

News at random

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The Swiss Observer

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PUBLISHER'S ANNOUNCEMENT.

Many subscribers have on different occasions expressed the opinion, that under the present changed conditions the "Swiss Observer" might be published at shorter intervals; we feel that we can now gratify their wish.

In future we shall go to publication twice monthly, namely on the 2nd and 4th Friday (a week later where there are five Fridays in the month).

We are sure that our subscribers as well as the advertisers will continue to give us the same support that has enabled us to carry on during the critical years of the war.

We have to remind our readers that the issue of our publication is only permitted on the condition that all the copies are prepaid and in order to fulfill our obligation, we shall be obliged if subscribers would promptly re-new their subscriptions on becoming due, as otherwise we shall be reluctantly compelled to remove such names from the mailing list.

ROYAL VICTORIA HOTEL

ST. LEONARDS-ON-SEA

(Extract from the "Neue Zürcher Zeitung.")

"The Swiss Students staying in England celebrated their National Independence last August 1st.

After riding through the glorious green of Kent the party began in earnest at the best Hotel in the South of England, namely, the Royal Victoria Hotel, the Manager of which is a Swiss from Poschiavo. In this Anglo-Swiss establishment a warm welcome was extended to the visitors.

During the excellent dinner, music of Tchaikowsky and Mozart was played by the orchestra, which, after the dinner, with versatility switched to dance music and Swiss tunes and dances.

It is quite clear that the Swiss are welcome guests in the United Kingdom."

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NEWS AT RANDOM

Federal

The 4% 200 million francs loan which was issued in 1931 is being paid off by the Confederation at the end of this month without offering conversion into a lower interest bearing issue as, it is stated, the Federal treasury disposes of sufficient cash resources.

* * *

Federal Coun. Petitpierre, in an interview to English journalists casually staying in Switzerland, stated that the staff of the new Russian Legation was now due at Berne and would consist of 40 and not a few hundred assistants as had been reported elsewhere.

* * *

The new Russian Minister arrived with his staff on the 10th inst. at Dübendorf direct from Moscow via Berlin and Paris; one of the three large planes also unloaded 1,400 kg. (nearly 7 million francs) of Russian gold.

Cantonal

The strike fever has seized school children at Rickenbach, canton Schwyz, where a new school has been opened necessitating a longer journey than before from their homes; the children are, of course, following the advice of their parents.

* * *

When cycling to the village of Menzan, Joh. Getzmann fell over the steep slope and died soon afterwards from concussion; he was 60 and a parish councillor and justice of peace in Tuttensee (Lucerne).

* * *

The urge to avoid payment of taxes is probably the outcome of modern conditions and the cause of many a headache of our authorities. To rope in the numerous defaulters without applying extreme measures an amnesty has been granted and in the canton Lucerne no less than 245 million francs worth of estate has been declared on which property tax has never been paid or demanded. Apart from communal and local taxes the government has derived last year an additional income of 1½ million francs or 10.8%.

A noteworthy incident is mentioned in a report from a children's hospital in Zurich where the illness of a 13 year old girl was diagnosed as infantile paralysis. The patient had previously been operated for an internal disorder and was not expected to react to the normal treatment. Through the intervention of the American Red Cross the chief medical officer of the U.S.A. army in Francfort/o/M sent without hesitation an "iron lung" by air to the Zurich clinic.

The heavy hailstorm on the 5th inst. caused damage at Berne where the services of the fire brigade had to be invoked to pump water out of a large number of cellars.

The spotting of a large edible boletus a few weeks ago in the Bernese Jura seems to have started a general inquisition of country fields and lanes by our youngsters. From Brittnau in the Aargau comes the news that two boys discovered a mushroom weighing nearly thirty pounds which had to be carted away in a small truck.

A motorist in Basle who from behind ran into and killed a farmer who was leading his horses received three months' imprisonment; the public prosecutor stated that this was an exemplary sentence (!)

The Landrat of Baselland sanctioned an agreement by which the school contribution payable to Basel-Stadt is increased by 100,000 to 250,000 francs

annually; about 1,400 scholars from the "Landschaft" are attending the higher schools in the town.

The dairy farmers in Herblingen near Schaffhausen have threatened to go out on strike on October 21st unless in the meantime their demand for a 4 cts. increase per litre in the milk price is granted.

An elaborate festive celebration on Sunday the 8th inst. marked the 700 anniversary of the existence of Frauenfeld.

One of the last sufferers which appeared on the list of the "200 adapters" is Dr. Hektor Ammann, who had to relinquish this month his office as cantonal registrar of the Aargau; his exceptional services in the cantonal administration were duly acknowledged.

The steamer "Thurgau" leaving Rorschach on Thursday, the 12th inst., landed, with the consent of the French occupation command, at Friedrichshafen a large cargo of furniture, kitchen utensils, shoes, bedding and vegetables to alleviate the distress of the population on the other side of the Rhine; the goods had been collected by 29 communes in the St. Gall border districts.

The first casualty when this year's hunt season was officially opened in the Ticino was the village clerk of Vira-Gambarogna who was shot accidentally near Magadino.

The 27th Comptoir Suisse was officially opened at Lausanne on Saturday, the 7th inst., over 200 exhibitors having secured stands.

The mysterious animal that is disporting itself in the region of the upper Rhône to the irritation of local farmers is now believed to belong to a family of panthers which at the time of the air raids escaped from a circus or zoological garden in Northern Italy. The hunt continues unabated and special traps are being constructed as well as sheds stocked with goats, chicken and mules which, it is hoped, will inveigle the beast near hidden firing posts where sharpshooters are waiting for the quarry.

In the canton Neuchâtel the heavy rainstorms placed tracts of agricultural land under water, particularly near Boveresse, Môtiers and Couvet, where the harvest not so far collected has been destroyed. Between Couvet and Travers the Areuse left its banks.

The "Voix Ouvrière," Léon Nicol's organ at Geneva, states that the Basle "Vorwärts" will appear again on October 1st under a new editorship.

Army

The Gloster Meteor, to be demonstrated to our air force, arrived at the Cointrin airfield in the morning of September 9th; it flew from Paris to Geneva in 32 minutes and the Genevese watching its arrival were dumbfounded by its speed, it being impossible to follow its course by the naked eye. The following day the plane flew in 18 minutes to Zurich-Dübendorf where several trials are being carried out.



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Proposals for the re-organisation of our army command will be discussed in the coming session of Parliament; they are the result of recommendations submitted by General Guisan to the Federal Council. The particulars — and justification — so far published in the Swiss press are of a complex character. The powers and authority of a commander-in-chief in peace time are to be exercised by a "National Defence Commission" which will be supreme only in strictly military (tactical) matters. The competency of the army and civil heads is to be clearly defined: at present one commands and the other is responsible to Parliament. The political department will decide on matters relating to the organisation, equipment and cost of the army, the establishment of training centres and the remuneration and duration of the different army services.

Traffic

The accounts for 1945 of the Swiss Federal Railways will close with a deficit of over 25 million francs which, subject to the approval of Parliament, will be taken over by the Confederation; the State may possibly derive some compensation from unsettled claims against former belligerents for bombing damage to the railway system. Though the passenger transport has reached record figures an increase in the fares may be expected in the near future. Here is an excellent survey from the "Railway Gazette," September 6th, reviewing the present position:

"When preparing their budget for 1946, the Swiss Federal Railways envisaged an unfavourable balance of fr. 25,600,000. The Swiss Federal Council, viewing the position in the light of reviving international passenger and goods traffic, amended the budget by increasing the estimated working receipts by fr. 24,000,000, the budget thus showing an unfavourable balance of fr. 900,000.

According to the accounts for the first six months of 1946, the working receipts of the Swiss Federal Railways exceed those of the same months of 1945 by fr. 48,000,000, that is, double the amount of the amendment introduced by the Federal Council. The working surplus attained in the first half

of 1946 amounts to fr. 94 million, exceeding by approximately fr. 37,000,000 that reached in the same period of 1945. It is thus assumed that the 4 per cent. interest on the working capital (fr. 400,000,000) of the Swiss Federal Railways has already been secured for the current year, and that the Confederation will obtain a sum of fr. 16,000,000 from the Federal Railways.

The position for 1947 is viewed with less optimism, and it is generally believed that an increase in the wartime fare increases introduced on April 1, 1944, will prove unavoidable. It is expected that the increases will be fixed in such a way as to enable the fast train supplements to be abolished. This would be a boon to the public, and result in simplifying the work of the ticket offices. It is thought that the additional use made of fast trains over short distances resulting from the abolition of the supplements would not prove excessive."

* * *

For a long time news of negotiations for a common working agreement between Swissair and Alpar have occasionally appeared in the Swiss press; subsequent developments, however, seem to hold out little hope for such an understanding. Nothing definite or final has been communicated to the Swiss press, but "Modern Transport," September 7th, seems to know what happens behind the scenes, to judge from the following cutting:

"Attempts to establish a single national air transport undertaking in Switzerland by the fusion of the Swissair and Alpar companies have met with a setback. The government of the canton of Berne has expressed opposition to Alpar losing its independence, and the company has decided to increase its capital from 250,000 to a million francs. Among the subscribers of the new capital are reported to be the municipality of Berne, a subsidiary of the Swiss Shipping Company in Basle, and a Geneva group. Faced with these indications of a coming expansion of the activities of Alpar, Swissair has withdrawn the offer, reaffirmed as recently as last May, to take over Alpar by means of an exchange of shares on a parity basis. Instead, Swissair is to increase its own capital from one million to 20 million Swiss

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frances, and it has suggested to the authorities that Swissair alone should be designated Switzerland's "chosen instrument." Negotiations for the fusion of the two Swissair transport companies were begun more than two years ago, but certain interests in Western Switzerland are afraid of what they believe to be dangers to the future of their local air communications within the framework of a national Swiss airways system. The activities of Swissair are based mainly on Zurich, whereas Alpar operates from Berne and Geneva, and the fear is that the merger might "in the national interest" lead to a still greater concentration of traffic on Zurich. To that extent there is a parallel with the claims made by some people for Prestwick.

It should be made clear, however, that the Swiss Federal Government, while favouring the creation of a single chosen instrument by the fusion of Swissair and Alpar, did not intend to nationalise Swiss civil aviation. The State was to have had greater influence, partly as a *quid pro quo* for help in the financing of an extensive Continental and inter-Continental Swiss airways system, but private capital would have predominated. Swissair, in making its latest suggestion that it should itself be turned into the chosen instrument, adheres to the outlines of this plan. At least two-thirds of the capital on the new and considerably increased level of 20 million Swiss francs is to be held by private interests. The rest, the company hopes, will be taken up by the Federal postal authorities, the Swiss Federal Railways, and by cantonal governments. In the present year Swissair expects to fly 2.5 million km. This is to be doubled in 1947, when experimental transatlantic flights are also to be undertaken. For the following years a five-year plan has been outlined, which aims eventually at nearly 20 million km. of flying annually, including regular transatlantic flights. A number of Douglas DC-4 aircraft has been ordered for early delivery, while Swissair also has an option for some Douglas DC-6 machines. The heavy cost of this new equipment is to be met out of the present increase of capital. The actual network of routes to be flown in the future by Swiss planes in the national interest is at the moment being planned by a commission which was appointed last spring by the Federal Government. This includes representatives of Swissair and Alpar and of the federal and cantonal authorities."

August has been a record month at Dübendorf. 10,435 passengers passed through the airfield with nearly 195,000 kilo luggage. A notable development has been the arrival of airtaxis specially from England: 326 landed 926 passengers. Circular and hooping-cough flights numbered 54.

Economics

As from the 1st of October the retail price of milk will be increased by 3 cts. per litre which will in its entirety benefit the dairy farmers: it is expected that butter and cheese will follow suit in the near future. Potato prices have already advanced and there are minor restrictions in the supply of chocolate. These inflationary measures will materially affect the cost of living.

The customs receipts for last month reached 22.5 million francs compared with 7.9 million for the same period last year. The total in the eight months to end of August last amounts to 173.2 million against 40 million same time last year.

Unofficial statistics disclose that the total annual cost of tobacco consumption exceeds 168 million francs or about 40 francs per head of the population (all included). Cigarettes claim 84 million, cigars 69 million and pipe tobacco 15 million francs. Apart from the patriotic "Stumpe," the most popular coffin-nails are the renowned Brissago (average price 18 cts.) and the Toscani, of which about 38 and 31 million respectively go up in smoke every year. Not disinterested in the tobacco smoke is, of course, the Federal Treasury which is entitled to a handsome dividend.

The recently concluded "token imports" agreement does not seem to materially increase the volume of our imports into this country, chiefly on account of the now unavoidable form-filling and other red tape inflictions. Here is a report from a Zurich representa-

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tive published in the "Sunday Times," September 15th:

"Although the Board of Trade will allow more than £500,000 worth of 'non-essential' Swiss goods into Britain annually under the recent Anglo-Swiss 'token imports' agreement, Swiss exporters are reluctant to avail themselves of the opportunity.

Goods allowed include cosmetics, artificial silks, toys, mechanical equipment, domestic woodware and rubber footwear.

The Director of the Swiss Chamber of Commerce told me: 'Swiss firms are antagonised by the formalities demanded before a licence is granted. In view of the European goods' shortage they may choose customers who are less exacting.'

* * *

According to the latest official information given out at Berne the export quota to Great Britain for watches and watch parts has been fixed not to exceed £2 million for 1946 and 1947 together and not for each year, as previously stated. Five per cent. — not 50% as reported in some English dailies — of this quota may be alarm clocks.

— 00 —

A young guide, Edwin Krähenbühl from Berne, said to have been somewhat overanxious in exploring the alpine world, met with a fatal accident when testing a new approach to the Rosenlauistock. He was accompanied by Melle de Courten, an experienced alpinist and a niece of the former Italian Navy Minister. The mishap was witnessed by interested observers who were able to recover the bodies.

* * *

A noted topographer, Dr. Pater F. X. Muheim from Altdorf, came to grief on the 10,000 ft. Grosse



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Members are informed that the next **Monthly Meeting** will take place, **Monday, 7th October**, at the **Dorchester Hotel, London, W.1**, at **6.30 p.m.**, dinner starting at 7 p.m.

The Rt. Hon. L. S. AMERY, P.C.,
will give an address on
"European Union."

Will Members wishing to attend kindly inform the Manager, Dorchester Hotel, Park Lane, London, W.1, in writing not later than 4/10/46.

THE COMMITTEE.

Ruchen in the Maderan valley. The 53 year old scientist was carrying out studies for the Swiss Geographical Association.

* * *

The famous dogs of the St. Bernhard monks whose century-old usefulness modern transport conditions seem to have muzzled are likely to come to the front again if "The Star," September 12th, is correctly informed:

"I hear that members of alpine clubs are planning to set up kennels from which dogs can be flown to the rescue of people lost or injured in the Swiss mountains.

Already airborne dogs have justified their use. A case was recently reported of a man who was rescued only two hours after a dog flown to the nearest settlement had begun to search in the snow.

For more than 600 years these dogs have been bred and trained by the Monks of St. Bernard, in Martigny, and in the Monastery of Simplon. They have been trained to trace the passes of the Alps, and it is doubtful whether the Monastery of the Great St. Bernard could have carried on in winter without their aid.

During the great snowstorms in 1815 many of the dogs died and the original strains became almost extinct. But by crossing the survivors with Newfoundlanders the Monks bred a line with markings which represented part of their vestments.

When, in later years, British dog breeders imported these St. Bernard dogs they improved the structure so much that orders poured into this country for British-bred St. Bernards. American breeders paid £1,000 each for them.

With the opening of the kennels by the Alpine clubs it is expected that there will be a boom in St. Bernards."

* * *

And here is a report dealing with an international movement that so far has attracted scanty notice in the press; it is taken from the "Manchester Guardian," September 10th, the only daily that has referred to this subject at some length:

"As you travel on the Swiss electric train, all spick and span, from Basle to Zurich you are provided with a lesson in international relationships which assists in understanding the purpose of our

recent visit. We ran for several miles on the banks of the Rhine, and just across the river lay Germany, with Frankfurt and Munich not very far away. No person, unless he had a poisoned mind, believes that a hundred yards of water, however deep, can divide human beings into scoundrels on the one side and angels on the other, all speaking the same language and embracing the same religion. But that is what is done by some unseen power all the world over, and in the name of that intangible and suicidal conception of national sovereignty.

The Inter-Parliamentary Union, struggling to recover ground lost through the war, held its third conference since the end of World War II at St. Moritz, in Switzerland. The British delegation on this occasion was a strong one; there were a dozen of us from the Lords and Commons, including Major Milner (Deputy Speaker), Mr. Clement Davies, Lord Marley, Sir Gilbert Campion, Clerk of the House of Commons, and Sir Cecil Carr, Legal Adviser to the Speaker.

There were about a hundred delegates, representing twenty Parliaments, three more countries than were at the Easter 1946 Conference in Copenhagen. Senator Barkley, the Leader of the Democratic majority in Congress, flew from America to attend, and Czechoslovakia and Hungary made their first appearance since the war. With the Balkan countries already in the fold, needless to say there were some Communists present. They were not slow in trying to convince us that they had discovered a new interpretation of Parliamentary democracy. They were certain in their own minds that any who disagreed with them must be Fascists; metaphorically, to them, there are no colours except black and white! Now that Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Hungary and Czechoslovakia, admittedly Soviet satellites, have rejoined, it will be interesting to watch the next step in the process. What constitutes a Parliament is more than ever a puzzle to the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

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Happily, there was an air of optimism throughout our deliberations, and reports of the Paris Peace Conference provided the opportunity for some plain speaking on reparations, reconstruction, migration of population, prisoners of war, and the desirability of greater cohesion and speed in determining Germany's economic future among the Allied Powers. Sitting, as we were, at an altitude of 7,000 ft., "on top of the world" as Count Carton de Wiart, the President, put it, we all felt an obvious desire that statesmen should hasten to fashion a peace this time that will last if man as a species is not to disappear from the face of the earth. Finally, Senator Barkley meant all he said in his farewell speech when he quoted Abraham Lincoln to the effect that 'I deny the right of any man to govern me without my consent.'

ALORS !

It's aergerlich, I understand,
To meet, but rain, in Switzerland;
Some, à la recherche du soleil,
Leave these shores, in grosser Eil,
Because, dark clouds, what for or why,
Verschleiern toujours the blue sky
Und, à la longue, the steady rain,
Obscures the view and auch the brain.

Au moins, versteckt the sun, en Suisse,
Sich pas toujours, behind la coulisse,
Blue sky, as well, is not a myth,
Like here, wo man ihn never sieht
And many, has that Champagne-air,
Revived, made glücklich over there,
England would be, with less Regen,
Really heaven, hier auf Erden.

H.E.

HOME SPUN YARN.

Guter Kopf.— Ein Landmann kommt mit seinem Sohne nach Bern, um ihn studieren zu lassen, und verfügte sich mit ihm zum Herrn Rektor, um ihn einschreiben zu lassen. Der Rektor fragte den Vater nach den Fähigkeiten seines Sohnes mit den Worten, ob er auch eine guten Kopf habe.— "O ja," erwiderte der Alte, "er isch nadisch schon zweu mol ufe Gring vo der Brügi abegheit u es het ihn nüt tah, gäll Sämel!"