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The Swiss Observer

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NEWS AT RANDOM

Federal

According to an official communiqué the allied "black list," as far as Swiss firms are concerned, is relegated *ad calendas* and the frozen Swiss balances in America will be allowed to gradually resume their liquid volume again. This is the outcome of the protracted negotiations that have been progressing haltingly at Washington. The details so far given to the Swiss press have not been followed by a burst of approbation but it certainly seems a matter of great satisfaction and dignity that our leading delegate has, perhaps against his conviction, assisted in liquidating an impasse that had the appearance of becoming another fixture. The agreement is now before our Parliament for ratification; in the House of Commons Mr. Dalton stated that the "Swiss Government has agreed to hand over 50% of the German assets in our country and to pay 250 million francs for the gold looted and transferred to Switzerland." The share of this country is likely to be about £5 million. Little has been said in the English press but the following is part of a "Reuter" message of June 17th which found scattered publicity:

"Dr. Stucki said that in Washington, Switzerland stood in a 'battle' against the U.S., Britain and France, who held the trump cards in their hands. 'The Allies declared quite openly that the Swiss assets in America would never be unblocked, or the black list of Swiss firms abolished, if we did not hand over the assets,' he said. 'In addition, we had to remember that we have to rely on the Allies for the supply of all vital commodities such as coal and wheat.'"

After lengthy negotiations terms and conditions have now been agreed for the employment of Swiss nationals in the civil administration of the American zone in Germany. Instead of the thousands originally mooted in the Swiss press it is more likely to be a few hundreds. Successful applicants of both sexes will be engaged for one year with a possible extension and the pay will be the same as the one governing the American civil staff employed in the zone. Two thirds of the remuneration will be remitted to the Swiss National Bank and converted into francs to be held at the dis-

posal of the respective claimants. Travelling expenses, medical examination and treatment and holidays will be a charge of the U.S.A. administration. Required are accountants, interpreters, translators and shorthand typists who must have a fair knowledge of English.

* * *

"The long-awaited bill to introduce into our Constitution the Old-age and Dependents' Insurance is now before our two houses of parliament. In the 200-page message the following are the salient provisions: The insurance is compulsory for all and is based on a 4% contribution on actual earnings (revenue from capital invested is exempted) to be paid in equal parts by the employee and the employer from the age of 20 to 65. Single persons working on their own in a modest way pay 2½% only; exempted are wives (!) and widows unable or unwonted to earn their own living. The annuities after the age of 65 vary according to the amount of annual contributions; on a minimum of Frs. 25 or less a single person becomes entitled to Frs. 450 and a married couple to Frs. 720. The volume of

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the annuities favours those of the lower earning classes, thus an annual contributor of Frs. 300 (salary Frs. 7,500) can claim a yearly pension of no more than Frs. 1,500 or Frs. 2,400 respectively. There are additional pensions to widows and orphans graded according to circumstances.

In place of the previously elected Prof. Hug of Zurich, who subsequently declined the honour, Nat. Counc. Kurt R. Dürby has been appointed a Federal Judge by the two Houses in a joint session; he obtained 112 votes against the 83 of his liberal opponent, Dr. W. Geerig, who is an official at the Federal Court. Judge Dürby, a socialist, is a well-known Zurich lawyer noted for his expert treatment of refugee problems. His place in the National Council will be taken by another socialist, Hermann Oldani, a leading figure in the Zurich labour movement who has already been a member of our second chamber from 1928 to 1934.

Cantonal

An excursion on Whitmonday into the alpine regions of the cantons Glaris and Uri ended with a tragic accident. Starting from Linthal on the Saturday before a party of seven tourists were nearing the summit of the Scheerhorn when bad weather conditions halted their further progress. They decided to return and when roped together three and four, one member of the latter slipped and dragged the whole gang with him down a crevasse unnoticed owing to bad visibility. The other three continued the descent in the same direction only to find the bodies of their four comrades.

A Lucerne appeal court reversed a judgment of a lower tribunal with the result that Dr. Eugen Kopp, the editor of the "Vaterland," has to pay a fine of Frs. 20 for having described the Genevese communist Leon Nicole as likely to play the rôle of a "red Quisling" should the occasion arise.

Large majorities accepted three uncontested proposals when they came before the voters of the canton Zurich. The first one necessitated a credit of 2.8 million francs for reorganising the unsatisfactory traffic situation in the Oberland, the second one required 3.08 million for modernising the antiquated sanatorium for tuberculous sufferers and the third one allocated 600,000 francs for enlarging the chemistry institute of the university.

Valuable support for the construction of the new intercontinental airfield has been accorded to the canton Zurich by the National Council. Apart from the cession of the large army region Kloten-Bülach, over a third of the building costs (about 20 million francs) is taken from the Federal treasury. In return Zurich is to surrender the existing aviation ground at Dübendorf in addition to the exclusive rights for the use of the two lakes of Pfäffikon and Greifen for aerial exercises and firing; a sum of ten million francs is to be contributed towards the cost of new barracks (Waffenplatz).

Prof. Dr. Hunziker died in Zurich at the age of 77. He was the dynamic force in the cultural life of Winterthur. A scientist, an acknowledged authority on literature and a prolific chronicler of Swiss authors and poets he displayed an active and leading interest in musical manifestations of the town.

Stäfa is another commune that has decided to award its young men for defending the country by voting 15 cts. for each day of military service; the amount involved will be about 45,000 francs.

Interlaken is being linked to the aerial traffic. The local flying ground is to be rented from the army command for two years at a rental of 10,200 francs and a small aviation company is in course of formation with the financial backing of the adjoining communes.

Ständerat Julius Bühler died unexpectedly in Schaffhausen at the age of 56; he belonged to the upper chamber since 1943 and was also a member of the Grosse Rat of Schaffhausen.

From Olten it is reported that excavations between Däniken and Dullikon have brought to light three graves dating from a period more than 2,000 years ago; they contained apart from the conventional bones, jewelry and three watches (the particular make is not disclosed).

For the third time in 26 years the Basle electors rejected a proposal to extend voting franchise to women, there being 19,898 noes against 11,709 ayes. Compared with the two previous ballots the majority against is slightly reduced. The campaign lacked excitement, the socialists being the only party that took up a clear stand in favour.

The sickness insurance fund in Basle which is on a voluntary basis and open to everybody has now reached



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a membership of 120,477 out of a total population of 176,636. After many years of adversity the accounts for last year closed with a surplus of about 750,000 francs.

* * *

The Basle Regierungsrat proposes that citizens whose livelihood has suffered through their war service should be assisted with grants not exceeding 5,000 francs in their endeavour to build up a fresh living.

* * *

The owner of a tobacco shop in the Klybeck (Basle), the 68 year old Frau Anna Haug, was murdered by a casual caller when she resisted the rifling of her till.

* * *

The Federal Tribunal has upheld the protest of the Grisons village Surawa against the usurpation of its name by the present director or editor of the Basle "Vorwärts" and the latter will have to own up to his ancestral family name of Hirsch. The case has been before the public for some time; first the Zurich Regierungsrat sanctioned the christening, then the local court rejected the change but the appeal court sided with the reformist..

* * *

In place of Nat. Counc. Ulrich Eggenberger, who resigned, Christian Eggenberger from Grabs will enter our second chamber. Though an active agriculturist the new National Councillor has occupied many administrative offices and since 1936 is a member of the St. Gall Grosse Rat.

* * *

Two youngsters in Wohlen (Aargau), Ad. Albrecht and Fredy Scheidegger, lost their lives when — in trying to overtake a motorcar — their combination crashed against an iron railing hurling them on the road while the damaged machine travelled solo for some distance.

* * *

Former Nat. Counc. Richard Zschokke died at the age of 82 at his home in Gontenschwil (Aargau). Apart from military works in the St. Gotthard region his name remains identified with the construction of the Jungfrau railway.

* * *

The traitor Franz Burri, who during the war published from several places across the Rhine propaganda

sheets and leaflets directed against the Swiss confederation, has been handed to the frontier police at St. Margrethen and is now incarcerated at St. Gall.

* * *

Owing to a premature explosion in the stone quarry at Iragna, the 20 year old Marino Parini lost his life, and two others, A. Piazzini and Ambrosetti, were taken to the Bellinzona hospital in a serious condition.

* * *

A ghastly discovery was made casually at Lugano where the caretaker of the local cemetery has been placed under arrest. Preliminary investigations revealed that local people were able to obtain skulls for decorative and other purposes and it is even asserted that in one of the graves opened the head of the body was severed and missing.

* * *

The frontier guard at Rédère near Porrentruy, Corp. Jules Lassueur, was badly wounded when he was attacked and maltreated by six individuals who were able to withdraw beyond the frontier. A few days later ten men, all smugglers and their accomplices, were caught and lodged in the prisons of Montbeliard and Porrentruy.

* * *

A botanical garden created by the University of Lausanne was ceremoniously inaugurated in the Vaudois capital; it covers 18,000 square metres; about 400 tons of Jura rock were presented by the commune of Bière.

* * *

Maurice Köchlin died near Montreux at the age of 90. An Alsatian by birth, a citizen of Zurich and a graduate of the ETH he is reputed to have contrived and designed the plans of the Eiffel tower which was built for the Paris exhibition in 1889.

* * *

Two violent shocks visited the western part of our country early on May 30th and were felt along a belt from the Valais to Vevey, Berne, Basle and Zurich. Slight damage was caused again in the Sierre region mainly to houses that had been repaired after the January visitation. At Chippis the church is said to have suffered badly.

According to a statement by seismic experts published in the press the centre of the earthquake is near

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the Rawil pass from which about four million cubic metres of earth and boulders have been displaced burying entirely the small lake at Le-Huchet. The statement also says that further tremors of a diminished vigour may be expected in the near future.

Heavy snow fell in most parts of our country during the first half of this month, especially in the Valais. On the slopes of the St. Bernhard cornfields were completely destroyed, the depth of the snow varying from 30 cm. to one meter on the summit.

The well-known Neuchâtel painter and sculptor Charles L'Epplattenier died at the age of 72 following an accident during an excursion in the "Cotes du Doubs". He had studied in Hungary, England, Belgium, Germany and Italy and was a much sought expert in matters of art; since 1912 he was a member of the Federal Art commission. Philatelists will probably recall his name which appeared on many Swiss stamps.

The observatory of Neuchâtel registered from January 25th to June 14th no less than 295 earth tremors which were all centred in the Valais.

Army

The unseasonable weather was probably responsible for the large number of flying accidents that have been reported during the last few weeks. Two Morane machines on their way from Buochs to Lucerne collided in mid-air; one of the pilots, Lt. Kleiner, succeeded in steering his plane into a forest where he parachuted to safety, but the other one, Lt. Karl Stieffel, an engineer from Herrliberg, crashed into the lake where he remained submerged in the twisted machine. A few days later his body was recovered from a depth of 150 meter near Hammetschwand.

No news has been heard from Lt. Hans Zweacker, who was on a routine flight from Emmen to Magadino in a Messerschmid; it is surmised that he crashed in the Titlis region.

Ten workmen were killed when two munition depôts near St. Maurice exploded; within a radius of 300 meters, trees were levelled clean to the ground and the neighbouring barracks, empty but capable of holding 600 soldiers, were completely destroyed. Fearing further explosions the inhabitants of the village of Morcle (Vaud) were hastily evacuated in lorries though only for a short time. This underground fort is part of the heavy fortifications in the Rhône valley at Dailly and was under renovation mainly to improve the housing conditions of soldiers. About twenty million francs had been spent on this fortified place; the best part of it will have to be rebuilt.

A premature explosion of a mine at the practice ground of Wallenstadt resulted in nine casualties, two of them fatal. The dead are: Corp. Andres Zeller, age 21, a farmhand of Vielbringen, and Corp. Paul Richard, age 25, a land worker of Wynigen.

Without stating any reasons the Federal Council has prohibited the export of all arms, munitions, explosives and components of them for the next six months, i.e., till 11th December, 1946.

Unofficially it is reported that the step has been prompted by malignant and false rumours that a Geneva firm has been supplying arms to the Franco government.

Traffic

On Tuesday morning, June 4th, the last section of the Frenalpstock tunnel was pierced and it is expected that the line Brunnen-Sisikon will be opened to traffic by the spring of 1948. With the exception of the small stretch Melide-Maroggia, which will be tackled at a later date, the whole of the Gotthard railway will now be a double track line.

It is reported that work on a 7½ mile railway tunnel through the Mont Blanc has begun. The venture is financed by French, Italian and Swiss capital and will give access to Italy from France through the Val d'Aosta.

The first consignment of American coal arrived in the Basle harbour on June 15th. The boats were loaded on April 25th at Baltimore; the sea voyage claimed about 3,800 miles, so that including the transport up the Rhine the cargo had travelled nearly 8,000 km.

In order to cope with the insistent demand the "Alpar" aviation company of Berne is now operating a bi-weekly extra service to London.

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Economics

The control and rationing of all kinds of paper which came into force on March 1st, 1943, has been rescinded as from the 1st of this month.

The cultivation of textile plants, always neglected, received an unexpected impulse during the war years. Flax was produced from 230 ha. (mainly in the cantons of Berne and Vaud) and hemp from 27 ha.

During May last the labour exchanges registered 10,806 vacancies while only 1,193 totally unemployed were available. According to other official figures there is at present a shortage of about 100,000 workers including about 40,000 domestic helps.

Coal is reaching our country from different sources and the supply is now over 50% of pre-war requirements. Poland has delivered so far 20,000 tons; the coal trains take about 10 days to reach Switzerland.

Contrary to previous reports, Fed. Counc. Stampfli stated in the National Council that no watch-making machinery is being sold to England; the present understanding provided for a temporary loan only — an arrangement similar to the ones already concluded with France and the U.S.A.

The great success of the Basle Fair has prompted the Federal Council and other spokesmen speaking with authority to warn industrial firms not to expand their plants as the present demand merely reflects the immediate needs of foreign countries and cannot last. This success also seems to have roused the management

CITY SWISS CLUB

Messieurs les Membres sont avisés que le prochaine ASSEMBLÉE MENSUELLE aura lieu, **Mardi, le 9 Juillet, 1946, au Dorchester Hotel, London, W.1, a 6.30.** Dîner commencera à 7 heures.

Notre membre, M. le Dr. G. G. KULLMANN, nous parlera au sujet:

"The Refugees and Displaced Persons Problem Before UNO."

Messieurs les membres sont priés de s'inscrire comme d'habitude auprès du Manager, Dorchester Hotel, Park Lane, London, W.1, pas plus tard que le 5 Juillet.

LE COMITÉ.

to the idea of making the Fair an international one — a deviation which does not find favour with most of the Swiss manufacturers.

Humanitarian

Several Swiss societies for the protection of cruelty to animals have telegraphed a joint declaration to President Truman protesting strongly against the wanton destruction likely to be caused to nature's creations and phenomena by the atom bomb experiments at Bikini in the Pacific.

The new 1st of August stamps and postcard were issued on the 15th of this month and retain currency till November 30th; the proceeds of the sale are reserved for the benefit of "Swiss abroad." The postcard shows a small section of the mural painting in the Chiasso station by Pietro Chiesa depicting the farewell scene of a Ticinese seeking his luck abroad. Of the series of four stamps the 5 cts. illustrate cheese making, the 10 cts. a farmhouse in the Valais (design by Faustina Iselin in Basle), the 20 cts. a typical shingle cottage in Appenzell and the 30 cts. a massive stone residence in the Engadine (the latter two originated by the St. Gall artist Willi Koch).

— 00 —

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Lest my halting feet should falter
Let Thy angels be my guide.

Translated by J.J.F.S.

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