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The Swiss Observer

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NEWS AT RANDOM

Federal

Switzerland has entered the field of atomic research, called nuclear physical research in scientific circles, and will spend an annual amount of one-million francs for this purpose under a decree submitted by the Federal Council to our two houses of parliament. It is stressed that we shall never make atomic bombs and that the subsidy is intended only for research for peaceful purposes.

Negotiations are in progress for establishing a radio station for the exclusive use of UNO; suitable ground has already been selected.

Federal Councillor Stämpfli pronounced an unequivocal protest against the constant innuendos that our country had derived profit from the war, adding that the Allies were incorrectly informed about our economic conditions. Here is part of an inspired article which appeared in the "Daily Telegraph," December 20th:—

"Steps will shortly be taken to bring pressure to bear on countries which were neutral during the war to contribute towards the cost of economic rehabilitation in the war-shattered areas. This is in keeping with the suggestion made by Mr. Dalton when he was in Washington.

He then said that countries such as Switzerland, Argentine and Sweden, which enriched themselves, or, at any rate, did not suffer economically, as a result of the war, should now aid such countries as Greece. Her economics had been shattered through Axis attack and occupation.

I understand that the procedure will be for "beggar" countries to be told to apply for help to neutrals. Their applications will receive the full support of the British and United States Governments."

Cantonal

Dr. Adolf Suter, since 1922 President of the District Tribunal in Schwyz, died, following an apoplexy, at the age of 65; he has been for nearly twenty years a member of the Ständerat over which he presided in 1944.

Half a million francs worth of damage is said to have been caused by a fire which broke out early on December 19th in a large warehouse in Zollikofen, near Berne, belonging to Chs. Gartenmann & Co., A.G. The main loss consists in the partial destruction of a consignment of 25 truck loads of sugar.

The "Daily Graphic," December 14th, brings a story to which a few grains of salt would not do any harm. Here it is:—

"A £500 brain operation carried out in Switzerland on urgent orders from the British Government was performed on a British Secret Service woman who is now receiving medical treatment in England for injuries received at Ravensbruck concentration camp.

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She is Patricia Cheramy, wife of a Frenchman. Arrested by Germans in France, she was persistently beaten because she refused to reveal Maquis secrets.

After her escape Mme Cheramy finally reached the British Consul at Berne, where she was found to be suffering from a brain tumour caused by the beating.

A leading Swiss brain specialist operated on her for £500, which was paid by the Consul.

The British Government appeared to have authorised the operation but not the payment of the fee."

* * *

A bazaar organised in favour of the new Steigkirche in Schaffhausen, the old church having been destroyed by the bombardment, has resulted in a net profit of 52,000 francs which will supplement the costs of an organ and inside decorations.

* * *

The Swiss customs office on the road between Schaffhausen and Büsingen has been closed from the 1st of this month thus allowing the latter's inhabitants unhampered traffic across the frontier. Büsingen is a German enclave easily accessible from Swiss territory only; the desirability of a sensible frontier rectification has often been stressed in the past without arousing the interested parties.

* * *

Ragaz has decided to construct a cable railway from Balen in the Tamina gorge to Pardiell in the Piz

Sol region; it will reach an altitude of 1600 metres and open up a large ski-field.

* * *

National Councillor Jean Meier, a leading liberal and a well-known bookseller in Olten, died unexpectedly in the cantonal hospital on December 29th, at the age of 65.

* * *

Yverdon has voted a credit of 60,000 francs for enlarging the local flying field, it being hoped that a Federal aviation school will be installed there.

* * *

The excitement about the mysterious creatures, some time called panthers, that ravaged cattle in the upper Rhone valley, seems to be dying out since it became known that a local huntsman following some mystic tracks succeeded in killing a large fox.

* * *

Talking about these ingenious marauders the "Evening News," December 31st, brings the following report, pertinently headed "Diplomat v. Fox":—

"Fox-hunting is in full swing among the Swiss, but it took a British diplomat to go one better — to strangle one with his bare hands.

From Montreux I hear of the feat accomplished by Mr. Hugh Whittall, swarthy, 60-year-old British vice-consul, who runs a model poultry farm on the slopes above the town.

One recent night he found four foxes attacking his hens; shot three, saw the fourth escape. But a few nights later the fourth came back, was caught in the act of making away with Whittall's personal pet, a perky little Leghorn.

The diplomat cornered the beast, got one of his hands bitten, but kept his grip on the fox's throat till it died."

* * *

The region of La Brevine, sometimes called Swiss Siberia, in the Neuchâtel Jura, has during the last few days registered minus 27 degrees Celsius.

* * *

A profitable transaction is reported from Geneva where in 1941 the city fathers bought the old hotel "Metropole" for a million francs and placed it at the disposal of the International Red Cross Committee. The building has recently been "de-requisitioned" and the council sold it to a foreign syndicate for the sum of 1,400,000 francs. Reconditioning and the necessary alterations have already been taken in hand and the hotel is expected to revert to its original usefulness early this summer.

* * *

Three months imprisonment was the penalty dealt out by the Geneva courts to one Félicien Bösch, who, in a stolen car met with a serious accident; he escaped scot-free while one lady passenger was killed on the spot the others being badly injured.

Army

"Das goht Sie en Dräck a" was the reply given to a police inspector when a man arriving at the Zurich railway station was asked about his business; he was arrested and in due course charged with high treason. His name is Franz Joseph Barwirsch, a lawyer in Davos who, an Austrian by birth and nationality, went there as a sick man at the age of 24. His prolonged stay had evidently effected a cure and he liked his new place of abode so

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much that he settled down and five years later, in 1929, he opened a solicitor's office and practice. After another two years he acquired Swiss nationality by becoming a citizen of the small commune of "Schmitten" in the Grisons. He was charged with a number of serious political offences: mostly on the strength of incriminating documents found in German archives and placed at the disposal of — or lent to — the Swiss authorities. The trial was staged in the large council chamber at Davos before the Federal Penal Court presided over by Federal Judge Dr. Hablützel, the prosecutor being Bundesanwalt Dr. Stämpfli. The defendant denied all and everything proving himself a worthy disciple of the Nuremberg junta. We reproduce a few illuminating passages of the five days trial which bring to light the wide ramifications before and during the war. The fact that an SS uniform was found hidden among his wardrobe he excused with the remark that a friend of his on his departure left behind a closed packet and that he had not the slightest notion of its contents. Less positive was his reply to the allegation that he was the medium of supplying funds to the notorious "Gauleiter" Wilhelm Gustloff who was shot at Davos by an anti-Nazi some years before the outbreak of war, and who was released from a Swiss prison not so long ago. Misleading reports about the political situation in Switzerland and outlining a gradual nazification of our country were submitted to Seyss-Inquart und Kaltenbrunner and to Hitler, those to the latter being dictated to a confidential typist in the Vienna office of a Dr. Ernst Hoffmann who had taken over the legal practice of the first of the trio. Those meant for the Führer had to be typed on a specially constructed machine with expanded letters as he refused to wear glasses so as not to reveal a physical weakness or imperfection. In spite of the testimony of the typist, Barwirsch insisted that what he dictated were of a professional and not political nature and that the reports in question were falsified for the purpose of the prosecution. Further on it transpired that Barwirsch had been asked to take over the defence of one of the Nuremberg criminals; he has already prepared his case but wished to secure the assistance of two Zurich lawyers; he ascribed to them damaging reasons for their refusal. Interesting evi-

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"DAILY TELEGRAPH."

dence was given by a number of officials of the Federal Police who were allowed to interview Seyss-Inquart while awaiting sentence, and others implicated in this case and still imprisoned in the occupied zone; the bulk of the documents discovered at Salzburg were handed over to the Federal Police at Thayngen (Schaffhausen) on November 14th, 1945, by American secret police. Of the 25 witnesses, only a handful of whom were for the defence, Dr. Ernst Hoffmann from Vienna, the intimate friend of his former partner Seyss-Inquart, was the most annihilating; being still detained by the American authorities he was allowed a short leave to appear at the trial. He gave particulars of the meetings and contact Barwirsch nourished with some of the Nazi leaders though he never reached the top, and practically confirmed what had already become manifest from the many documents produced in court. His last words contained a regret that his connection with Barwirsch turned into a hostile activity against Switzerland. The few witnesses for the defence brought little relief, in fact they seemed to have lowered their own prestige as they all held positions of some importance in public life.

Dr. Stämpfli, in his four hours speech went through the different charges which had all been proved 100%; he said the name of Barwirsch would go down in Swiss history with the same odium and disgrace as Quisling in Norway and demanded the maximum penalty of 20

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years' penal servitude. The counsel for the defence, Dr. G. P. Treadwell from Zurich, endeavoured to belittle and overthrow the evidence of Dr. Hoffmann who had an interest in finding a scapegoat; he said the court to return a merciful judgment. The final word was taken by Barwirsch who maintained his innocence and his constant wish even to-day, to do the best for his adopted country; he had been turned aside from this straight and honest course by the influence of Dr. Hoffmann. On Friday afternoon, December 20th, judgment of twenty years penal servitude was pronounced the court declaring that for a number of years the defendant had been in constant relations with leading politicians of the Third Reich with the object of bringing about an "Anschluss."

Traffic

Last month saw a considerable improvement in the air and rail services between our two countries. Swissair has started to fly a Skymaster between London and Geneva twice a week in each direction. The old Harwich-Hook of Holland service has been restored again and leaves Liverpool Street Station at 8 p.m., Sundays excepted. Those preferring to spend some time at Paris can reach Basle in less than six hours from the French capital.

* * *

The first of the Douglas DC4 machines ordered in America was flown by a Swiss pilot from La Guardia airfield to Geneva in 16 hours 39 minutes without a stop. For the distance of 4,000 miles the plane averaged 240 miles an hour; it carried no passengers but nearly five tons of spare parts.

* * *

In spite of the exchange restrictions it is officially stated that there are more British people going for our winter sports than ever before. About 70,000 left by the end of last month and another 100,000 are expected.

Economics

A strong protest has been lodged with the U.S.A. on account of the low import quota of 8,500 tons bread cereals for January instead of the previously agreed 40,000 tons. The American authorities replied that in spite of the largest wheat crop ever recorded it had been found impossible to overcome the existing transport difficulties and gave the assurance that by July 1st the total quantity contracted for would be exceeded in all probability.

* * *

During a discussion in the National Council about the division of the Radio licences, it was stated that for the last three years the total fees amounted to 35.5 million francs and showed a gradual slight increase, i.e. 11.4 million in 1944, 12 million in 1945 and 12.1 million during the last year. Over a third (13.5 million) has been claimed by the postal administration for the maintenance of the technical installation, the remaining 22 million being allocated to the Swiss Radio Corporation responsible for the preparation and distribution of the broadcasts. The general demand for an improvement in the programmes may lead to a measure of re-adjustment.

* * *

By a decree of the Federal Council, dated 29th November last, the import duties on manufactured

tobaccos have been considerably increased; the following particulars are taken from the London "Board of Trade Journal," December 28th:—

| COMMODITY | FORMER DUTY | NEW DUTY |
|--|--------------------|-------------|
| | Francs per 100 kg. | |
| Tobacco extract | 120 | 150 |
| Twists, stalks and rolls for making snuff | 500 | 650 |
| Chewing tobacco or snuff; pipe tobacco in rolls or plugs | 1,000 | 1,500 |
| Cut cigarette tobacco:— | | |
| Not packed for retail sale | 3,000 | 4,000 |
| In any packages for retail sale | 2,200 | 3,000 |
| Cut pipe tobacco:— | | |
| Not packed for retail sale | 1,000 | 1,350 |
| Packed for retail sale:— | | |
| In metal packages | 850 | 1,100 |
| In packages other than metal | 850 | 1,100 |
| Cigars:— | | |
| Not packed for retail sale | 1,600 | 2,600 |
| In any packages for retail sale | 1,200 | 2,000 |
| Cigarettes:— | | |
| Not packed for retail sale | 3,000 | 4,000 |
| In packages of all kinds for retail sale:— | | |
| Weighing each up to 1.35 g. inclusive | 1,850 | 2,400 |
| Other | 2,350 | 3,000 |

* * *

It is stated that amongst our farmers there are no less than twelve millionnaires whose total net assessment is about 22 million francs; if all were rightfully declaring their wealth the number is likely to show a pleasing increase. Appenzel A./Rh. seems to be the poorest canton as well over 90% of the farmers have to pay interest in land mortgages; in the Ticino the proportion is 22% only, believed to be the lowest.

* * *

Some surprise will be occasioned by the announcement that the well-known BIRO pen will be produced in Switzerland. The parent company, the Compania Sudamericana Biro, intends to establish a factory and distribution centre capable of supplying the Swiss and European markets. The principle of this pen was originated by a young Hungarian who shortly before the outbreak of war emigrated to South America where many frustrated hopes he succeeded to perfect the invention.

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Here is an extract from the "*Shoe and Leather News*," January 9th, which, we are sure, our fair readers will be interested in:—

"A measure of relief has been afforded the fashion end of the trade by the arrival in this country of the first two consignments of Swiss shoes, which were on sale at the Dolcis establishment in Oxford Street, W. The range of styles is comparatively small and in three colours only: black, brown and navy blue. The shoes are typical of Swiss styling, being classic, elegant, high heeled. Some have shallow platform soles, others, in suede, are trimmed with rosettes or "nasturtium leaf" motifs. Most of them feature the Louis heel.

Several other West End establishments are expecting early delivery of quotas from Switzerland and I fully anticipate that in some instances these will be on sale by the time these notes are in print.

Shoe queues are still very much in evidence, but several sales managers with whom I have discussed this problem recently are optimistic of the future and anticipate that by winter it will be possible for a woman to buy a new pair of shoes without wearing out an old pair in the process."

Humanitarian

As a token of recognition and gratitude for the help extended to fugitives and the maintenance of war charities the Belgian Government has made a gift of three grammes of Radium to Switzerland; in acknowledging the gift the Federal Council stated that this radium will be used exclusively for the fight

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against cancer. The transport of this apparently small quantity which is the largest ever carried on a railway has been effected with the closest secrecy.

—oo—

The next Tir Fédéral (Eigen. Schützenfest) will take place at Chur in 1949.

* * *

Three monks of the St. Bernard Hospice — Fr. Savioz, Fr. Emery and Fr. Fournier — are joining a group of five pioneers who left this hospice some years ago to found a similar monastery for travellers in the mountainous region beyond the Himalayas near the Latse Pass. They left a London Airport on December 22nd on their two-months journey to Tibet the last stage being completed on mule-back.

HAPPINESS.

Back to work again, and what a relief it is after the holidays. To cheer us up, to show us the proper way to handle our daily tasks, the following prayer, sent to each of his clergy by a certain English Bishop, seems to me appropriate:

Give me a good digestion, Lord,
And also something to digest;
Give me a healthy body, Lord,
And sense to keep it at its best.
Give me a healthy mind, good Lord,
To keep the pure and good in sight,
Which, seeing sin, is not appalled
To find the way to set is right.
Give me a mind that is not bored,
That does not whimper, whine, or sigh;
Don't let me worry overmuch
About the fussy thing called "I."
Give me a sense of humour, Lord;
Give me the grace to see a joke,
To get some happiness in life
And pass it on to other folk.

The greatest truth about happiness is, of course, — and as that jazz song of old for once so aptly says in "No, No, Nanette" — "But I can't be happy until I make you happy, too!"

Let us, therefore, try to remember this absolutely sure and infallible recipe for Happiness in the New Year; let us bear in mind, daily and always, that if we wish for happiness, we can easily achieve it, by simply striving to make someone else happy. And let me tell you, oh ye readers, who thirst for the wisdom falling from my lips, for the pearls of experience you expect me to scatter before you, let me tell you, "there is no other way to happiness!"

ST.

HOME SPUN YARN.

Der Scheidungsgrund. — "Herr Pfarrer! My Wyb ischt chorzsichtig, i cha si nomme bruuche, i möcht mi von-n-ere Schääde loo!" — "Jää, Jakob, Chorzsichtigkeit ischt känn Schäädiggrund." — "Jää, wessid, Herr Pfarrer, ond ehr Here, mi Wyb ischt so chorzsichtig, dass si my ond en andere Maa nomme vone-n-and kennt."