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The Swiss Observer

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NEWS AT RANDOM

Federal

It is unofficially stated that negotiations for a loan to the Netherlands government for a 1,000 million Frs. have been completed. Part of the amount will represent the value of manufactured goods to be delivered such as Diesel engines for Dutch ships.

* * *

It is confidentially anticipated that the ban on the Swiss communist party and its activities will be lifted in the near future.

* * *

“Anyone who has admittedly over-paid his war-profits tax is not necessarily entitled to a refund” was declared by Fed. Counc. Nobs in the National Council. Such surplus may be retained by the treasury and turned over to the unemployment fund. He added that the return from the war-profits tax has so far been disappointing: in the first world war 800 million frs. had been collected (half the total incurred by our country for defence purposes) while during the present war only 270 million frs. were scraped together, which was barely a 30th of the total war cost.

* * *

The Federal Council has appointed as our new minister in Paris, M. Henri de Torrenté, so far secretary of legation. He has recently returned from Paris where he was on an important mission.

* * *

M. Xavier de Gaulle, an elder brother of the great Frenchman bearing his name, has been appointed French consul-general at Geneva; he and his family, took refuge in Switzerland in November 1942.

* * *

In the course of a speech delivered on 2nd January, 1945, our new President von Steiger warned his audience that Switzerland had to be prepared for greater trials than encountered so far, and that the immediate danger was increasing.

* * *

One of the last official acts of Fed. President Stampfli was the bestowal of a specially struck golden medal to Prof. Max Huber on his 70th anniversary in recognition of the magnanimous services he had ren-

dered to Switzerland and humanity in general as a great scholar and noble-hearted world citizen.

* * *

Since the Office of Swiss Customs Statistics has published its monthly reports there has never been such a low quantity figure of imports been registered as there was in October of last year. The 10,700 truck loads of import goods which were allowed to pass the frontiers were only a third of these in the previous October and only one-sixth of the average monthly imports in 1938. The export figure in quantity reached only 40 per cent. of the monthly average for the last five years before the war, but represented in value (nearly 137 million francs) a new record. Unfortunately the proportion for November will be thoroughly changed, for the long expected traffic connection with the South of France and Spain, i.e., the ports of the Mediterranean has again been completely stopped.

* * *

In spite of high prices and increased taxation, the savings deposits at the Swiss banks has increased by 400 million francs last year. They stand now at over six milliards. The number of savings bank books are now about the same as the number of the total population of the country, namely 4,11 millions.

Cantonal

Over 350,000 inhabitants are stated to be residing in the town of Zurich at the end of November last.

* * *

In the municipal council of Langenthal, a former bourgeois majority, has had to give way to Socialist control. The socialists are now occupying 5 of the 9 seats.

* * *

Under the patronage of the Swiss Skiing Association and with the assistance of various Benevolent Societies, 500 boys and girls will again this year enjoy

CITY SWISS CLUB

Owing to special circumstances, the February Meeting has not been definitely fixed, so that at the time of going to press a date cannot be given, but the Members will be circularised as soon as specific arrangements have been made.

THE COMMITTEE.

a week ski-ing camp, the boys in Arosa and the girls in St. Moritz. The lucky ones have already been selected by lots from amongst a great number of applicants and are looking forward with joy to these happy days to come in the mountains of the Grisons.

Mlle. Marie-Louise Magnin, who died recently at Crêt — her birthplace in the canton of Fribourg — bequeathed Frs. 35,000 to local charitable institutions.

Over 10,000 children who have been evacuated from Mulhouse (Alsace) have passed through Basle at the rate of about 1,000 per day.

Two vacancies on the Conseil d'Etat of the canton Vaud were filled by the two candidates proposed by the radical party; they are MM. Rodolphe Rubattel and Gabriel Despland, who secured small majorities from 38 per cent of the electorate.

In the course of a debate on finance in the Grand Conseil of the canton Valais it was stated that the budget expenses up to the year 1929 used to be in the neighbourhood of 10 million frs. and they had gradually risen to the present record figure of 20 million frs.

The Maire of St. Imier, M. William Reymond has been temporarily suspended while an official enquiry is investigating alleged irregularities.

Winds and gales of hurricane force continue to visit the region of Neuchatel lake. At Cudrefin three

week-end chalets were uprooted by the waves and practically destroyed. Between Neuchatel and Auvrier part of the tram-way track has been washed away and the cellars of the houses along the road have been flooded.

Army

Sentences of death for violation of military secrets were promulgated by a military tribunal against S.C. W. G. Laubscher, a Zurich Merchant, Fusilier H. F. Grimm, dental mechanic at Zurich, and Fourrier Samuel Plüss, a Basle merchant; an appeal for mercy to the Federal assembly has been rejected. The sentence was carried out on 8th December, 1944 with the exception of Plüss, who is stated to be in hospital.

Courts-Martial passed further sentences for espionage in connection with the three soldiers sentenced to death for treason. The sentences, ranging from four years to life imprisonment, were passed on eight Germans, mostly hotel-keepers and traders, and on nine Swiss, of whom four were soldiers and one an officer, and on six persons now living in Germany. Lighter sentences were passed on others, among whom were a great number of Germans. Their activities were spread over 1941, 1942 and the beginning of 1943.

The U.S.A. has officially admitted violation of Swiss territory on the 5th, 8th, 9th, 10th and 11th of September 1944, and has offered reparation for any damage that may have been caused by the offending aircraft.

The Presidents of both the National and States Councils addressed their felicitations to General Guisan, who celebrated, at the beginning of last month, his 70th anniversary.

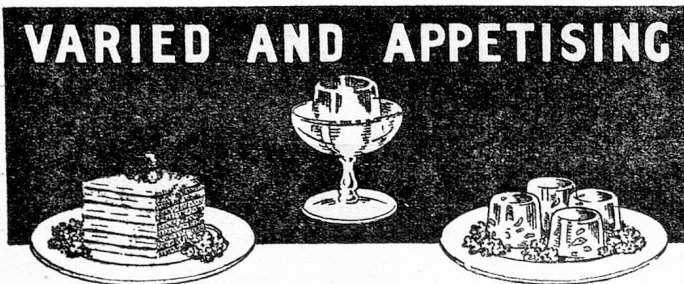
During 1944 Switzerland had 255 air raid warnings as compared with 489 during the first four years of the war.

Traffic

Although the Franco-Swiss frontier has been open for something like three months, hopes and efforts for a resumption of goods traffic have been in vain. Some consolation will be found in the fact that the post (not air-mail) is functioning fairly regularly and slowly, even the London papers are arriving within 24 days after publication.

The keen competition between Basle and Zurich for the possession of an airport which is to link up with the international air lines, is joined by a newcomer from the Canton Schwyz; our Defence Department is said to have approved plans for the construction of an extensive airfield at Rotenturm designed to develop international civil aviation.

A recent Swiss broadcast referred to the introduction by Swissair of a new small passenger aircraft designed particularly for operation in mountainous country. It is stated to be capable of landing and taking-off in very restricted space. Capacity is given as five passengers and maximum speed as 145 m.p.h.



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Economical

Owing to import restrictions the food quotas allowed to hotels and restaurants have been reduced for the present month and unless the position improves further reductions may be expected in February.

* * *

The consumption of beer in Switzerland has shown a marked decline due, it is believed, to the increased retail price and the deterioration of the quality.

* * *

Economic sanctions against Switzerland have been the battle cry of practically all the English dailies with the notable exception of "The Times." A free competition in sensational headlines has been set loose, such as "Moves to stop Swiss trade with Germany" (*Ev. Standard*) "U.S. will stop Swiss trade if..." (*Herald*), "Pro-Nazi campaign in Switzerland" (*Star*), "Our supplies to Switzerland cut off," etc., etc. The ball was set going by a guarded statement to a press representative made on January 3rd by Mr. Stettinius, U.S. Secretary of State, to the effect that "the whole of the economic relations with Switzerland is under consideration." We very much hope that this is the case considering that our western frontier has been open to trading with the Allies for months; if so far no concrete plans or arrangements have eventuated, our Federal authorities can hardly be reproached for this unsatisfactory state of affairs. Our neutrality may have been somewhat slanting, dictated by the inborn will for existence or survival but certainly not sentiment. Without raw materials, specially coal, our country was forced to pay the price (not necessarily in cash) exacted by the one and only source of supply open to us. It requires little intelligence to notice that these enforced bargains are ceasing to operate thus allowing our people at home to follow their natural inclination. The period of transition will hit our people at home severely and it will take some time until the new orientation has asserted itself; according to what has transpired from the deliberations at Teheran our country has been placed — rather arbitrarily we venture to say — under the economic sphere of British influence. The following is a translation of an official communiqué that has been issued at Berne to the Swiss press:

"The Swiss Federal Council hope that the latest news from Washington concerning allied trade discussions with Switzerland and alluding to coming pressure emanated from non-informed press opinion rather than from official quarters.

Up to the date of M. Hotz's declaration to the Swiss press no formal approach had been made by the State Department which would in any way contradict this assumption. The Swiss Federal Council stopped at the end of September, 1944, all exports of war materials to the belligerents; even before that and certainly since Switzerland regained in the spring of 1944 a certain freedom of movement the export of war essentials to Germany has continually decreased. The embargo on war material covered not only arms, munition and explosives, but also ball bearings, fuses, or aeroplanes and spare parts, telephones, telegraph instruments, radio apparatus and spare parts. At the same date the Federal Council came to an agreement with Germany according to which new quotas would only be granted in proportion to the German imports into Switzer-

land already effected. Since October 1st it can be said that Swiss exports to Germany are taking place on the basis of full reciprocity with the result that, for instance, in the month of October no new quotas could be granted to Germany even for ordinary consumption goods. For November the quota was small; it can therefore be said that Swiss exports to Germany are gradually receding. There is no question of allowing exports to go to Germany pending German delivery. It would, therefore, be correct to say that the American press campaign which we have witnessed lately is hardly justified by the situation prevailing to-day.

However, as long as Germany continues to provide Switzerland with vital raw materials Switzerland has to export goods in return, for when the import of coal and iron ceases entirely the situation in Switzerland will become extremely serious from the point of view of employment. The various raw materials imported from Germany form the basis of Swiss industry, as well as of certain schemes for the prevention of unemployment.

The Swiss can say that they have done all they could do within the framework of their policy of neutrality to satisfy the Allies. Regarding transit it must be remembered that Switzerland has duties under an international treaty. Being a landlocked country she has always had to defend freedom of transit and therefore when it comes to fulfilling obligations, she cannot refuse to do so. In any case



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Switzerland has never permitted transport of war material through Switzerland via the Gotthard or any other line.

Switzerland's behaviour has always been based on the principle of adhering strictly to treaties concluded by her.

The problem of transit through France is a very urgent one indeed, since 30,800 trucks with goods en route for Switzerland and provided with B.L.S.T. navicerts are detained in Spain and Portugal and to get these goods through France, Switzerland needs not only the consent of the Allied governments, but also the consent of the military authorities.

The Federal Council feel that they have done all in their power to satisfy the Allied governments as far as is compatible with Swiss independence, and dignity, and they hope that as they are after all dealing with friendly powers, some understanding can be reached. At the same time they have no illusions that the period into which we are entering will be a very difficult one indeed."

Humanitarian

The Swiss Red Cross has organised a special medical mission which left for Belgium on 26th December 1944; it is financed by the "don Suisse" and consists of four doctors, nine nurses and three orderlies. The mission will stay for about three months and will establish maternity homes, baby clinics, and take charge of food distribution in these centres. With the collaboration of the International Red Cross Committee additional supplies containing provisions and medicines to the tune of 145 tons will follow.

* * *

New enterprise is disclosed by the latest reports from the International Red Cross Committee. A former railway dining car has been turned into a mobile dental surgery equipped with laboratory and supply buffet; this dental car which is staffed by fully qualified medical units will travel to parts of Switzerland where camps are too remote from dental clinics. Another feature is the special assistance extended to blind prisoners, to whom braille alphabets and books have been sent. Braille watches are now supplied to those prisoners who ask for them, and from September 1942 to September 1944, 77 were dispatched to camps.

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By private means and with the assistance from the Confederation and the canton of Basle-Stadt, the tropical institute which opened its doors last year in Basle was able at the beginning of its second year to move into new rooms. Next to a considerable number of young Swiss who are preparing for an activity in the tropics, there are at present 45 young Dutchmen, who wish to have a thorough professional training. The research activities at the institute has already shown valuable results in the treatment of malaria.

—oo—

Posterity will probably associate the doom of the silk-worm with the name of Dr. Henry Dreyfus, who fought equally successful battles in "haute finance" though he was known only to a very limited circle in our colony and had become a "cosmopolitan." We print with pride the obituary published in the *Financial News* on 2nd January, 1945.

"Dr. Henry Dreyfus, chairman and managing director of British Celanese, died at his London home on Saturday. He would have been 63 next Sunday.

Dr. Dreyfus, who was a doctor of medicine as well as a brilliant scientist in other fields, came to Britain during the last war from his native Basle, in Switzerland. A man of genius, he was just such a man whose help the Government needed. He concentrated his powers on making a secret substance for aircraft fabrics from cellulose. His brother, Camille, came with him.

After the war he suggested that artificial silk could be made from cellulose acetate, and after long experiments the first celanese yarn was produced at the Spondon, Derby, factory in 1922.

He had great ability and was a tremendous worker. He was often up with the dawn, and continued at pressure far into the night. He retained great mental and physical vigour, and was almost invariably good humoured even under the greatest stresses.

He concentrated almost exclusively for many years on the development of rayon and helped to put Britain in the forefront of this great new artificial silk industry.

In 1927 he and his brother, in a £2 millions City deal, gained a controlling interest in British Celanese, of which Dr. Camille Dreyfus remains as managing director.

Dr. Henry Dreyfus became a British subject in 1937. The following year, when he was 56, he was awarded the Perkins Gold Medal by the Society of Dyers and Colourists for his discoveries and outstanding work in the development of the cellulose acetate industry.

Dr. Dreyfus was also a director of the Celanese Corporation of America and of Canadian Celanese.

Dr. Dreyfus had been suffering from attacks of angina pectoris and was taken suddenly ill on December 23 with coronary thrombosis. There was some temporary improvement but his life could not be saved. During his illness Lord Horder and Dr. Daniel Davies were called into consultation.

His fatal heart attack occurred two days after he had issued a reply to criticisms of his company made in the House of Commons."

We like to add a few personal notes. Dr. Dreyfus embodied the sterling qualities which secured

the Swiss an honoured place in any part of the world; he was of a reserved disposition, shunning the lime-light and finding abundant contentment in pursuing the task he had set himself; he was always genial and cordial but never communicative to his friends. Well do we remember a small informal luncheon party in the late twenties. Fed. Counc. Schulthess (who, unless we are mistaken, was then Federal President) was on a short private visit to London. Our then minister, M. C. R. Paravicini, telephoned a few of us, and needless to say Dr. Henry Dreyfus who was amongst the party, involuntarily became the focus of the conversation when we adjourned for the "café noir." At that time dealings in Celanese Ord. Shares were fast and furious round about £5 and we were all anxious to get some 'ground-floor' information. The only definite reply we extracted was to the effect that the doctor and his brother had, between them, a couple of million shares and had not the least desire to sell a single piece. We remember only one of the party who took the tip. Dr. Dreyfus never joined our festivities in the colony, nor was he a member of any of our clubs, but he was a staunch supporter of any patriotic manifestation that seemed to him deserving. An appeal usually met with a three figure response and the strict command that anonymity had to be preserved.

* * *

A somewhat extravagant report appears in "The Friend," 15th December, 1944, which states that:

"A Swiss Association for the Protection of Artistic Treasures has been started in Geneva, and Violet Ansermoz is one of the secretaries. She says that an appeal published in the Swiss Press has stirred public opinion in neighbouring countries as well as created much enthusiasm in Switzerland. 'We would, of course,' she comments, 'have preferred to see some of the former efforts on behalf of the populations obtain practical results. It does seem heartless to cry, 'Save the statues' when there are God's creatures everywhere in frightful danger, but we must learn to be content with the little things that can still be done.'"

It appears to us that we have already an abundance of museums and art galleries, both private and public; and a call for this new association seems hardly justified. There are, of course, a large number of art treasures that have recently found a hiding place in Switzerland, and these would require a good deal of protection.

* * *

The war has caused great and unexpected increase in the production of books. During last year the record number of 3,358 new publications saw the light of day. The greatest influx was in the section "Belles Lettres," the number of which compared with last year increased by 60 per cent., but the other kinds of books are equally well represented. Of the new books 210 are translations in which category the Anglo-Saxon authors are by far the most numerous.

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LA SITUATION ACTUELLE DE LA SUISSE.

Discours prononcé à Uster,
dimanche, le 26 Novembre, 1944
par M. le Conseiller fédéral Kobelt.

"Le chemin de la guerre à la paix est long, dangereux et malaisé." C'est par ces paroles que M. Kobelt a commencé son discours de dimanche à la Journée commémorative d'Uster.

Le chef du Département militaire fédéral a parlé d'abord des difficultés d'établir une paix juste et durable, qui ne porte pas en elle les germes d'une nouvelle guerre. Notre pays demeurera exposé aux dangers de la guerre aussi longtemps que l'on n'aura pas déposé les armes sur le continent. Nous pouvons être entraînés dans le tourbillon sans que l'étranger veuille occuper notre pays, simplement si l'un des belligérants voit un avantage stratégique dans la traversée de la Suisse. La tentation de fouler le sol suisse, pour des fins stratégiques, est d'autant plus grande que les perspectives de succès d'une telle entreprise apparaissent plus assurées. Un parti belligérant peut être tenté d'agir ainsi, s'il craint que l'autre ne veuille le précéder dans l'utilisation de cet avantage. Dans la situation militaire actuelle, il dépend uniquement de nous de sauvegarder la paix ou non. Nous avons les moyens de nous protéger. Notre force défensive est suffisante. Les effectifs de l'armée ont été doublés pendant la guerre et l'armement et l'équipement des troupes renforcés constamment. Des ouvrages fortifiés, des barrages et des objets mines ont été aménagés sur tous les fronts et jusqu'à l'intérieur du pays. Les nombreux jours de service des soldats ont permis à ceux-ci de s'habituer au maniement des armes et au service en campagne. La volonté de résistance du peuple suisse, en cette sixième année de guerre, n'est pas moindre qu'au début des hostilités. Toutefois, les moyens défensifs n'offrent aucune garantie de sécurité, si l'on ne met sur pied les effectifs suffisants. Une mobilisation tardive pourrait avoir des conséquences incalculables. La protection découlant de la neutralité n'est vraiment assurée que lorsqu'il y a assez de troupes prêtes aux endroits menacés de la frontière.

Le Conseil fédéral et le général n'ignorent pas les grands sacrifices que les longues périodes de service imposent aux soldats. Aussi ne mobilisent-ils que les effectifs absolument nécessaires à la sécurité du pays, et c'est bien l'une des tâches les plus difficiles du gouvernement que de concilier les exigences de la sécurité et les besoins de ravitaillement du pays.

100,000 réfugiés civils et militaires.

Parlant de l'éventualité que des contingents de troupes étrangères fussent refoulés vers la Suisse, M. Kobelt précise :

En principe, il y a lieu de refuser le passage de troupes étrangères, même si elles déposent les armes, en vertu des prescriptions élaborées en 1930 déjà. Dans chaque cas, le Conseil fédéral se réserve la possibilité d'examiner si le droit d'asile doit être accordé ou non. Le Conseil fédéral est guidé, dans ses décisions, par les dispositions de la Convention de La Haye et de la guerre sur terre, par des considérations humanitaires, par les possibilités d'accueil et de ravitaillement du pays et, surtout, par la situation militaire de notre pays à ce moment. Aujourd'hui, le nombre des réfugiés civils et militaires internés en Suisse dépasse 100,000. Leur entretien cause de grosses difficultés. La zone d'interne-