

# News at random

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# The Swiss Observer

FOUNDED BY P. F. BOEHRINGER.

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## NEWS AT RANDOM

### Federal

The following is D.V. the constitution of our highest authority for the next four years and their respective

charges:

Public Economy:	Walter Stampfli, <i>President of the Confederation.</i>
Political Dept.:	M. Pilet-Golaz, <i>Vice-President of the Confederation.</i>
Post and Railways:	M. Celio.
Justice and Police:	Ed. von Steiger.
Home Affairs	Phil. Etter.
Army:	M. Kobelt.
Finance and Customs:	Ernst Nobs.
Chancellor of the Confederation:	Dr. Oskar Leimgruber.

The Federal Council, for the first time, has lost the predominating influence of a single party and is now made up of three liberals, two cath.-conservatives, one farmer and one socialist.

\* \* \*

Federal Councillor. Pilet-Golaz is the eldest member of our cabinet having been elected to this exalted position as far back as 1928; next in seniority is Federal Councillor Etter elected first in 1934.

\* \* \*

In commenting on the socialist success at the recent elections for the National Council English labour papers predict that under pressure from the workers our Government can be expected to resume diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union in the near future. There is, of course, not the slightest justification for such a contemplation as even the Swiss socialists have backed the Federal Council in the many decrees restricting and forbidding communist activities and propaganda.

\* \* \*

The Federal Council approved the trade agreements between Spain and Switzerland, signed on December 4th, 1943. These agreements regulate the mutual exchange of goods for the period from October

1st, 1943, to the 31st of March, 1944. Spain will export to Switzerland metal, sulphur, cork, fur and animal hair, fibre, fruit and wine; Switzerland will send to Spain chiefly machinery, tools and apparatus, chemical products, textiles and watches.

### Cantonal

An unusual manoeuvre is being enacted at Brunnen where two houses — lock, stock and barrel — are being moved backwards in order to make room for a second track of the Brunnen-Sissikon railway line. One residence has already been shifted eighty metres and turned round 90 degrees.

\* \* \*

A protestant church in Einsiedeln was inaugurated on Sunday, December 12th.

\* \* \*

The Socialist party of the town and canton of Zurich gave a banquet to M. Ernest Nobs, the new Federal Councillor. In the presence of about 1,500 people, M. Nobs declared himself honoured to possess the confidence of the working classes. "Switzerland must not stay behind, but follow its way firmly, for it befits a democracy to be active." The speaker added that a socialist not remaining true to himself as a Federal Councillor would be valueless.

\* \* \*

In place of National Councillor Nobs who has advanced to the Federal Council, Prof. Dr. Valentin Gitterman (socialist) will join the National Council.

\* \* \*

The electors of the canton Zurich voted a credit of 35 million francs to combat unemployment. The communes were invited to submit projects for canalisa-

## CITY SWISS CLUB.

Messieurs les Membres sont avisés que la prochaine

### ASSEMBLÉE MENSUELLE

sera en forme d'un "BIERABIG" et aura lieu le 1er février à 5.30, dîner commencera à 6h. précises au Dorchester Hotel, London, W.1.

Les participants sont priés de bien vouloir s'inscrire pas plus tard que le 28 janvier auprès de Mons. P. A. Moehr, Hon. Sec., Imperial House, Kingsway, W.C.2.

LE COMITE.

tions, construction of roads and reservoirs and other public works. Plans anticipating an expenditure of 45 million francs have already been deposited with the Council.

\* \* \*

In a black-market deal in industrial diamonds which the Zurich police discovered when it was being completed, it was found that one of the six arrested persons had the diamonds sewn in his under clothing.

\* \* \*

Prof. Alfred Vogt, the well-known eye-specialist, died in Zurich at the age of 64. He enjoyed international fame and was probably the greatest authority on ophthalmology of modern times. Among the many prominent patients from this country may be mentioned the late Lord Grey of Fallodon, Lord Ashfield and President de Valera. The following personal notes are taken from the "*Evening News*," December 11th:

One outstanding case was that of the late Sir James Fraser, of "Golden Bough" fame, who went to Vogt towards the end of his life, when he was unable to read or write. Vogt enabled him to do both well enough to finish his last book, and to see well enough to play golf.

A friend and a former patient, told me what a very unusual character Professor Vogt was, and how all patients, whatever their rank or position, were equals in his mind. Until he knew and liked them they were merely case numbers to him. "rather like convicts."

If he did not come to like a patient, that patient knew it. The treatment would be just as careful, but the patient remained a case number.

Yet Vogt's way with children was delightful. He could induce a boy whom he was treating for a detachment of the retina to lie quite still for ten days by sheer personal magnetism.

A small, stoutish figure, he had a funny short-paced walk, so that he looked at a distance as if he were being moved along on wheels.

Hard work probably shortened his life (he was 64 when he died).

He had three establishments at Zurich — the Eye Clinic, the Red Cross hospital, and another hospital. Starting at 6 a.m., he went on without a break until 7 p.m. subsisting on an apple and some brown bread for lunch. This he did seven days a week.

He was Professor of Ophthalmology at the University of Zurich as well as head of the Eye Clinic, likewise a State concern.

His skill was medical as well as surgical, and he was a great diagnostician.

\* \* \*

In the municipal elections of Berne the five members whose term of office expired were re-elected. The budget of the town was agreed to and a project for the enlargement of the home for aged people was sanctioned.

\* \* \*

The municipal council in Berne has voted a subsidy of Frs.30,000 to the organisers of the Swiss Art Exhibition which is to be held this year in our capital.

\* \* \*

The circulation throughout the country of different communist propaganda leaflets has led to the discovery of a printing works at Berne and to the arrest amongst others of the well-known Basle communist, Emil Arnold who seems to have been the spiritual director. Further enquiries disclosed that the "composition" or plates were supplied from Geneva and imposed, printed, stitched and distributed in Berne.

\* \* \*

Dr. Ernest Mosimann, an efficient practitioner, who enjoyed unequalled respect and admiration in Burgdorf especially for his unrelaxing interest in youth welfare, died in that town at the age of 75 after a protracted illness.

\* \* \*

The radical party of the canton Fribourg has launched a successful initiative demand insisting that all expenses approved by the Government and exceeding Frs.500,000 should be submitted to the electorate.

\* \* \*

Solothurn has bestowed the honorary citizenship upon Federal Councillor Stampfli, the new President of the Confederation.

\* \* \*

The town authorities of Solothurn decided to distribute to their needy old age pensioners a special yearly allowance of 200 frs. for single people and 300 frs. for families, besides their cantonal and federal pensions.

\* \* \*

A matinée in the Basle municipal theatre celebrated on Sunday, December 5th, the 60th anniversary of Dr. Rud. Schwabe when the President of the Government and other high civic dignitaries delivered laudatory addresses. Dr. Rud. Schwabe who is closely identified with the "Basler National-Zeitung" is a keen and always active supporter of the cultural achievements of his native town.

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Some illuminating facts were revealed at the Basle criminal court when five "Spitzel" (one Swiss and four foreigners) were sentenced to terms of imprisonment ranging from three months to 2½ years. One of the accused, a porter at a large local establishment, kept a register of the firms with whom his principals corresponded and of the persons that used to call at the offices. Others were employed in shadowing the movements of prominent men and reporting casual utterances made by citizens of a disparaging nature about a foreign power.

Col. T. M. Bruggisser, senior of the well-known straw-plait factory M. Bruggisser & Co., died in Wohlen at the age of 80; the London office was closed at the beginning of the present war.

At a meeting of representatives from the villages along the Lago Maggiore held at Locarno means were being discussed to reopen navigation on the lake suspended during the last few months and thus establish communications again between the two shores.

After an animated and critical discussion in the National Council the coal position in the canton Valais is likely to be eased, anyhow as far as the accumulated stocks are concerned. Though the industry cannot be maintained on an economic basis without Federal subsidies new conferences have been arranged with Federal Councillor Stampfli with a view of future mining. The possibility of an early termination of the war does not offer great promises of a resumption.

A detestable joke has been played on the "Tribune de Lausanne" and some other less important local papers. Notification was received of the death of a local newspaper correspondent with the result that a "fair part" and the customary obituary notices were published. It subsequently turned out that the reporter so despatched was in the best of health, and not in the least concerned about this intelligent anticipation but police proceedings are likely to be set on foot against the informer.

According to a census taken on the 1st of December the inhabitants of La Chaux-de-Fonds, the metropole of our watch industry, have increased by 298 in the last twelve months and number now 32,130.

Among several other financial projects the Grand Conseil of Neuchâtel has adopted a proposal to allocate family allowances in an extremely liberal manner. A special committee has even been formed to study the desirability of making these allowances compulsory throughout the canton.

The official reply of the Federal Council to the many claims put forward by Geneva — some of them as far back as February 1939 — has now been published. Most of the demands have arisen owing to the economic isolation of the canton intensified by war conditions. No immediate relief can be expected as questions like the "Free Zones" of "Upper Savoy" and the "Pays de Gex" cannot be discussed with the French authorities until the return of normal conditions. The Federal Council pledges its full support in the schemes locally proposed such as the construction of an airfield, the opening of a waterway between

Geneva and Lyons and a general reduction in tariffs. The Federal Council also pays tribute to the spirit in which the canton and people of Geneva have borne the present difficulties.

The death at the age of 81 is reported from Geneva of the Romansch poet, Eider Linsel, the author of "Il Vegl Chalamer" (the old inkpot) and other books. He was born at Sent in the Engadine, and championed the merits of Romansch which, mainly due to his efforts, was adopted as the fourth national language.

The Geneva Conseil d'Etat elected as its President National Councillor Albert Picot who already in 1938 occupied this important position.

### Army

In an address to high officers of the army assembled on the battlefield of Sempach on December 28th General Guisan said: "To command does not only mean to know, to foresee, to have the will, it means above all to believe, to believe in one's country and in its freedom. Whatever will be the destiny of our country in future, it will no doubt be hard, even if we are spared the last upheavals of the war." One minute's silence was then observed by those present, in memory of those who fell on the battlefields during the past centuries, for the independence of our country, and of the soldiers of 1914-1918 and of 1939-1943.



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The first air fight in which our own air force was engaged took place on New Year's day over the Bernese Jura. A German twin-engined plane crossed the frontier and was met by our own pilots who signalled to the intruder to land; instead the latter opened fire and was promptly attacked by our own craft and ultimately shot down. It was a fight between two Messerschmidts; a few of the latter form part of the Swiss Air Force which it is said consists of about seventy squadrons the majority of them being made up from old French machines.

On January 7th foreign aircraft flew over the Engadine. One heavy American bomber evidently lost its bearings and circled over Berne, and on being pursued turned towards Dübendorf where ground patrols signalled landing orders. It came down respectfully on the airfield.

**Economical**

How war accelerates the development of electrical undertakings is shown in the following statement as reported by the "*Electrical Review*," December 31st: Monsieur H. Von Schulthess, in an address on the electricity position, said that in normal times consumption would increase by 250 million kWh. per year, but during the war years the increase had been much greater. Many factories were changing over to electric drive and numerous householders had adopted electricity for heating because they could not obtain coal. In 1942 new electrical installations for domestic use added from 75 to 80 million kWh. The growing demand had so far been met by new plants at Verbois, Innertkirchen and Reckingen. Two new plants were under construction at Rapperswil and Lucendo-Airolo; their joint production is estimated to be 300 million kWh, but they would not be ready before 1945 or 1946.

The immediate outlook for workers in the cotton trade is not promising, work and wages already experiencing a serious slump. At a trade union meeting in Zurich the threat of total unemployment led to an animated discussion.

Conditions in our watch industry are reflected by a report which appeared in the "*Star*," January 18th, to the effect that Longines, one of Switzerland's biggest watch factories, has ordered a 50 per cent. cut in production from January 31st. Other Swiss factories are expected to follow suit, because these firms, who are selling mainly to America, are unable to convert more than about 50 per cent. of the dollars they receive into Swiss francs. The National Bank objects

to increasing the frozen dollar credits of the Government, and the agreement now effective covers conversions up to about 50 per cent.

**Traffic**

The number of passengers travelling on the Swiss Federal Railways continues to increase. During the first six months of 1943 84,870,000 passengers were carried, which was 6,200,000 more than during the same period in 1942. Receipts showed a corresponding rise of frs. 6,000,000. As regards freight traffic, 10,500,000 tons of merchandise were transported during this period. Receipts exceeded the 1942 figures for the same period by frs. 17,800,000, and despite an increase in expenditure of 8,600,000 francs, net profits amounted to 93 million francs, or 9.8 million more than for 1942.

An ambitious scheme of post-war air development is foreshadowed by Mr. H. Pillichody, in New York, who acts as official representative for our home authorities. According to him a direct air service between Switzerland and New York will be established with an estimated flying time of 18 hours.

Other projects are referred to by "*Modern Transport*," January 1st, which reports that the development of its services after the war is being planned by Swissair in order to link them with the transoceanic and transcontinental services which are envisaged.



It is considered probable that direct services will be provided from Switzerland to Lisbon and Foynes to connect with North Atlantic services. A service to Dakar would provide the link with routes to South America, and services to Asia and Australia would be intercepted at a Greek or Egyptian base. Direct services to Scandinavia and to Eastern Europe are also contemplated.

\* \* \*

Basle has put forward a scheme for the building of a new airport on the western plateau of the Birsigtal, near Paradieshof. The site covers an area of 250 acres, which would suffice for continental air traffic; it could be increased to 675 acres to meet the requirements of inter-continental traffic. The levelling of the site would necessitate 1.3 million cubic metres of earth-works. The main runway would measure 1,500 by 400 metres. Costs involved by this scheme, excluding purchase of the site, are estimated at 8.5 million francs.

\* \* \*

The steamer "Santis" which has been fitted out with new Diesel motors will be the fastest boat of our mercantile marine; it will do about 12 knots to the hour and is destined for the transatlantic route. Another boat is now being overhauled, the "Chasseral," and will be engaged in the service between Lisbon and Marseille.

\* \* \*

Further restrictions on motor traffic, mainly due to the scarcity of rubber, came into force with the beginning of this month. Transport facilities by public and postal services are suffering a reduction of about 20% and motor-cabs are limited to a ten mile radius; private motoring is practically eliminated.

\* \* \*

For a long time past the trains of the line Berlin-Hamburg were considered the fastest in Europe, as the distance of 269 km., with one stop was overcome in 228 minutes, an equivalent of 75.4 km. per hour. This record is beaten by the light express trains between Zurich, Berne and Geneva which are traversing the distance of 287 km. including three stops and considerable curves and height differences in 220 minutes, equal to an average of 78.3 km.

### Rationing

Heavy penalties have been imposed on five butchers in Allschwil who during about two years have slaughtered unregistered cattle and sold the meat coupons-free. Altogether about 47 tons have escaped rationing. The fines varied from Frs.20,000 with three months imprisonment to Frs.2,500 with one month. The meat controller who negligently countersigned the fraudulent declarations of the butchers earned three months imprisonment with a fine of Frs.3,000.

\* \* \*

The Federal Office for food distribution announced that for the present only Emmenthaler cheese with large holes would be available. The exceptionally warm summer during the making was responsible for these large cavities which rendered the cheese unsuitable for storing.

\* \* \*

Motor-cars, motor-ships, lorries and every kind of transport depending on fuel for propulsion must

exhibit a special sign indicating the official permit. Coaches carrying workmen and employees to and from factories are exempted. Removals and delivery of furniture to newly-wed couples are limited to a distance of 100 km. if taken by road. These measures are intended to preserve the stock of tyres and rubber tubes.

### Humanitarian

British prisoners of war who escaped from Italy to Switzerland are given free accommodation in camps or hotels, under special arrangements made by the British military attaché in Berne. All necessary clothing is obtainable from stocks held in Switzerland by the International Red Cross and the men receive advances of pay through the British Legation.

\* \* \*

From the "Tribune," December 24th. At present Switzerland has received 60,000 refugees, racial, political and military, among whom are British, Polish, and other Allied soldiers who escaped into Switzerland after the collapse of France, and later after the fall of Mussolini. This total is identical with the number of refugees admitted to Britain since 1940. There is only this difference — Switzerland is a neutral and not bound by moral obligation to Allies, and Britain has ten times the population of Switzerland.

\* \* \*

The Zenith Watch Co., which employs about ten per cent. of the population of Le Locle, celebrated on December 12th the centenary of the birth of its founder, Georges Favre-Jacot, by distributing amongst its personnel Frs.20,000; a similar amount was added to the pension fund.

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Apart from the 66,000 refugees which were forced to find a refuge in Switzerland, there are at present 7,000 emigrants in our country. For the relief of the civil internees a collection is now in progress in order to grant increased assistance to these poorest of the poor of war victims.

—o—

A sportsman of singular achievements is the epitaph of Ernst Kaufmann, who died in Zurich at the age of 49. A cyclist of merciless enthusiasm his name is recorded in the annals of all the international cycle races where he was in the habit of carrying off top honours. His performances have been described in articles and books which serve as classics for would-be-emulators. Like with most athletes the forced expenditure of the natural powers of endurance and resistance in his early days cut short his chances in later life. Kaufmann had retired from active sport about ten years ago and became interested in a local cycle business.

\* \* \*

A skiing camps for girls has been organised and inaugurated at Grindelwald by the association of Swiss skiing clubs, where 500 maidens of between 12 and 14 years are taught the rudiments of this exhilarating sport; it is under the patronage of Madame Guisan, the wife of our general.

\* \* \*

Our good friend Mr. G. Wüthrich has been on a visit to Dublin, and a man of his imposing stature cannot walk about without being noticed by any enterprising reporter. "*The Irish Press*," January 4th, has succeeded in buttonholing him and extracting from our generally not very talkative compatriot some interesting information especially about one of his not commonly known hobbies. From the article which is headed by his likeness — somewhat in line with his latest hobby — we reprint the following: "Before he left for London yesterday, Mr. Wüthrich told an Irish press reporter that further electrification of rivers in Ireland would be very useful in bringing power to farms, homes and small factories.

He considered that small industries on the Swiss model were much more suitable to this country than industries concentrated in large centres.

As, he said, there was not sufficient water power here to supply the country's full needs in electricity, new steam generating stations would be necessary, some probably in the near future.

From the defence point of view, it would be advisable to have several small steam stations rather than one or two big stations. Water was not always available, and when they had low rainfalls they must have steam.

In Switzerland they paid very high prices for hydraulic stations so that they would be less dependent on foreign fuel. By the development of our own power resources in Ireland we could place ourselves in a similar independent position.

A native of Berne, Mr. Wüthrich has studied the influence of Irish saints in Switzerland. He said he was surprised that "they do not seem to be as important in Ireland as they are in Switzerland."

\* \* \*

The first ski club in Switzerland was founded towards the end of November 1893 in Glarus, and nine

years later the first Swiss ski races took place in Glarus to which soldiers from the St. Gotthard were sent to partake. In 1904, on the solicitation of Glarus the Swiss Ski Association was formed which to-day numbers many tens of thousands of members. The jubilee assembly on November 21st last year was saddened, as the President of the Swiss Association for Physical Culture, Lieutenant Colonel Paul Simon, died from heart failure whilst addressing the assembly. The deceased was an outstanding personality in Swiss Sport; he was Central President of the Swiss Ski Association for physical culture with 36 sports associations and a membership of roughly 600,000.

### OUR NEXT ISSUE.

We hope to go to press again on February 25th, and we take this opportunity of gratefully acknowledging the many expressions of goodwill and support so lavishly bestowed upon the Editor during the festive season. Moreover we are indebted to the following subscribers who have added substantial amounts to the ordinary subscription rates:

J. Kupli, H. Koch, R. B. Meier, W. Walter, A. Muller, J. Zimmermann, A. A. Bodenehr, J. Stettler, Miss J. K. Waddell, O. Worth, W. Beckmann, E. Montag, L. J. Faivre, L. Chapuis, F. B. Tschudi, W. Wagner, A. Probst, Miss M. Christinat, Th. Erb, C. J. Bernheim, L. Guggenheim, E. Steiner, A. C. Baume, P. Bessire, E. A. Neuenschwander, B. Allentolli, E. Spleiss, J. Obrist, C. Fugistall, E. G. Stanton, H. Schenkel, P. F. Brun, E. Bachofen, H. Zimmermann, G. Hafner, E. Straeuli, Theo. Schaerer, A. Schmid, H. Pfister, M. E. Perrenoud, A. Bolliger, E. Flury, A. Schwenenberger, A. Kuenzler, O. Gambazzi, L. Schobinger, H. Lucca, Miss A. L. Borel, M. A. Pluess, Miss M. Dapples, Miss O. Asper, H. Bingguely, W. Glauser, W. Deutsch, A. Ruef, W. Lehmann, L. Forrer, A. A. Waelti, Miss M. L. Dupuis, E. Reichenbach, Miss I. Wyss, A. Hausermann, J. Paravicini, P. Brunet, R. A. Merz, F. E. Brunner, F. H. Rohr, Mrs. Susy Spink, Miss M. Meyer, P. Jacot, Kasimir Luternauer, R. Weist, H. Huber, Miss C. Rougemont, T. R. Jaeger.

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