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The Swiss Observer

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NEWS AT RANDOM

Circumstances beyond our control have forced us to reduce again the number of pages of our issue. Readers will probably realise the difficulty of obtaining regular news from our country under present conditions, but the few items assembled below are believed to be reliable.

—ED. S.O.

Federal

Many post-war problems have been raised in the present session of our Parliament without the Federal Council committing itself in any way. The prohibition of fresh newspapers and certain political publications as well as the general press censorship have been severely criticised. The continued suppression of the communist party is not justified—it is maintained—as they cannot be charged with any act punishable under our laws.

* * *

Federal Councillor Stampfli, the President of the Confederation, has issued an urgent appeal enjoining everybody to do the utmost in maintaining a regular supply of the necessities of life. The continued diminution in the import of foodstuffs forces us to extract the highest possible yield from our own soil.

* * *

According to "The Times," May 22nd, Federal Councillor Kobelt, the Chief of the Military Department, stated in the course of a speech delivered at the centenary celebration of the Swiss Y.M.C.A. that Switzerland would not be in a position after the war to lay down her arms even if a new world organization pledged a perpetual peace. She would sacrifice her neutrality and independence the day she relaxed her defences and placed herself under the military protection of foreign Powers or of a world organization.

* * *

Replying to a question in the House of Commons on June 14th, Mr. Eden (Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs), paid us the following compliment: "I think the Swiss Government are already aware of the gratitude felt by his Majesty's Government for the many services which they have rendered us as Protecting Power. But

I gladly avail myself of this opportunity to give public expression to the very warm gratitude of his Majesty's Government for the action of the Swiss Government in giving asylum and ministering to the needs of large numbers of refugees and escaped prisoners of war of many nationalities within their territory.

* * *

A Swiss Federation of labour parties (?) has been constituted at Basle when delegates from different cantons were addressed by M. Nicole from Geneva and other demagogues. Resolutions were carried demanding the re-establishment of the right of meeting in public, an adjustment in the cost of living and an early resumption of normal relations with Soviet Russia.

* * *

Over 114,000 signatures are contained on the lists deposited with the Federal Chancellery demanding a resumption of diplomatic relations with Soviet Russia.

* * *

At a meeting of the Socialist Parliamentary Group presided over by Mr. Robert Grimm and held at Zurich, Federal Councillor Nobs, our Minister of Finance, hinted at economic readjustments necessitated by post-war conditions and stressed the vital need of counteracting without further delay the expected crisis on the labour market.

* * *

An official caution has been issued by the Department of the Interior with reference to the purchase of foreign art treasures. It is added that these objects are often imported for political reasons and prices are paid which do not always reflect their real value. It is intimated that some measure of control is likely to be introduced.

* * *

In an address to a local Liberal Party meeting at Lucerne, Federal Councillor Stampfli is credited with the

CITY SWISS CLUB.

Messieurs les Membres sont avisés que

L'ASSEMBLEE MENSUELLE

aura lieu Mardi, le 11 Juillet, 1944 à 6h., dîner à 6h. 30 au Dorchester Hotel, Park Lane, London. Cette assemblée sera en forme d'un "Bierabig."

Les Membres sont priés de s'inscrire par écrit au plus tard le 8 Juillet auprès de M. P. A. Moehr, Hon. Secr., Imperial House, Kingsway, London, W.C.2 Prière de s'abstenir de téléphoner.

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statement that he expected increased economic pressure on our country by one of the belligerent parties. During the last two years we had voluntarily reduced our war industry reserved for export and if this policy could be accentuated without causing sudden unemployment he would be happy if this would be considered a friendly gesture towards the Allies.

* * *

While the harsh travelling restrictions between our two countries have recently been moderated on this side with probably no practical effect, news comes from Berne that the mail service from Switzerland was suspended on June 13th due to the stoppage of the French railway traffic.

Cantonal

Practically the whole of the Grosse Rat of the canton Uri has been re-elected for another period of four years; it consists of 35 conservatives, 12 radicals and 4 socialists.

* * *

The canton Unterwalden is receiving a Federal subsidy of 778,000 francs towards the correction and canalisation of the torrents at Eckerwill.

* * *

The oldest Swiss citizen, Alois Gabriel, a former jobmaster, died in Ennetburgen (Nidwalden) at the age of 103.

In order to meet the rapidly increasing demand for telephones the dialling system in Zurich will be increased from five to six figures. New exchanges are expected to be available in August. The 1st four figures being assigned to private subscribers limited their number to below ten thousand.

* * *

At a delegates' meeting of Rotary Clubs held at Zurich Professor Alfred Stucki of the Ecole d'Ingénieurs at Lausanne was elected "Governor" for the term 1944/45. The delegates were received officially by the City President who expressed the hope that the Rotary movement would achieve the civilising mission to which it was devoted.

* * *

Professor Dr. Eugen Steiner, the famous biologist, died in Zurich at the age of 83.

* * *

Over a thousand more inhabitants are registered in the canton Baselstadt to end December, 1943, as compared with a year ago. In the figure of 171,908 are included 8.1 per cent. foreigners—the lowest proportion during the last hundred years.

* * *

The Grosse Rat in Basle has declared August 26th a public holiday, it being the 500th anniversary of the Battle of St. Jakob a/d Birs.

* * *

Wilhelm Meyer-Brotbeck, the oldest Basle citizen, died at the age of over 102 years.

* * *

Among the victims of the bombardment of Schaffhausen was Regierungsrat Dr. Gustav Schoch, aged 43; he has been closely associated with cantonal administration ever since he completed his studies. Of the industrial concerns the majority has been able to resume trading, some of them in a limited measure only, owing to the difficulty of replacing stock and machinery. The building and leather manufactory "Kessler" was, however, so completely destroyed that over a hundred hands lost their employment.

* * *

A certain number of inmates of the Schaffhausen prison who were temporarily liberated by the collapse of one of the prison walls during the recent bombardment have been amnestied in recognition of their unselfish services in carrying into safety treasures from the adjoining museum.

* * *

The town of St. Gall has decided to change its present coat of arms; the new design embodies the traditional bear.

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M. Johann Schneider-Maeder, who died last January in St. Gall, left a legacy of 100,000 francs for philanthropic purposes.

* * *

The Grisons government has appealed to the Federal Council to devise some measure of relief in favour of the artisan class of the canton which has never confronted such a serious crisis.

* * *

A forest fire at Kalandia (Grisons) which broke out at the end of last month caused some anxiety on account of the strong wind and necessitated the organization of something like 200 watching posts.

* * *

As a further indication of their great satisfaction at the abandonment of the local power scheme the inhabitants of the parish of Rheinwald have made a collection in favour of refugees which has produced 1,400 francs.

* * *

In the canton Thurgau a radical, Mr. W. K. Schmid from Frauenfeld, has been elected President of the Grosse Rat and a socialist, M. Roth, President of the Statsrat.

* * *

National Councillor Pierre Rochat died in Lausanne at the age of 45 from the after-effects of a cycle accident. At the early age of 32 he was elected to our second chamber where he presided over the radical-democratic group.

* * *

A good deal of damage was caused by a fire that started in a small way in the Aletschwald and kept ablaze for ten days; it was only mastered after motor pumps had been carried up the mountain-side on the backs of mules. Water was obtained from the glacier. Several mountain chalets were burnt out and about 700,000 trees destroyed.

* * *

The Neuchatel Conseil Général has voted a credit of 65,000 francs for the restoration of the "Temple de Serrières," an outstanding religious building of the canton.

* * *

Col. Armin Müller, at one time instructor to our artillery, died in Geneva at the age of 89. For five years he held the unusual post of inspector-general to the Moroccan police to which he was appointed by the Algeciras Conference in 1906.

Army

General Guisan in announcing the calling-up of more troops on June 16th in order to strengthen the frontier positions declared that no particular danger was expected from any one of the belligerent powers, but that the threat may assume entirely unexpected and novel forms.

* * *

The landing of foreign air crews in our country is now quite a common occurrence, but they do not always follow the instructions of our fighters so meticulously as the three American fortresses whose 28 members were interned unharmed on June 13th; two machines were



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MEAT ASPIC

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directed to Dübendorf and one to Magadino in the Ticino.

* * *

The two Federal Chambers in their joint session on June 7th rejected by a large majority the appeal against the death sentence imposed by a military tribunal on two members of an espionage gang. For over a year and a half they had managed to gain access to secret emplacements vital for our defence and had communicated the result of their observations to a foreign power. The two delinquents were shot the same night, one being K. J. Roos from Zug and the other a Liechtensteiner, thus being the first foreigner sentenced to death in our country for espionage.

* * *

A mosaic of over twenty different nationals (and races) is now scattered over Swiss soil; one batch of over 250 Indians crossing our frontier near Basle, having escaped from a prison camp at Epinal about 65 miles away. It is believed that another 1,500 are hiding in the woods of the Vosges waiting for an opportunity of migrating south. One Moslem soldier who was shot while escaping was carried all the way by his comrades for burial in Switzerland. These prisoners are sent by special trains into quarantine camps in the interior where the problem of their identification presents unforeseen difficulties to our authorities. Other "unusual tourists" arrived in Basle one Saturday night, leaving their passports behind at a Mulhouse location reserved for Russians.

Traffic

It is unofficially stated that at the beginning of this month all British navicerts to Mediterranean ports were cancelled. Several ships flying the Swiss flag were thus prevented from unloading their cargo so vital for our livelihood. Rumours have it that goods passing on the last part of their journey through enemy-occupied country were indiscriminately confiscated.

* * *

The commission of the States Council (Ständerat) recommends the immediate completion of the double track for the whole of the St. Gotthard line.

* * *

A number of privately-owned railways will receive considerable subsidies under a Federal decree passed just before the beginning of the war; thus the Furka-Oberalp will obtain 1,2 million francs, the South Eastern one million and a similar amount will probably go to the Rhaetian Railways.

* * *

Two small local companies, the "Erlenbach-Zweisimmen" and the "Spiez-Erlenbach" have joined hands and will be known in future as the "Simmentalbahn."

* * *

The latest bulletin of the Swiss Federal Railways gives an interesting survey of the manner in which the pupils of a primary school in Zurich were recently made familiar with the working of our railway system. In the class-lessons the signals were fully explained with the aid of coloured diagrams and the various figures and signs on the coaches were illustrated. The principles of the brakes and electric traction was made clear. With the co-operation of the railway authorities visits were arranged subsequently to stations, shunting yards and sheds, as well as to a power signal box.

* * *

At a members' meeting in Lucerne of the National Office of tourism the President outlined plans for the future, stating that the agencies abroad were continuing their activities. He was of the opinion that in laying out and equipping new aerodromes special consideration should be given to the requirements of international tourism.

Economical

The following summary of an official "Swiss Electrical Survey" is taken from "Electrical Review," June 2nd:

An official survey of the Swiss electrical industry shows its growth since 1900. A table gives the plant capacity in 1900 as 131,000 kW., producing about 200 million kWh., and in 1940 as 2,034,000 kW., producing about 8,200 million kWh.

The report goes on to say that Switzerland has a total potential capacity of 21,000 million kWh. and that production is developing at an average rate of 220 million kWh. per annum. Yearly consumption per capita is 1,600 kWh., which places Switzerland third among the countries of the world, with Canada first and Norway second. The Association of Swiss Electricians and Union of Power Producers have a ten-year plan which will not only include the building of very large plants, but the expansion of smaller ones and the stepping up of their efficiency. The report expresses the belief that over-production is not to be feared. It stresses the need

for simplification of tariffs and some reorganization in the industry so that the utmost use can be made of water power.

In 1941 Switzerland possessed 6,030 power plants but 95 per cent. of the total capacity was contained in 130 of these. Water power is responsible for 99 per cent. of the total output. Ownership is divided as follows: 57 per cent. canton or municipally owned plant; 10 per cent. mixed enterprises; and 33 per cent. private enterprise.

Rationing

An official warning has been issued that the allocation of soap may have to be suppressed after this month for a short period in order to preserve existing stocks.

* * *

A somewhat alarming report has been cabled by the "Times" Geneva correspondent and is published in its issue of June 17th, which says: "Herr Stampfli, President of the Swiss Confederation, issued an urgent appeal to the population as well as to trade and industry to supply as much labour as possible for agriculture. The situation with regard to food, he said, was alarming, as all supplies from outside had been stopped. Home-grown supplies from Swiss soil must be developed to the fullest extent. One single railway is still connecting Geneva with France through Haute Savoie, where every day more lines and roads have been cut off by partisans." Other reports affirm that the Federal Council is preparing a protest against the requisitioning by military commands of food trucks in transit from the Iberian Peninsula.

Humanitarian

A superbly printed magazine commemorating eighty years' activity by the International Red Cross Committee has just reached this country. All sides of this noble work are brilliantly recorded with the help of beautiful illustrations and outstanding characters like Florence Nightingale, Clara Barton, etc., are called back to our mind. A limited number of copies are available and can be obtained personally from the offices of the International Red Cross Committee at 6s., or at 6s. 6d. by post (which is not advisable on account of the likely damage).

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The Montana Vermala section of the Swiss Alpine Club has decided to construct a new hut (cabane) on the Col Porchet, fitted out with the latest improvements.

* * *

A sensational invention in the sphere of television is said to have been perfected by Prof. Fischer of the Zurich Institute for Technical Physics. Lamps with an extraordinary capacity will be able to project filmstrips on screens with a surface of anything up to 100 square meters. Films made in any part of the world can be transmitted by underground wire and thrown on the screen of local cinemas.

* * *

The movement of 100 glaciers officially controlled during the last year showed that seven had advanced, four remained stationary and 89 are receding.

* * *

Mrs. Ernst Hofstetter, wife of the Swiss Consul in Scotland, died at her home, the "Villa Suzanne," Balloch, Loch Lomond, on Thursday, 25th May. Mrs. Hofstetter, who was in her 41st year, passed away peacefully after a long and trying illness. During her stay in Balloch she had taken part in many activities and assisted to a great extent deserving and charitable objects. She was closely identified with the work of the W.V.S. The sympathy of a wide circle of friends will be extended to Mr. Hofstetter and his two children in their sad loss.

* * *

It grieves us to mention that our old friend P. Hilfiker, the popular chancellor of the Swiss Legation is suffering badly from heart trouble and has now been laid up for several weeks. We feel sure that the prospects of him having to sign our new passports before long will further a speedy recovery.

PROF. MAURICE LUGEON (LAUSANNE.)

Professor Maurice Lugeon, of the University of Lausanne, a distinguished Swiss geologist, has received a further signal honour in this country. He has been selected by the Council of the Royal Society as a Foreign Member. You cannot join the Royal Society by application and recommendation as you can most scientific societies. A limited number of Fellows is admitted every year, chosen for their merit in science by the Council of the Royal Society. This selection is always of great interest to everybody interested in Science. Perchance in this small list may be included one of your Friends. The field of possible Foreign Members is the wide circle of eminent scientific men all the world over. Six were selected by the Council for election by the Royal Society, two from America, two from Sweden, one from Australia and one from Switzerland.

We offer our sincere congratulation to our distinguished countryman.

In 1938 Professor Lugeon was given the highest award of the Geological Society of London, the Wollaston Medal. When he came to London to receive it, the President, Professor O. T. Jones, F.R.S., Cambridge, addressed him as follows:

The Council of the Geological Society has awarded to you the Wollaston Medal as a mark of their appreciation of the services you have rendered to geological science

by your brilliant and inspiring contributions to the study of the problem of mountain building, etc., etc. . . .

From the reply of Professor Lugeon, the following sentences are extracted as of possible interest to all of us:

"Votre haute marque d'estime a pour nous, les Suisses, une autre signification et je puis vous dire combien le geste que vous venez de faire pour l'un d'entre nous a eu et aura un profond retentissement dans mon pays. N'oublions pas en effet, ceci n'est plus de la science, mais il faut le dire, que dans la tourmente actuelle il y a peu de pays ou règne par la démocratie, la liberté totale de pensée et la liberté totale de dire ce que l'on pense. Non seulement nous sommes liés par la science, mais nous le sommes également par nos libertés."

The Royal Society was founded in 1660 and received a Charter from Charles II. It is housed in Burlington House.

E.M.

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We gratefully acknowledge "donations" from the following subscribers:

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