

# News at random

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Le Comité

with America and the advantage of these great exhibitions to international solidarity formed the themes of the traditional speeches.

\* \* \*

In order to finance the cost of the mobilisation an amount of 200 million francs is being placed by the Confederation with the Swiss banks in treasury bills of one to three years at an average rate of 3½%.

\* \* \*

It is now officially stated that all Swiss mobilised from abroad are to be paid their travelling expenses from their foreign domicile to the Swiss frontier. They are also entitled to the cost of the return journey as long as their army papers are in order and up-to-date.

\* \* \*

A shortness and consequent high prices of pork has induced the Confederation to send an official to Belgrade to arrange for the wholesale importation of pigs into Switzerland.

\* \* \*

The "Kunstmuseum" at Berne has organised a unique exhibition of masterpieces from the local and Basle museums; the latter at the outbreak of hostilities were removed from Basle to a place of safety. This picture gallery includes works by the two Holbeins, Arnold Böcklin, Hodler and Koller.

\* \* \*

Exceptional damage has been caused this year by hailstorms and farmers have received over four million francs from the insurance company.

\* \* \*

The indiscriminate despatch abroad of small postal packets (maximum two kilos) is being considerably curtailed; such articles as coffee, tea and woollen garments have to be excluded.

\* \* \*

After eight weeks deliberations an agreement has been reached with Germany to regulate commercial relations between the two countries. The fact that under the clearing treaty of last June Germany has incurred a liability of about 65 million Swiss francs has aggravated the difficulties of the Swiss negotiators. Both governments are anxious to restore normal

conditions and somewhat complicated means have been devised to gradually reduce this adverse balance so that the old accounts of the Swiss exporters can be liquidated.

\* \* \*

The Bernese Oberland is threatened with the gradual extinction of the chamois presumably due to the absence of new blood.

\* \* \*

According to news published in the Irish press, M. von Gunten is the official horse buyer of our government; he is said to have examined about 500 "troopers" in Irish centres and selected 200 horses for transport to Switzerland. This is what the "Irish Independent" (25/10/39) states:

One of the difficulties about this consignment was that, owing to the war, special permission had to be obtained from the British Government for the export of horses bought in Northern Ireland. Special arrangements had also to be made with the authorities in Britain and in France for the transport of the animals to Switzerland.

An Irish dealer, who accompanied M. von Gunten and his associates, Capt. Egli and Capt. Ramus, stated that during their two weeks' tour they had been on the road at 7 o'clock each morning, and had been examining horses by lantern-light in remote country lanes until late at night.

The prices given ranged from £50 to £70.

On a visit here in August M. von Gunten bought a large consignment of troopers and five horses for officers. The latter animals included Wise Girl, which, ridden by Mr. Maurice Bamber, of Ballymena, won the Civilian £100 Jumping Championship at this year's Horse Show.

M. von Gunten said that the Swiss authorities had been delighted with the jumpers which he had bought on his last visit.

They had all been doing very well, and some of them would undoubtedly be leaders at the Army and other jumping competitions in Switzerland next year. He hoped to return in January for another consignment of troopers.

\* \* \*

General elections took place throughout Switzerland during the last week-end. The majority of candidates were returned unopposed. Owing to mobilisation and delays in transmission, final results are not yet available. In a number of districts, notably Basle and Berne, the distribution of certain electioneering leaflets was stopped by the army command.

\* \* \*

An ominous news item has been circulated by Reuter's in the English press. It states that our Government has decided to send a circular letter to the cantonal authorities containing instructions as to how the population should act if our country were invaded.

\* \* \*

The Italian extension of the Gothard line from Chiasso to Boghera — 66 miles — was opened to traffic last Saturday, the electrification having been completed. It is now possible to travel by electric railway from Basle to Reggio, the extreme south of Italy, the whole distance being over 900 miles.

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