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The Swiss Observer

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The Official Organ of the Swiss Colony in Great Britain

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NEWS AT RANDOM

Federal

The message of the Swiss Federal Government to Parliament proposing to grant the vote to women in federal affairs has been published recently. It puts forward some constitutional modifications, one of them making it clear that the word "citizen" used in the present text of the constitution would apply to women as well as men.

Other changes proposed are that women should be entitled to sit in the Lower Chamber of Parliament (National Council) and on the Federal Supreme Court. There would be an exception in the case of foreign women married to Swiss citizens; they could be elected only after holding Swiss nationality for 12 years.

As acceptance of the proposals would almost double the number of electors, there would be changes in the referendum rights which are part of the Swiss constitution. At present a law passed by Parliament must be submitted to a popular vote if at least 30,000 citizens demand it; in future the number of signatures necessary would be 60,000. The "right of initiative" allows a petition for an amendment to the constitution to be submitted by 50,000 citizens; in future the number would be 100,000.

M. Chaudet, head of the Federal Military Department, stated at a Press conference that he was asking for a supplementary credit of about 40 million francs for the defence forces. About half would be spent on training specialized technical units of the army, and the remainder on the purchase of training aircraft. These would include 20 Vampire trainers, to be built under licence in Switzerland.

The traditional dinner offered by the Federal Council to the heads of the diplomatic missions accredited to the Confederation, and their ladies, took place in Berne.

The report of the Swiss National Bank reveals gold reserves of nearly £600,000,000, or about £120 per head of the population, compared with reserves of £46 per head in the U.S.A.

Monsieur Joseph Marjai, the newly appointed Minister Plenipotentiary and Envoy Extraordinary of the People's Republic of Hungary, has presented his credentials to Dr. Th. Holenstein, Vice-President of the Swiss Confederation, and to M. Max Petitpierre, Swiss Foreign Minister at the Palais Federal in Berne.

The newly appointed Minister Plenipotentiary and Envoy Extraordinary of Iceland, Monsieur Helgi P. Briem, has presented his credentials to Dr. Th. Holenstein, Vice-President of the Swiss Confederation, and to M. Max Petitpierre, Swiss Foreign Minister.

Customs receipts for the month of January 1957 totalled 75.9 million francs of which the Confederation benefits by 56.1 million francs, or 10 million francs more than during the same period in 1956.

The widow of the chauffeur who was killed in an attack on the Rumanian Legation in Berne two years ago has, by the order of the Federal Council, received a cheque of 30,000.— frs. as compensation for the loss of her husband.

The Italian Minister of Commerce, Monsieur Dall'oglio Stattete, has paid a visit to Federal-Councillor Dr. Th. Holenstein, to discuss commercial relations between the two countries.

CITY SWISS CLUB

Will members kindly note that a

SOIRÉE FAMILIALE

(with Ladies)

will take place on **Wednesday, March 20th, 1957, at 6.30 p.m. for 7 p.m., at the Dorchester Hotel, Park Lane, W.1.** Dinner will be followed by two films, as well as by a short talk on the Petroleum Industry.

Will members kindly advise the Manager of the Dorchester Hotel not later than Tuesday, March 19th, 1957.

TH. v. SPEYR,
Assistant Secretary.

The Federal Council has appointed Mr. Ernst Schweizer to the post of Swiss Consul at Venice, in succession to Consul Imhof who is retiring for reasons of age.

Consul Schweizer was born at Worb (Ct. Berne) and entered into the service of the Confederation in 1920. He formerly occupied posts at Milan, London, Liverpool and Bucharest.

Cantonal

The Swiss Government recently voted a sum of £4,375,000 towards the cost of modernising and enlarging Zurich-Kloten Airport. The total cost, to which the canton and city of Zurich are contributing, will be in the order of £15 million. [A.T.S.]

The golden Hans-Georg Naegeli medal for services rendered to the musical life of the town of Zurich has been awarded to the Swiss conductor Dr. Volkmar Andrea. [A.T.S.]

The well-known "Gasthof zum Baeren" in Brienz was badly damaged by fire. [A.T.S.]

During the year 1956 741 traffic accidents were reported in the canton of Fribourg. 563 persons were injured of whom 44 succumbed to their injuries. [A.T.S.]

The collection made in the R.C. diocese of Switzerland for the University of Fribourg totalled 629,476.— frs. (1955: 582,447.— frs.) [A.T.S.]

The accounts of the canton of Aargau for 1956 close with a credit balance of 135,510.— frs. [A.T.S.]

A fire which broke out at the premises of the textile firm "Kummer & Gutzwiller, A.G.", Birsfelden, caused heavy damage. [A.T.S.]

The loan of 25 million francs at 3½ per cent issued by the Basle Cantonal Bank has been heavily over-subscribed and allocation had to be reduced. [A.T.S.]

All the members of the Government of the canton of St. Gall have been re-elected. The poll shows the following result: Dr. A. Roemer (Liberal), 40,904 votés; Dr. J. Riederer (Cons. Cath.), 42,459 votes; Dr. A. Gemperli (Cons. Cath.), 42,222 votes; Paul Mueller (Cath. Cons.), 43,157 votes; Dr. S. Frick (Liberal), 42,341 votes; W. Clavadetscher (Liberal), 42,900 votes; M. Eggenberger (Socialist), 42,697 votes. [A.T.S.]

Three skiers were carried away by an avalanche on the Piz Sol (Ct. Grisons). A rescue party which went to look for them found them all dead. Their names are: Mme. Good-Ackermann of Mels, Theo Germann, school-teacher of Kriessern, and Jakob Mettler, school-teacher of Bad Ragaz. [A.T.S.]

The University of Louvain has bestowed the degree of *doctor honoris causa* on Professor Paul Demieville-Roux, Professor at the "College de France", Lausanne, and a member of the "Ecole française d'extreme orient". [A.T.S.]

In the village of Basse-Nendaz (Conthey district) an avalanche carried away three buildings killing two persons and injuring two. The names of those killed are: L. S. Fournier and Robert Fournier. [A.T.S.]

DEATHS.

The following deaths are reported from Switzerland:

Dr. Henri Niesz, in Baden at the age of 70. The deceased was for 27 years a member of the management of the "Motor Columbus A.G." In 1950 the Federal Institute of Technology, Zurich, honoured him with the degree of *doctor honoris causa*.

Paul Mathis, publisher of the "Feuille d'avis du district de Courtelary", in Courtelary, aged 51.

Dr. Stefan Ankus, journalist, author and film producer, in Zurich at the age of 73.

Robert Moret, Swiss Consul in Nantes since 1952, aged 65.

Dr. Robert Schmidt, consulting-engineer, manager of the "Energie Ouest-Suisse", in Lausanne at the age of 73.

Edwin Bachmann, well-known landscape painter, in Zurich, aged 83.

Joseph Schuler, a former member of the National Council, in Schwyz at the age of 67.

Emile Juillard, general manager of the watch manufacturing company "Cortebert", in Cortebert, aged 72.

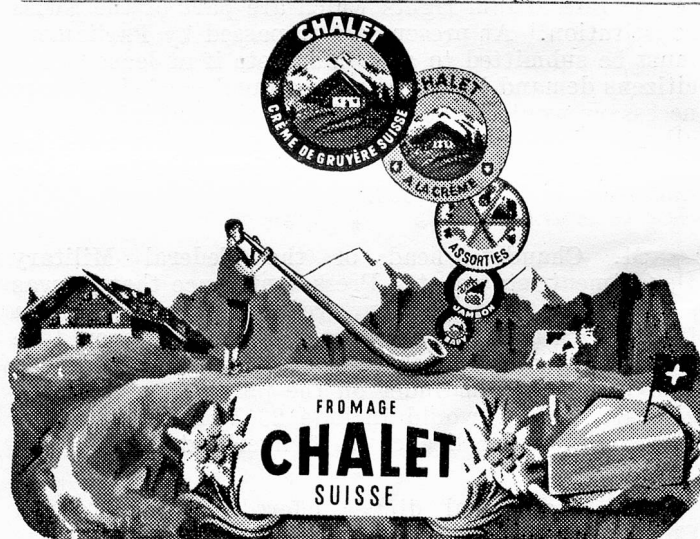
Dr. Max Flury, for 30 years secretary of the "Basler Volkswirtschaftsbundes", and a member of the Grand Council of the canton Basle Town, in Basle at the age of 63.

Adrien Calame, since 1950 director of the conservatory Neuchâtel, and a well-known concert pianist, in La Chaux-de-Fonds, aged 57.

Dr. Romain Pasquier, surgeon-in-chief of the clinic for tubercular diseases "Humilimont", Bulle, in Bulle at the age of 60.

Arnold Egli, from 1934 to 1945 "Kreispostdirektor" of Lucerne, and a member of the Grand Council of the canton of Lucerne, in Lucerne, aged 76.

Adrien Bovy, Professor of History of Art at the University of Lausanne, in St. Legier at the age of 77.



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Adele Schreiber-Krieger, at Herrliberg-Zurich, aged 85. The deceased was one of the pioneers in Europe of the movement for women's rights and social reform.

August Zuber, formerly commercial manager of the "Papierfabrik", Perlen, in Hergiswil at the age of 84.

Dr. Joh. Kaelin, from 1905 to 1919 editor of the "Solothurner Anzeiger", and from 1919 to 1945 keeper of the archives of the canton Solothurn, and a member of the "Kantonsrat", in Solothurn, aged 80. [A.T.S.]

* * *

ANNIVERSARIES.

Alfred Nicole (75), of Geneva, a member of the editorial staff of the paper "La Suisse", and a member of the Board of "Sonor, S.A.", Geneva.

Dr. Emil Wietlisbach (70), of Beinwil (Ct. Aargau), a lawyer. In 1916 he was elected a member of the Grand Council of the canton of Aargau. Dr. Wietlisbach sat in the National Council from 1922 to 1942. In the latter year he was chosen as a member of the Federal Insurance Tribunal of which he is at present its Vice-President. [A.T.S.]

* * *

LEGACIES.

The late Arthur Schneider, lawyer, of Berne, has left the amount of 400,000.— frs. to the Bernese Government, the interest is to be used for charitable purposes.

Mlle. Ida Weber, who died two years ago at Dübendorf, has left a number of legacies to hospitals and charitable institutions amounting to 143,000.— frs. [A.T.S.]

DIAMOND WEDDING ANNIVERSARIES.

Mr. & Mrs. Philipp Walser-Huber, of Chur, and Mr. & Mrs. O. Weber-Brauchli, of Weinfelden. [A.T.S.]

* * *

VARIOUS.

The Federal Gymnasts Association (Eidg. Turnverein), with a membership of 244,998, has celebrated its 125th jubilee. [A.T.S.]

Lieut. Nager (35), of Arlesheim, leader of a Swiss Army Alpine patrol, was killed by an avalanche on the "white hell" 12,830 Mt. Pitz Palu. Five men with him narrowly escaped death.

The avalanche swept the patrol away as it was making a training climb. A helicopter and ski-plane landed rescuers, who were able to save all members of the patrol except the lieutenant.

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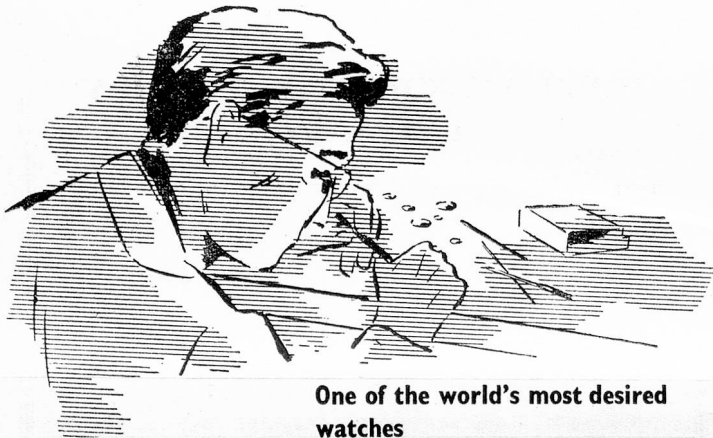
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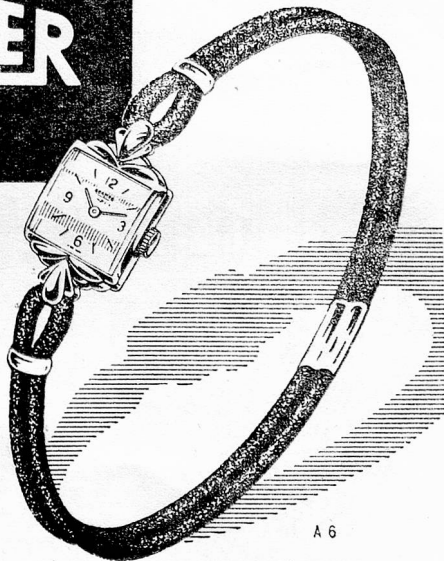
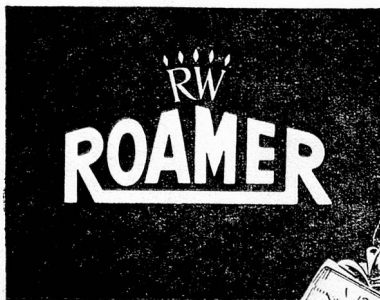
The provisional figures for 1956 show that the Federal Railways carried 215,700,000 passengers in that year, an increase of 7,300,000 on 1955, earning fr. 326,000,000 compared with fr. 315,100,000 in the previous year. Goods traffic increased by 1,290,000 tonnes to 24,760,000 tonnes with receipts of fr. 484,100,000, an improvement of fr. 26,900,000. Working expenses also rose, from fr. 569,400,000 to fr. 645,900,000, so that the surplus of fr. 270,000,000 of 1955 was reduced to fr. 231,800,000. The final results are expected to be published at the end of this month.

Extension work is being carried out on the Sphinx Observatory perched at a height of 11,723 feet above the Jungfraujoch — the saddle between the



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Swiss Alpine peaks of the Monch and the Jungfrau — in preparation for the International Geophysical Year in 1957-8.

A new storey will house laboratories of the high Alpine research station, working particularly on the observation of cosmic rays and sun spots.

The building and installations, costing some 150,000 Swiss francs (£12,500) should be completed in the spring.

* * *

Ernst Pichler, pilot of the Swiss Alpine Air Rescue Squad, was killed, and his three passengers injured, on February 10th when a Fairchild crashed soon after taking off from Birrfeld aerodrome, near Brugg, to make parachute drops.

* * *

The French liner La Marseillaise (17,000 tons) has been sold to the Swiss Arosa Line at a price reported to be slightly over \$6m. She will be converted in France during the spring, and is to enter the transatlantic service in June under the new name of Arosa Sky, with her gross tonnage increased by about 3,000 tons.

Originally named Le Maréchal Pétain, this was one of the finest ships in the Mediterranean, where her owners, the Compagnie des Messageries Maritimes, used her both as a regular liner and as a luxury-cruise ship. She was requisitioned last summer by the French Government, and was used later as a hospital ship in the Suez operations.

The ship was built at the Chantiers Navals de La Ciotat in 1949, and has diesel engines giving her a speed of over 20 knots. During conversion for the North Atlantic trade her accommodation will be approximately doubled to provide for about 60 first-class and 900 tourist-class passengers. The Arosa Line has three other ships sailing between Europe and Canada.

* * *

Ski-ing is only part of the outdoor fun at Swiss Winter Resorts.

Besides the countless opportunities for ski enthusiasts Switzerland offers skaters and curlers 250 ice-rinks, tobogganers 15 slides, bobsleigh and skeleton runs which are under constant polishing-brush treatment, and daredevils on skis 75 ski jumps.

* * *

Two big International Conventions will be held at Lucerne in 1957.

Some 5,000 to 10,000 participants are expected for the International Rotary Convention (May 19th to 23rd), and 500 to 600 will attend the congress of the Federation of Varnish and Paint Chemists' Association of Continental Europe (FATIPEC) from September 23rd to 27th.

* * *

One of Switzerland's most modern and most Beautifully Located Hotels is now under construction on the lakeside promenade of Neuchâtel. Part of the structure is being built on pillars giving the effect of protruding pier-like into the lake. All guest and social rooms of this new hotel, which is to open by June 15th, 1957, under the name of "Baulac Hotel", will afford a unique panoramic view of the Alps, from the Saentis to the Mont Blanc, enhanced by the charms of the Lac de Neuchatel, Switzerland's largest inland lake.

It seems that Canton Valais is making a bid to become the ice-skating centre of Switzerland. This is not merely restricted to its double garland of winter resorts stretching in the south from Saas-Fee to Champéry and in the north from Montana-Vermala to Crans but extends above all to the towns with their southern charm situated in the apricot orchards of the Rhone Valley. Following after Martigny and the capital, Sion, Visp, a little town of 3,000 inhabitants, and also the gateway to Zermatt, has now acquired a modern artificial ice-rink with a surface area of 19,375 sq.ft.

* * *

It is now possible to make the trip up the Rhine from the North Sea to Switzerland with all the comfort of an ocean voyage by travelling in the modern Swiss motor-ship "Basilea" which is the Italian name for Bale, its home port. The ship is powered by three 450 h.p. motors and can carry 55 passengers, accommodated in 27 double cabins and one single cabin. Further comforts on board include elegantly furnished Social Rooms and several promenade decks.

THE CIVILISED OASIS.

Mr. George Bilainkin, the British author, who has recently visited his old friends in Berne, St. Moritz and Evolene, and been entertained in Zurich and Geneva, writes in a Devon-paper (which he once edited), the following:

... Last, but not least, I come to the civilised oasis in Europe, Berne, capital of the efficient, advanced, and superbly clean Switzerland.

I feel I am in another continent when Swiss customs gentlemen approach me. I see here spotless table cloths. I listen to polite and dignified exchanges. I step into strictly correct tramcars, trains, taxicabs. There is no "doing" anyone. The bread is the best in Europe. (I have now reduced my taste in brown from 20 varieties available in most big Berne shops to three favourites.) Services for the housewife make me wonder how long crushed and decadent women elsewhere will tolerate needless serfdom.

Everybody says "thank you", cordially, when you make a purchase; the slightest and the largest article is carefully wrapped in spotless paper.

I salute this wonder city of hope.

SWISSAIR'S OPERATIONS IN 1956.

Swissair carried 773,956 passengers in 1956, an increase of 23 per cent over the 1955 figure of 630,719. Thus more passengers travelled on Swissair services in 1956 than in the four years 1948 to 1951.

Offered capacity expanded by 16 per cent to 75,618,430 short ton-miles from 65,201,052 in 1955. The number of miles flown was 13,716,620, compared with 11,873,156.

The volume of air freight carried rose by 23 per cent to 10,421 metric tons from 8,487 tons. Air mail recorded an increase of nine per cent to 3,608 tons from 3,317.

The overall load factor on the scheduled services improved to 66.5 per cent from 64.8 per cent.

Operating revenue for 1956 amounted to 153 million Swiss francs, an increase of 17 per cent over the 1955 total of 130 million.

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