

News at random

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NEWS AT RANDOM

The final figures in the election for the National Council have now been published. On the whole there is little change; the communists and frontists have been eliminated while the "Landesring" (Duttweiler), a body of recent creation, seems to be gaining strength. The following is the comparative strength of the principal parties in the last three councils:

	1939	1935	1931
Liberals	50	48	52
Socialists	49	50	49
Catholic-Conservatives	44	42	44
Farmers (Bauern)	21	21	30
Landesring	9	7	—

A circular issued by the Federal Council and addressed to the cantonal authorities deals with the behaviour of the population in case of an invasion. It contains obvious instructions and stresses the inexpediency of civilians offering resistance or taking any part in military operations.

Petrol rationing will come into force on November 15th when the prohibition of Sunday motoring will be dropped. It is stated that petrol imports are extremely satisfactory and helpful in increasing the existing stocks.

Biel (Bienne) is to have a trolleybus service; the installation including six buses is to cost half a million francs.

The cantonal appeal court of Schwyz has confirmed an award fining each member of the Morschach communal council Frs.120 for contravening the order regulating and safeguarding the transport of passengers. The local council has constructed a kind of cable railway to convey goods to the "Stoos" and subsequently allowed and encouraged residents to make use of the convenience. The worthy councillors ignored the protests of the court order obtained by the cantonal authorities until one fine morning the latter sent their constables to detach and collect the "Cabin" which has now found a resting place in the cellars of the Rathaus in Schwyz.

Lieut. Giuseppe Albisetti, who since June last, has been kept in prison in different Italian towns without a definite charge has now been released and has returned to Lugano. The Ticinese press insists on a full enquiry and report by the Federal Council.

* * *

Prof. Rud. Staehelin, of Basle, who at the request of the German Government reported on alleged cases of mustard gas poisoning during the Polish campaign has now published a personal statement in the Basle press. The Professor maintains that it is the duty of a neutral to assist in establishing the truth and that his mission was undertaken with the consent of the university officials; he was mainly concerned with the medical aspect, and the various statements and deductions since published have not been authorised by him. — The matter is forming the subject of an interpellation at the forthcoming session of the Basle Grosse Rat.

* * *

Prof. Alfred Vogt, of Zurich, the famous eye specialist, celebrated on October 31st, his 60th anniversary; he hails from the canton of Aargau.

* * *

A veteran of the 1870/71 mobilisation reached his 90th anniversary on the 1st of this month; he is advocate Frédéric de Weck, of Fribourg, and as lieutenant of Battalion 56 was present when the Bourbaki army crossed our frontiers.

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The National Exhibition in Zurich which officially closed its doors last Sunday is refunding the whole of the guarantee capital in addition to 10% interest.

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The new British Minister to the Confederation will be Mr. David Victor Kelly who is promoted from his present post at the Foreign Office; until a year ago he was Counsellor at the Residency in Cairo. — General regret will be felt at the retirement of the present Minister, Sir George Warner, who was extremely popular and charmed the Bernese by his distinguished appearance and gentle manner. Sir George is an authority on Bernese history and families; at a luncheon following the recent visit of the Lord Mayor of London he delivered a transporting oration blended with typical Bernerdütsch.

* * *

For publishing in the Ticinese paper "Il Popolo" an abusive article about the Federal Council a fine of frs.500 in addition to heavy costs has been imposed on Humbert-Droz, the secretary of the communist party.

A number of Basle wine merchants have been sentenced to fines of frs.50 to frs.2,000 for diluting Kirsch and other spirits (Schnaps) and selling them as the genuine article.

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The Swiss Himalayan Expedition under the leadership of Mr. André Roch has returned home. Unfavourable weather conditions prevented the alpinists from achieving their object but three peaks said not to have been conquered before were successfully scaled. The following is an extract from a report published by *The Times of India* (26/9/39).

After successfully scaling Mount Dunagiri (23,184 feet), Rataban (20,100 feet) and Gauri Parbat (22,071 feet), the Swiss climbing party set out from the Base Camp on September 9th to conquer Badrinath peak (23,420) on a clear morning. The party consisted of Messrs. André Roch (leader), David Zogg and Fritz Steuri (Alpinists) and four Sherpa porters, namely, Gamboo, Andhva, Nuri and Thilia, and two Dotiyal coolies, Ajitia and Bali.

The party, after struggling for nearly eight hours through ice and snow, reached Camp One, 19,000 feet, at 3.30 p.m. and pitched three tents in succession in the direction of the peak on a snow saddle which was considered safe from the danger of avalanche. From noon the weather grew bad and the party settled early in their tents. Weather conditions continued to remain unfavourable throughout the night and the morning dawned with additional mist and fog. As a result, the party decided to halt until weather conditions improved. After breakfast on the morning of September 10th, the party again retired to their tents. At about 12 a.m., suddenly a whistling and buzzing sound was heard and a terrific wind blew down over the tents. Before they could make out what it was, a terrific avalanche swept over their tents and carried them down nearly 500 yards. The party was thrown over an area of fifty yards on either side of the snow ridge, and each of the members struggled frantically for his own life in a state of semi-unconsciousness.

The Swiss climbers, recovering from the shock, saw Nuri and Thilia, Sherpa porters, over the surface of the snow struggling for their lives and trying to reach a safer place. Other porters, Bali, Gamboo and Andhava were found under neck-deep

snow, and the leader helped by the other two climbers rushed for their rescue unmindful of their personal injuries. The ice-axes were all buried under snow and the digging of the snow in order to extricate the half-dead persons had to be done with fingers only. Nearly two hours were spent in extricating them.

The sixth porter, Ajitia, was not, however, traceable. A vigorous search was immediately conducted without success. It appears that Ajitia, the Dotival mate-coolie, was thrown by the avalanche into one of the crevasses. Mr. André Roch made further attempts to search the crevasses with the help of a rope, but all efforts proved futile. Nuri and Thilia, who were injured, managed to undertake the journey to the Base Camp with the help of Messrs. Zogg and Steuri, who were themselves injured. Bali, Andhava and Gamboo had lost consciousness and had perforce to be left behind under the care of the leader. Mr. André Roch displayed uncommon strength in remaining alone with the porters the whole night and the following day up to noon, although he himself did not escape injury. Gamboo ultimately succumbed to his injuries. Mr. Roch was able to bring Andhava and Bali to consciousness. Both these porters were able to move down with the help of ropes the next morning.

GENERAL GUISAN.

(The following is an extract of an instructive article which appeared in the "Christian Science Monitor" of October 14th.)

On Wednesday afternoon, August 30th, the Swiss Parliament was convened to elect the General of the Swiss Army. The Swiss, jealous of equality among cantons, prefer in times of peace to leave the Army without a Supreme Chief. The levies of the different cantons are gathered into five divisions or "army corps," each having its own "Divisions Kommandant," the highest attainable rank in time of peace; there is no general. Such a situation is believed to exist in no other army in the world.

The General is appointed only in case of national emergency. The necessity of entrusting the care of military operations to a single head is obvious. But the Swiss General is far more than the Supreme Chief of the Army. He takes under his authority all the state services connected with the needs of the Army.

Transport, telegraphs, telephones, post offices, censorship, are all placed under the General's direct authority, and their employees submitted to military law. Even public economy becomes so closely linked with the military, that it is dependent on it. The Government executives lose a good deal of their authority, or become subservient, in many respects, to the military.

The Swiss General may be best compared to the Roman dictatorship under the Republic. The Roman dictator was elected in case of pressing danger such as that of Hannibal approaching Rome, and he laid down his powers as soon as the national danger was over. Until then, however, his power was supreme.

This is what, with but few variations, happens in Switzerland. The Swiss General might himself become a danger for the country, if he did not follow the dictates of the most conscientious citizenship. There is

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