.

* * *

Dr. Otto Brunner-Waser died in Zurich at the age of 64 after a long and painful illness; owner of one of the oldest pharmacies, he at all times took a leading interest in the sporting and social activities of his native town. In the army he was a colonel of infantry.

* * *

A well-known skiing expert, Albert Piquet senior, from Winterthur, made a fatal fall when taking a party over the Tödi; he was thrown down a snow covered crevice which his daughter had just successfully negotiated.

* * *

Dr. J. Hofmann, Director of the Agricultural Training School Strickhof in Zürich, has resigned. He was on the teaching staff since 1902 and in 1917 he took over the direction of the Strickhof. Dr. Hofmann was responsible for the linking up of a number of agricultural institutions, experimental and otherwise, with the Strickhof, such as institutions concerned with the cultivation of fruit trees, vegetable production and poultry farming. He was also responsible for the creation of a special office to advise farmers on administrative questions. To the many farmers who have attended his school, he was more than just a teacher, he was always eager to keep in touch with them and to help them with their farming experiences.

* * *

The postman of Eptingen (Baselland) is said to have covered 231,000 km. or five times round the earth during his daily peregrinations; he is Mr. Robert Bürgin who has now retired after 35 years faithful service.

The organisation for the purpose of bringing about a closer contact between Swiss children living abroad and those in Switzerland has once again this year made great efforts to further this cause. Its council met recently in St. Gall, and it became known afterwards that 1,000 Swiss girls and boys coming from abroad will be able to spend a holiday in the mountains. There will probably be many coming from occupied countries and unfortunately none this year from England as available communications are not such as to encourage travelling.

* * *

The town of Zurich has decided to present Beauvais, famous for its Cathedral, which still stands, and for its beautiful carpets, with a Hut for the benefit of school children. The Hut is planned to house 40 children and everything is to be provided: beds, crockery and other necessities. In doing this, Zurich is following the example given by the people of Fribourg who chose Breteuil as a "Home Fribourgeois" equally well-equipped.

* * *

Over 6,200 school children from the canton Ticino travelling in special trains made a pilgrimage to the Rütli and other historic places in the district.

* * *

Among the English people stranded in Switzerland and unable to return home is a happy group of children stationed in Davos where they are undergoing treatment for tubercular complaints. They hail from Birmingham — 27 of them — and their stay and cure is due to the initiative of our compatriot, Mr. Christian Kunzle, who as far back as 1932 turned his chateau at Davos into a sanatorium.

SWISS STOCK EXCHANGE PRICES.

Through the courtesy of the London Office of the Swiss Bank Corporation we are enabled to publish the quotations of some of the leading stocks ruling on June 5th:—

	May 7th.	June 5th.
Bankverein	383	385
Kreditanstalt	447	453
Rückversicherung	2820	2900
Ciba	5100	5175
Nestlé	842	830
Aluminium Neuhausen	3240	2860 ex right
Columbus	208	267
Sulzer	890	950 ex div.
Brown Boveri	227	246
Wehranleihe 3% 1936	101%	101%
SBB JURA-SIMPLON	99 $\frac{3}{4}$ %	100%

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