

Federal Mosaic

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President of new European Federation of Engineering Students: Leopold Huwiler, Lucerne, President of the "Studentenschaften Schweizerischer Techniken".

First Woman President of Geneva Magistrates' Penal Court: Me. Annette Matile, lawyer, member of the Municipal Council and the Geneva Cantonal Parliament.

Swiss member of the World Boy Scouts' Committee: "Bundesfeldmeister" Hughes de Rham, Lausanne, one of only four Europeans on the Committee.

Swiss Chef at the White House in Washington: Henri Haller from Altdorf, in succession to a Frenchman. (A.T.S. and "Basler Nachrichten".)

FEDERAL MOSAIC

On 14th January, the latest negotiations between Switzerland and Germany came to an end with the signing of the tenth addendum to the Swiss-German trade agreement of 2nd December 1954.

The trade agreement with Cuba of 30th March 1954 has been extended by a further year.

When diplomatic relations were broken off between Great Britain and Algeria, the British Government asked Switzerland on 23rd December to look after her interests in Algeria. This is the eighteenth mandate Switzerland holds. The oldest representation goes back to 1946, since when Switzerland looks after the Rumanian Archives in Spain.

On the death of the Indian Prime Minister, the Federal President sent a telegram of condolence to the President of the Indian Republic. The Secretary-General of the Federal Political Department, Ambassador Micheli, and the Chief of Protocol, Monsieur Wetterwald, went to the Indian Embassy in Berne on an official visit of condolence.

On 10th December, the Day of Human Rights, the then President of the Confederation, Federal Councillor Tschudi, gave an address to the Swiss schools on the radio. A telegram of protest was subsequently sent to the President by the association for women's suffrage, for he had left out the word "sex" (equality of) when quoting the Declaration of Human Rights. "If Swiss youth is to be enlightened at the highest level on the Declaration of Human Rights", said the women, "it should not be kept secret that our State does not conform to this ideal in some of the most important points".

Dr. Rudolf Maurer (Baselland) presented his thesis on Alt-Bundesrat Markus Feldmann to the University of Berne. Part of it has just been published. It deals with the first half of the life of the former Federal Councillor.

On 17th December, twenty-three National Councillors sent a telegram to the Shah of Persia protesting against the way the trial against intellectuals (Nik Khah and others) was conducted. They also asked for pardon for the accused.

The Federal Council decided to increase the radio licencing fee from Fr. 26.— to 33.— as per 1st January. The broadcasting authorities had asked for an increase to Fr.36.—.

Also at the beginning of the year, cigarettes went up by 40%. The Federal Council had been empowered to take this step when the sixth revision of the Old Age and Dependents' Insurance (AHV) was undertaken. The extra revenue will be used for additional benefits. The increase means a mere centime per cigarette.

[A.T.S.]

WEATHER NEWS

The month of November brought more than the usual amount of rain especially North of the Alps and in the Valais. There was great lack of sunshine everywhere. The first half of the month was unusually mild, the second unusually cold. Snow began to fall very early and at altitudes 23m lower than usual for that time of the year. On first December, nearly four metres of snow fell on the Great St. Bernard. This was later increased to ten metres. In the Canton of Schaffhausen, many parts were flooded. There were landslides and road splits, all due to unusually heavy rains and melting snow. Other parts of the country had flooding, too. A heavy storm in Zurich on 6th December caused great damage. Stalls were knocked down in the main station, windows and shutters demolished, trees uprooted. A day later, strawberries were gathered in the Valais — the mild autumn had allowed a late variety to bear fruit under the snow! In the Valais Alps, some building sites were cut off by snow, and food had to be dropped to the workers by air.

Heavy damage was caused by storms in the Jura. Roofs at Moutier were damaged, and large areas of fir trees uprooted or knocked down. By the end of December, it was extremely cold. St. Moritz had minus 14 degrees centigrade, and then the cold spread throughout the country. A number of the smaller lakes froze. By 11th January, the whole of Switzerland was covered in snow, even places like Lugano. Some warm air from the Atlantic which managed to turn the snow to rain in Geneva, had to give way to a strong "Bise" wind. Thanks to a host of snow ploughs, brushes, blowers and other snow-clearing equipment, the heavy snow at Kloten Airport could be cleared, and delays were comparatively slight.

On 14th January, it became colder still everywhere. The Jura Village La Brevine showed once more that its adjective Siberian was justified -35°C.! Some of the Grisons stations also had -30 degrees centigrade. Zermatt held the Valais record with -21 degrees. Two other villages in the Jura (Martel Dernier and Les Abattoires/Les Ponts de Martel) beat the La Brevine record and registered -38 degrees centigrade. Even the Lakes of Geneva and Constance began to freeze. The river Doubs also froze. On 20th January, -40 degrees near La Brevine!

Ski-ing conditions are marvellous, and winter sports resorts are full. But widespread rescue operations had to be undertaken in the Alps to drop food by aircraft and helicopters to starving game, mainly deer and chamois. The animals cannot walk in the deep snow and fall a prey to foxes. Chamois, apparently can survive a month without food. Gamekeepers on skis try to climb as near as possible and leave food on the rock ledges where animals shelter.

On going to press, we learn that warmer weather has returned in Switzerland. (A.T.S. and "The Times".)

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