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The Swiss Observer

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NEWS AT RANDOM

Federal

The Federal Chancellery has issued a report in connection with the £8 million Centurian tank deal.

As mentioned in our last issue (January 25th) the Federal Attorney's Office (Bundesanwaltschaft) was asked by the Swiss Government to investigate whether illegal profits have been obtained by third parties on war material procured by the Federal Military Department and whether such people are liable to legal penalties.

The 1,500 word *communiqué* from the Attorney's Office has now been published, and states that Colonel Hans Rieser, Military and Air Attaché in Washington — who was suspended and recalled to Berne during the course of the investigation — could not be prosecuted under the Swiss penal code, but disciplinary procedure would be opened for alleged violation of the Swiss civil statute.

According to the *communiqué* Colonel Rieser, who was Military and Air Attaché in London till April, 1952, claimed that he was asked by the makers of Centurian tanks, Vickers-Armstrongs Limited, to propose a representative for them in Switzerland. Colonel Rieser proposed his brother Hubert (a contractor) with whom Vickers-Armstrongs came to an agreement in June, 1950. Hubert was to receive one per cent commission from Vickers-Armstrongs if the Swiss Parliament voted credits to buy Centurians, as it did in 1955. It stated that Hubert Rieser said he intended to pay his brother one-third of the commission for acting as intermediary in his appointment by Vickers-Armstrongs. Hubert Rieser received 395,000.— frs. and placed 50,000.— frs. in a special cash account for Colonel Rieser.

The Federal Military Department has entrusted Federal Judge Schoenenberger with the task of investigating whether Colonel Hans Rieser can be charged with "blameworthy and reprehensible" conduct. In the meantime Colonel Rieser is relieved of his post as Military and Air Attaché without pay.

Colonel H. Rieser was well known in the Colony whilst *en poste* in London. He was born in 1901 in Berne, and is a citizen of Berne and Wuppenau (Ct. Thurgau). He attended schools in Berne and St. Gall and studied languages in Rome, Cambridge, London, Paris and Berlin. He then attended the Federal Institute of Technology (ETH) Zurich, where he passed his examinations as an architect.

After several years in this branch, he was until the beginning of the last war for five years General Secretary of the Swiss Aero Club. During the war he was commander of various units and joined the Federal Military Department in 1942. On March 1st, 1947, he was appointed as Military and Air Attaché at the Swiss Legation in London.

* * *

The receipts for the month of December, 1956, of the Federal Customs Administration amounted to 80.8 million francs. The Confederation (Bund) receives from this amount 60.4 million francs, or 6.4 million francs more than in December, 1955.

For the whole year of 1956 the receipts amount to 666.6 million francs. (1955: 585.0 million francs.)

Cantonal

Two persons were killed when a motor-car collided with a lorry near Reichenburg (Ct. Schwyz). The names of the victims are Edwin Keller (59), teacher in Küsnacht (Zurich), and Robert Hafner (54), contractor of Zurich. [A.T.S.]

* * *

The electric railway "Stansstad-Engelberg, A.G." has gone into liquidation. [A.T.S.]

CITY SWISS CLUB

Will members kindly note that the next

MONTHLY MEETING

will take place on **Tuesday, February 12th, 1957, at 6.30 p.m. for 7 p.m. at the Dorchester Hotel, Park Lane, W.1 (Stanhope Room).**

The Dinner will be followed by a game of Jass, Bridge or Canasta.

Members wishing to be present should send their card to the Manager of the Dorchester Hotel, Park Lane, W.1, to reach him not later than Monday, February 11th, 1957.

THE COMMITTEE.

During the year 1956 10,919 traffic accidents occurred in the canton of Zurich. (1955: 10,065); 4,909 people were injured of whom 147 (1955: 126) succumbed to their injuries. [A.T.S.]

The town of Winterthur had on December 31st, 1956, a population of 73,780. [A.T.S.]

The Federal Council has appointed Mr. Ernst Hirt (Tuescherz) to the post of Manager of the Federal Gymnastic and Sports school at Magglingen (Ct. Berne) in succession to Mr. Arnold Kaech, who has been nominated Director of the Federal Military Administration. [A.T.S.]

A fire which broke out on the premises of the Singer dial plate factory at La Chaux-de-Fonds caused damage estimated at four million francs. [A.T.S.]

The administrative council of the Marcel Benoist Foundation for the Furtherance of Scientific Research, has awarded the Marcel Benoist prize for 1955, amounting to 20,000.— frs., to Drmed. Max Holzmann of Zurich. [A.T.S.]

On December 31st, 1956, the town of Fribourg numbered 31,442 inhabitants. [A.T.S.]

Mme. C. Quartenoud, the mother of the late M. Maxime Quartenoud, a former member of the Government of the canton of Fribourg, has celebrated her 102nd birthday. [A.T.S.]

The town of Olten is now the largest town in the canton of Solothurn, numbering 18,579 inhabitants. [A.T.S.]

The paper "Basler Nachrichten" has now closed the collection made for Hungarian refugees. The collection totalled 286,276.— frs. [A.T.S.]

During the year 1956 267 traffic accidents were reported in the canton of Schaffhausen. 175 persons were injured of whom three succumbed to their injuries. [A.T.S.]

The population of the town of St. Gall — which, on account of the crisis which took place in the embroidery trade in the thirties, reached the low level of 62,515 inhabitants — numbered in December, 1956, 72,751 persons. [A.T.S.]

The Mayor of the town of Bangor (Eire), Councillor F. C. Tughan, was the official guest of the town of St. Gall. The function was arranged when Professor Dr. O. Widmer, President of the Geographical Society of St. Gall, visited Bangor last year to obtain information about St. Gall, who was a pupil of St. Comgall's celebrated school which flourished in Bangor in the sixth century. [A.T.S.]

The commune of Trun (Ct. Grisons) has nominated Dr. Joseph Condrau, President of the National Council for 1957, an honorary citizen. [A.T.S.]

Mr. Franz Mayo, Mayor of Arbon (Ct. Thurgau), is shortly vacating his post on reaching retiring age.

He was for many years a member of the Grand Council of the canton of Thurgau. [A.T.S.]

The Statistical Office of the canton of Ticino has given the number of inhabitants at the end of the year 1950 (last census) as being 175,055. [A.T.S.]

On 1st January, 1957, the population of the town of Lausanne numbered 117,323 inhabitants. [A.T.S.]

M. Roger Matthey, has been elected Manager of the "Schiffartsgesellschaft" for the Morât and Neuchâtel lakes. [A.T.S.]

The population of the canton of Neuchâtel in December, 1956, numbered 140,188. [A.T.S.]

Burglars entered the premises of a grocers establishment in the suburb of Eaux-Vives, Geneva, and removed a safe containing about 6,000.— frs. [A.T.S.]

On the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the appointment of General Dufour to the supreme command of the Swiss army during the Neuchâtel *affaire* (1857) a celebration was held at the monument of General Dufour in Geneva. [A.T.S.]

The population of the canton of Geneva on December 31st, 1956, numbered 227,515. [A.T.S.]



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DEATHS.

The following deaths are reported from Switzerland:

Dr. Arnold Meier, Publisher and Proprietor of the "Schaffhauser Nachrichten", in Schaffhausen at the age of 64.

Dr. h.c. Franz von Ernst, in Berne, aged 78. The deceased played for many years an active part in Swiss journalism and political life. He was at one time Chairman of the Swiss Broadcasting Corporation, and from 1938 to 1942 a member of the Grand Council of the canton of Berne. The University of Fribourg honoured him in 1934 with the degree of *doctor honoris causa*.

Philippe Albert, a former *regisseur*, and President of the "Union Instrumentale" and the municipal band of Geneva, in Geneva at the age of 78.

Max Hector Egger, a former "Kantonsbaumeister", in Berne, aged 69.

Dr. h.c. Ernst Mayenfisch, a partner in the Banking Concern "Julius Baer & Co.", in Zurich, and well-known art collector. In 1929 he bequeathed his large collection of pictures and sculptures to the "Kunsthaus", Zurich. He died at Zurich at the age of 75.

Hans Haenni, well-known pistol shot, in Solothurn, aged 84. He was "Pistolenweltmeister" in 1921 in Lyons, and in 1922 in Milan.

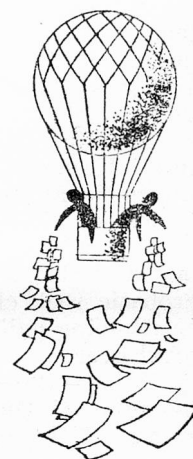
Dr. h.c. Charles J. Steiger, since 1938 Chairman of the Board of the "Ueberseehandel, A.G.", Zurich, at the age of 71. In 1949, the University of Zurich bestowed on him the degree of *doctor honoris causa*.

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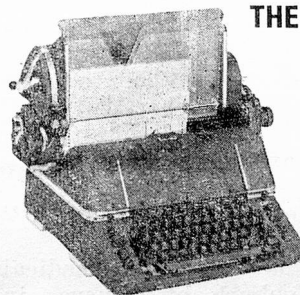
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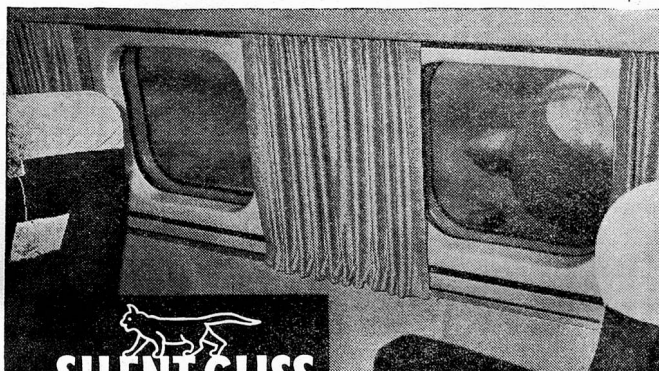
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Jean Gauchat, a teacher, and President of the commune of Colombier, in Colombier, aged 74.

Arthur Moser, architect, and from 1922 to 1931 a member of the National Council, in Neuhausen, at the age of 77.

Hans Bandi, landscape painter, in Interlaken, aged 60.

Dr. Max Riesen, formerly Director of the Swiss Hotel Keepers' Association and Secretary of the International Hotel Keepers' Association, in Basle, at the age of 69.

Felix Genecand, in Geneva, aged 77. The deceased was a well-known alpinist and one of the first acrobatic rock climbers in Switzerland. He invented the climbing nail named after him, which is known the world over.

Robert Bezencon, for 26 years President of the commune of Onnens, and a member of the Grand Council of the canton of Vaud, in Yverdon at the age of 65.

Pasteur S. A. Rollier, for many years a preacher at Boudry, and from 1928 to 1944 a member of the Grand Council of the canton of Neuchâtel, in Fribourg, aged 90.

Dr. H. U. Vollenweider, from 1932 to 1938 Commercial Editor of the "Neuen Zürcher Zeitung" and afterwards a Director of the "Schweizerischen Bankgesellschaft", in Zurich at the age of 65.

Joseph Schwerzmann, a Judge at the cantonal police court and a member of the "Kantonsrat" Zug, in Zug, aged 52.

Dr. W. Bouvier, for 50 years a medical practitioner in the Vernier suburb of Geneva, in Geneva at the age of 76.

Rudolf Ferber, co-partner in the Nova Works, Zuerich, in Zurich, aged 73. [A.T.S.]

LEGACIES AND DONATIONS.

The late Theodor Pletscher, school-teacher of Schleithem, has left 12,500.— frs. to the commune of Schleithem, and a sum of 46,500.— frs. to various charitable institutions.

Madame Berta Luethi-Kolp of Kappel, widow of the author Gottlieb Luethi, who recently died, has left various legacies totalling 36,000.— frs. to a number of charitable institutions.

The late Madame Paula Haeberlin of Frauenfeld, widow of the late Federal Councillor Haeberlin, has given a legacy amounting to 10,000.— frs. to the Home for old people in Frauenfeld.

On the occasion of his 84th birthday Mr. Paul Konrad Gimmi, a Merchant in St. Gall has made several donations to charitable institutions amounting to 100,000.— frs. [A.T.S.]

ANNIVERSARY.

Benjamin Vallotton (80) of Lausanne, a well-known novel writer and journalist. Amongst his best-known works are a series of "Potterat" tales, "Portes entr'. ouvertes". [A.T.S.]

VARIOUS.

Traffic accidents in Switzerland are still on the increase and in many cases such accidents have been caused by drivers who were under the influence of alcohol. Whilst in this country such cases are very seriously dealt with (and rightly so) Swiss courts seem to be very lenient. A driver of a motor-cycle,

who was found guilty of being drunk when driving and causing an accident, received a sentence of 8 days' imprisonment and fined 30.— frs. (! ! !)

The Police Court of La Chaux-de-Fonds sentenced a motorist, who was found guilty of being drunk whilst driving to 3 days' imprisonment and a fine of 10.— frs. (! ! !)

A motorist, who three years ago received a sentence for driving whilst under the influence of alcohol, was caught again, and this time was sentenced to a month's imprisonment. (No wonder accidents are on an increase. Ed.) [A.T.S.]

* * *

New automatic weapons are to be issued this year to members of the Swiss army, each of whom keeps his rifle at home ready for instant mobilisation.

Distribution of the first 25,000 "assault rifles", something between a sub-machine gun and a carbine, will start soon. The new weapons as light as carbines but with magazines holding thirty rounds and effective at ranges of up to about 320 yards can also fire anti-tank grenades.

The bore of 7.5 millimetres is the same as that of the present rifles and light and heavy machine guns of the Swiss Army, so the same ammunition can be used for all.

The first men to be issued with the new gun will be the so-called Grenadiers of the Infantry, specially trained in fighting at close-quarters.

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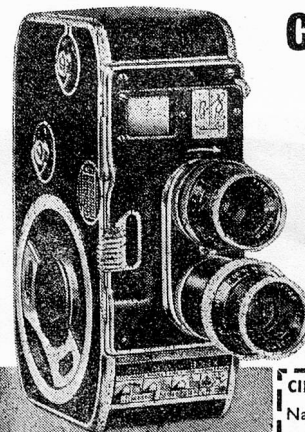
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The main road over the 7,000-foot Klausen Pass, in Central Switzerland, has been closed because the village of Spiringen is being gradually carried towards it in a monster landslide.

The village is slipping down the mountainside at the rate of about a quarter of an inch a year.

It is now possible to make the trip up the Rhine from the North Sea to Switzerland by the modern Swiss motorship *Basilea* (Italian name for Bale, its home port). The ship can carry 55 passengers, principally in double cabins.

A Swiss film called *Rythmique* has been produced in Zurich to demonstrate the pedagogic application of the Jaques Dalcroze system of teaching. It is already being shown in the cinemas of the German speaking part of Switzerland. A French version is in preparation and the film will doubtless be made available soon in other languages.

The longest cable railway in Switzerland, covering the $2\frac{1}{4}$ miles between the Bernina Hauser (6,720ft.), in the Engadine, and the Diavolezza (9,766ft.), was opened recently. Its two cabins can transport 250 passengers an hour over the Morteratsch glacier.

Switzerland will soon do away with her last steam engines.

The few miles in thinly populated sections of the country still served by steam will be electrified within the next months.

The Federal Military Department has issued a directive authorising tourists to bring arms into Switzerland for their personal defence. Each tourist is allowed one revolver or automatic pistol and 15 rounds of ammunition.

Whether the visitor will be able to carry the weapon on his person depends on the police regulations in each canton.

A standard test for mountain-climbing ropes has been agreed on by an expert commission representing seven nations set up by the International Union of Mountaineering Associations. It consists in attaching a weight of 187lb to the end of a rope and letting it fall freely from a height of 19ft 8in. A rope that stands up to two pulls is deemed trustworthy.

During experiments made at the Swiss Federal Institute for material testing, one French nylon rope stood up to 16 pulls. Climbers favour nylon ropes because they are light and dry quickly, but they fray easily.

Foreign workers in Switzerland now number 326,000. This is 13% of the population.

OUR NEXT ISSUE.

Our next issue will be published on Friday, February 22nd, 1957.

We take the opportunity of thanking the following subscribers for their kind and helpful donations over and above their subscription: J. W. Bonjour, R. Sahli, A. Engelbert, J. v. Bergen, R. J. Helfenstein, A. Baenzigen, F. E. Stuber, E. H. Hess, H. E. Messmer, Walter Forster, M. A. Rothlisberger, H. Knapp, Rev. C. Reverdin, F. Winkelman.

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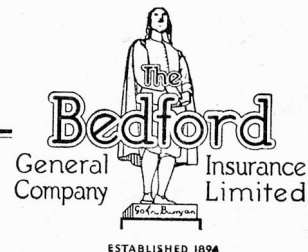
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