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NEWS AT RANDOM

Federal

Dr. Enrico Celio, President of the Swiss Confederation has received the entire Diplomatic Corps, as well as representatives of the government of the canton of Berne, on New Year's Day.

* * *

The Union of South Africa, it is learned, has expressed the wish to increase its imports from Switzerland and henceforth to settle any balance in Switzerland's favour in gold.

Owing to the fact that South Africa's imports from Switzerland exceed by far its corresponding exports (the respective November figures, for instance, being Frs.4,600,000 and Frs.800,000), Switzerland had to curtail exports to the Union some time ago which otherwise would have been higher still.

However, in the light of South Africa's offer to pay in gold, Switzerland will, no doubt, favourably consider this proposition. If it is accepted, Britain's favourable trade balance with Switzerland would, as a result, no longer be offset to such an extent by the Union of South Africa as it has been in the past.

* * *

The Swiss Federal Penal Court, sitting at Lucerne, has sentenced 19 members of the short-lived Swiss Nazi Party under the leadership of F. Riedweg, to imprisonment for treason. They were found guilty of working for the S.S. or German propaganda services and of assisting the Germans in their scheme to incorporate Switzerland in the "Greater German Reich."

The following sentences were passed: F. Riedweg, 16 years penal servitude; H. Bühler, 8 years penal servitude; K. Benz, 18 years penal servitude; J. Schönenberger, 4 years penal servitude; B. Schäppi, 16 years penal servitude; J. Nägele, 8 years penal servitude and 15 years expulsion from Swiss territory; W. Wirth, 10 years penal servitude; K. Meyer, 8 years penal servitude; T. Brink, 6 years penal servitude; J. Weber 5 years penal servitude; K. Kyburz, 5 years penal servitude; F. Weilenmann, 6 years penal servitude; P. Gloor, 4 years penal servitude; E. Weniger,

1½ years imprisonment; J. Foser, 1 year imprisonment; H. Diggelmann, 6 years penal servitude, W. Kölliker, 1 year imprisonment; W. Müller, 1 year and two months imprisonment; Th. Stadler, 3 years penal servitude.

Six of the condemned were not in custody.

[A.T.S.]

In November, Switzerland's imports rose from Frs.441,000,000 to Frs.480,700,000, while exports dropped from Frs.291,500,000 to Frs.270,500,000. The adverse trade balance thus amounts to Frs.210,200,000, which is the highest figure ever recorded.

Imports from the United Kingdom declined from Frs.35,100,000 to Frs.29,600,000, placing Britain fifth among Switzerland's suppliers, against fourth in the previous month. Exports to Britain slightly rose from Frs.9,500,000 to Frs.10,700,000.

The United States still ranks first as Switzerland's supplier and customer, the respective figures for November being Frs.98,900,000 and Frs.37,900,000.

* * *

It is reported that the Belgian National Railways is raising a loan from a Swiss banking corporation to pay for the modernisation of Belgium's rolling stock, and restoration of war damage. The money is to be redeemed by December 1st, 1949, but the railways have the right to repay the entire loan or part of it at an earlier date. The rate of interest has been fixed at 4 per cent.

* * *

As a result of parleys conducted at Berne, the present trade programme between Poland and Switzerland has been adjusted to present-day requirements.

Poland has undertaken to supply Switzerland in 1948 with 680,000-metric tons of coal. To some extent Poland may now dispose more freely of funds acquired through its supplies.

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Swiss interests in Poland affected by the nationalisation measures will form the subject of talks next spring.

* * *

The Swiss Government is to send a trade delegation to Moscow in mid-January, at the invitation of the Soviet Government.

* * *

As a result of Switzerland's continually increasing trade deficit, the Swiss National Bank's gold and foreign exchange reserves begin to show a decreasing tendency. Lately, as evidenced by the bank's weekly returns, gold had to be continually converted into foreign exchange.

In the light of this development, the Swiss National Bank will, in the New Year, considerably alleviate the stringent restrictions governing the transfer to Switzerland, of private dollar holdings in the United States belonging to Swiss nationals. It is understood that many hundred million dollars are involved.

* * *

M. Otto Seifert, 1st Secretary of Legation at the Swiss Legation in Budapest, has been promoted to Counsellor of Legation.

* * *

Giacomo Balli, General Consul in Barcelona, has retired from his post on reaching the age limit.

Monsieur Balli was appointed, in 1918, Secretary to the Swiss Legation in Brussels, later on he was transferred to the Legations in Madrid and Paris.

At the outbreak of the last war he occupied the post of General Consul at Barcelona. Balli is a citizen of Cavergno (Ticino).

Counsellor of Legation, Monsieur E. Fontanel, from Geneva, has been appointed his successor. He was at one time attached to the Swiss Legations in Washington, London, Berlin, Warsaw and Budapest. During the last war he was Chargé d'Affaires in China, and at the same time General Consul in Shanghai.

[A.T.S.]

Cantonal

The "Schweizerische Schillerstiftung" has awarded the "Schiller" prize (5,000.—frs.) to Meinrad Inglis of Schwyz. Inglis is a well-known writer of folk-lore.

* * *

Professor, Dr. G. Bachmann, formerly President of the Board of the Swiss National Bank, has died in Winterthur at the age of 73.

The deceased was born in 1874 at Winterthur and studied law and national economy at the Universities of Zurich, Strassburg, Berlin and Leipzig. In 1906, he was appointed Professor at the University of Zurich. Twelve years later (1918) he entered the "Direktorium" of the Swiss National Bank of which he was President from 1925-1939.

Professor Bachmann was from 1939-1943 a member of the National Council where he sat as a Liberal. He rendered conspicuous services to our country for which he was honoured by the Universities of Lausanne and Geneva with the degree of *doctor honoris causa*.

[A.T.S.]

* * *

A tragedy occurred on Xmas Day at the Zoo in Zurich, a keeper was killed by an elephant.

It is reported that this animal had already two

years ago killed a woman and last year seriously injured another keeper. The animal has now been destroyed. [A.T.S.]

* * *

Dr. Gottfried Bosshard, a former General-Manager and member of the Board of the "Schweizerischen Unfallversicherungsgesellschaft" in Winterthur, has celebrated his 80th birthday anniversary. Dr. Bosshard is Honorary President of this institution; he was for many years a lecturer at the University of Zurich on Insurance law. [A.T.S.]

* * *

The late Verena Conzett-Knecht has left an amount of 50,000.—frs. to the "Mütter und Säuglingsheim" Inselhof in Zurich of which institution she was one of the founders. [A.T.S.]

* * *

Ernst Gamper, who recently died in Zurich, has left to the communities of Wängi and Eggetsbühl an amount of altogether 30,000.—frs. for charitable purposes. [A.T.S.]

* * *

Professor Paul Niggli, of the University of Zurich, has arrived in Philadelphia (U.S.A.) where he was presented with the Hayden Gold Medal, for his research work. [A.T.S.]

* * *

Professor, Dr. Fritz Fischer, head of the Institute for technical physics at the Federal Technical University in Zurich, has died there at the early age of 50.

Professor Fischer, who was a citizen of Oberdiessbach (Berne) enjoyed an international reputation.

[A.T.S.]

* * *

Madame F. Gyr-Schlueter, of Zug, has given an amount of 100,000.—frs. to the "Kinderkrippe" of the town of Zug. [A.T.S.]

* * *

Ammunition stored during the war in a gallery hewn in the solid rock at Mitholz-Blausee (Bernese Oberland) exploded on Friday, December 19th, 1947.

Fires burst out from the mountainside, snow avalanches were started from the mountain tops, and explosives were scattered over a wide area.

The village and railway station of Mitholz were destroyed, and traffic on the Loetschberg line was held up for several days.

Ten people were killed and about a dozen people had to be taken to the hospital at Frutigen, some in serious conditions. Troops have been sent to the area to help in rescue work.

Federal-Councillor Kobelt, Head of the Federal Military Department, accompanied by a number of high Officers has paid a visit to the inflicted area.

A commission of experts has been appointed to investigate the cause of the disaster. The damage caused is estimated to exceed 100 million francs.

[A.T.S.]

* * *

Eduard Baumgartner (Liberal) has been elected Mayor of the town of Biel with 5,274 votes. His opponent A. Favre (Socialist) polled 3,622 votes. Dr. G. Müller, the former mayor of the city has been nominated an honorary citizen. [A.T.S.]

* * *

E. Scherz, Manager of the Cantonal Bank in Berne, has retired from his post, he has been connected with this concern for the last fifty years. [A.T.S.]

An avalanche which broke loose above Handegg (Ct. Berne) buried eight workmen, six of them were dug out alive, whilst two lost their lives. [A.T.S.] * * *

Dr. Carl Mutzner, Head of the "Eidgenössischen Amtes für Wasserwirtschaft," is leaving his post shortly owing to differences which have arisen between him and Federal-Councillor Celio. [A.T.S.] * * *

According to the latest census the town of La Chaux-de-Fonds numbers 33,294 inhabitants. [A.T.S.] * * *

H. Buchli, Manager of the "Verkehrsverein" of the town of Berne, has retired from his post. [A.T.S.] * * *

The death is reported from Berne of Dr. August Siegrist at the age of 83. The deceased was from 1903-1935 Professor at the University of Berne, and enjoyed an international reputation as an eye specialist. [A.T.S.] * * *

J. Gruber, Manager of the "Spar und Leihkasse," Solothurn, has been given notice, to take effect on February 1st, 1948. Investigations have proved negligence on his part to the detriment of the Bank. [A.T.S.] * * *

Dr. Hans Obrecht, in Solothurn, has been elected "Landammann" for the year 1948, and "Reg. Rat" Jacques Schmid has been appointed "Vice-Landammann." [A.T.S.] * * *

The oldest inhabitant of the canton of Solothurn, Mme. M. A. Späti of Gerlafingen, has celebrated her 104th birthday anniversary. [A.T.S.] * * *

Owing to an accident, the death has occurred in Basle of F. Oertli-Straumann, at one time Manager of the "Seidentrocknungsanstalt Basel," at the age of 90. The deceased has rendered great services to the Silk Industry and was, during the first world war, delegated by the Federal Council to the Silk Import Syndicate. [A.T.S.] * * *

On the occasion of the General Shareholders Meeting of the Grand Hotel, St. Moritz, which was

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destroyed by fire a few years ago, the liquidation of this establishment was completed. A final dividend of 4 per cent. was declared, all shareholders have been fully paid. [A.T.S.] * * *

Two skiers from Zurich by the name of Dr. Nordmann, a teacher at the "Gymnasium," and Harburger, lost their lives whilst skiing in the Val Gravas (Grisons); they were surprised by an avalanche. A third member of the party (Rain) was able to dig himself out of the snow, and was rescued by a search party. [A.T.S.] * * *

For charging his customers black market prices for milk, a man was sentenced by the Tribunal at Aarau to 14 days imprisonment (on probation) and a fine of 10,000.—frs. [A.T.S.] * * *

The oldest inmate of the "Pflegeanstalt" Muri (Aargau) Elisabeth Suter, has celebrated her 102nd birthday anniversary. [A.T.S.] * * *

The 3½ per cent loan of 7 millions francs issued by the canton of Thurgau has been considerably over-subscribed. [A.T.S.] * * *

Alfred Huggenberger, the well-known writer, has celebrated his 80th birthday in Gerlikon near Frauen-

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feld. His novels and plays enjoy a great popularity throughout Switzerland. The Government of the canton of Thurgau has presented him with a cheque of 5,000.—frs. as a birthday present. [A.T.S.]

Dr. Ernst Reiber, Editor of the "Schweiz. Bodensee Zeitung," in Romanshorn, has been elected a member of the cantonal Government of Thurgau with 19,747 votes. He belongs to the Liberal Party. His opponent, Nat. Councillor Schümperli (Socialist) polled 9,625 votes. [A.T.S.]

The oldest inhabitant of the canton of Ticino, Mme. Margherita Degrussa, died at Olivone at the age of 104. [A.T.S.]

The trial ended at Lausanne of a Swiss citizen named Raoul Cevey, of Geneva. It was alleged, that he acted as a spy first on behalf of the Russians and later of the Germans.

According to the indictment, he led a party of Gestapo agents, who in 1944 burnt down the village of Pouilly, in Haute Savoie, where he himself shot down two men and ordered nine others to be killed; that he supplied the Vichy Police with reports of refugees in Switzerland; and that he helped to smuggle German spies from Switzerland into France.

The Division IIIa Court found him guilty on all charges. Cevey was sentenced to imprisonment for life, he has also to bear the cost of the trial. [A.T.S.]

Dr. Peter Leuzinger, Manager of the CIBA, and his wife were killed whilst motoring. The car skidded on the icy road near Oron (Vaud) and collided with a tree. [A.T.S.]

Jacques Ehrhardt, conductor and composer, has celebrated his 90th birthday anniversary in Lausanne. [A.T.S.]

Major Ludwig Studer has been appointed "Waffenplatzkommandant" of Sitten, in succession to Colonel W. von Kalbermatten. [A.T.S.]

M. L. de Torrenté, from Sitten, has been appointed Manager of the Branch Office of the National Bank in Neuchâtel, in succession to the late René Brandt. [A.T.S.]

—oo—

Twelve experts in skiing and rescue work, coming from Italy, Czechoslovakia, Switzerland, and Yugoslavia, attended the first international course, organized by the International Union of Alpine Associations, for the study of snow and avalanches. It was held at Davos and the Weissfluhjoch Institute.

Under the guidance of the Weissfluhjoch scientists they have been made acquainted with the Swiss methods of snow observation, utilizing meteorology, physics, and crystallography; with rescue work in the Alps; and with the forecasting of avalanches. The experts witnessed the remarkable skill of an "avalanche dog" which took only six minutes to find a man buried 2ft. deep in the snow. They were shown how avalanches can be started by hand-grenades or mine-throwers; they experimented with the various means used in the Swiss Alps for transporting injured persons, and carefully studied the entire organization of rescue parties.

The Weissfluhjoch Institute, which is situated at an altitude of 9,345ft. above Davos, is a unique institution.

By its intensive research work and by its regular avalanche warnings, which are issued almost every week, it has helped to save hundreds of human lives. Its staff during the war trained a large number of Army officers, and as result, during the five war winters, although the Alps were guarded by as many as 40,000 men, casualties from accidents did not exceed 25. The foreign experts will try to set up similar services in their own countries.

This first international course has been such a success that the International Union of Alpine Associations has been asked to organize at least one such course every year, and, if possible, two or three. These courses will be open to the members of the associations belonging to the union, one of them being the British Mountaineering Council.

An Exhibition of more than 100 paintings of Turner, sent to Switzerland from the Tate and National Galleries, was opened at the Berne Museum of Fine Arts.

A thaw, accompanied by abundant rainfall is general in Switzerland up to the 6,000-feet level. Numerous avalanches are reported from the alpine regions. One near Morgins, in the Valais, destroyed a chalet and buried a family of four persons, two of them were killed and the others injured.

Switzerland is issuing a new set of stamps for the winter Olympic games which will take place at St. Moritz from January 30th to February 8th.

Hans Pfaff, 1940-42 Swiss tennis champion and former Davis Cup player, has turned professional to coach at Zurich.

Among projects for increasing hydro-electric power in Switzerland, the latest to be put forward provides for harnessing the Brenno, a tributary of the Tessin. The scheme comprises three underground power houses, Luzzzone, Olivone and Biasca, the total fall being 1,920 metres, spread over 33km., and the total power developed would be 274,000 kW. The Luzzzone power house would comprise two 27,500-kW horizontal shaft groups; the Olivone station three 31,000-kW vertical shaft turbo-alternators; and the Biasca station four 31,500-kW groups. The average output would be 890 million kW annually.

The following couples have celebrated their diamond wedding anniversary: Mr. and Mrs. J. Stutz-Müller in Kempten; Mr. and Mrs. K. Sprenger-Bollinger in Neftenbach.

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