Home news

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Message from the Swiss Minister

Monsieur C. R. PARAVICINI.

Monsieur le Rédacteur,

La fondation du "Swiss Observer" coïncida, il y a vingt ans, avec la première année de mon activité à Londres comme Ministre de la Confédération en Grande-Bretagne.

C'est donc durant deux décades que mes rapports avec l'organe de notre colonie ont continué sans interruption et son vingtième anniversaire est également celui de nos efforts communs pour le bien de la communauté suisse dans le Royaume-Uni.

J'ai toujours trouvé dans le "Swiss Observer" un ami fidèle et un appui précieux. D'année en année la valeur et le prestige de notre hebdomadaire ont gagné en volume et les informations qu'il a fournies à ses lecteurs n'ont cessé de constituer, tant par leur esprit que par leur substance, un élément des plus utiles pour nos compatriotes.

Ce succès incontestable est dû à l'intelligence et au dévouement de ceux qui l'ont créé et qui ont veillé à sa destinée.

Je pense avec reconnaissance à mon compatriote bâlois, M. Boehringer, qui, dans le temps, a eu l'idée et le courage de fonder cet organe et qui l'a dirigé avec sagesse et patriotisme pendant de longues années.

En confiant, il y a dix ans, la rédaction à un successeur entièrement à la hauteur de cette importante tâche, l'avenir du journal était assuré. En effet, vos propres mérites, cher Monsieur Stauffer, sont trop connus et trop appréciés de tous pour que d'autres éloges y ajoutent de l'éclat.

Mes bons vœux accompagneront le "Swiss Observer" sur la route vers ses grands anniversaires de l'avenir.

C. R. PARAVICINI.

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HOME NEWS

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FEDERAL.

SWISS FEDERAL DEBT OF TWO HUNDRED MILLION POUNDS.

Federal Councillor Wetter, Chief of the Finance Department, reviewed in the Council of States, or First Chamber of Parliament, the financial situation of the Swiss Confederation.

He said that at the end of 1938 the Federal debt was 1,529,000,000 francs (about £73,381,000), but that the total was now 2,156,000,000 francs (£104,155,000), when all deficits and liabilities of the Confederation as well as those of the railways were added. Expenditure on national defence and other matters would soon bring the debt to 4,500,000,000 francs (£217,400,000).

It was, therefore, necessary to consider the possibility of framing as soon as possible a scheme to redeem the debt within a period of 60 years. The annual yield of the crisis tax, which was 30,000,000 francs (£1,450,000) would not cover the payment of interest and a yearly instalment towards redeeming the debt. The Finance Department was examining what further sacrifice the taxpayer could be asked to make for that purpose.

SWISS HOLIDAY FOR CHILDREN OF UNEMPLOYED.

A party of 25 children from the homes of unemployed parents in the Special Areas left London for a month's holiday in Switzerland. Adelboden, a village in the Bernese Oberland, is, for the second year, the host of the children. The National Council of Social Service has again found funds to meet the cost of travel, additional suitable clothing, and the provision of pocket-money. At Adelboden the children are "adopted" for a month by residents of the village. This year's party, which will be accompanied by two teachers, consists of 12 children from South Wales, five from County Durham, five from Tyneside, and three from Cumberland.

A YEAR'S MOVEMENT OF SWISS GLACIERS.

The report issued by Dr. P. L. Mercanton, Director of the Swiss Meteorological Office, on the movement of Swiss glaciers during the nivometric year 1937-38 shows that retreat was general. Snowfalls were under the average during that period, the heaviest being recorded in January, 1938.

The Allalin glacier retreated 81ft., the Fée 180ft., the Aletsch 57ft., the Upper Grindelwald 90ft., the Unteraar 92ft., and the Morteratsch 75ft. Four glaciers only — among them the Scex Rouge, Lenta, and Basadino — showed a slight advance, which did not exceed 21ft. Out of 100 glaciers measured, 88 were retreating (76 during the previous year), eight were at a standstill (12 in 1936-37), and four were advancing (12 in 1936-37).

The retreat of the Zanfleuron glacier, in the Diablerets group, exposed a human skeleton with some pieces of clothing and shoes. These remains are supposed to be those of a solitary Greek tourist who disappeared in that region in 1905.

The retreating movement of the Swiss glaciers has been general for the past 40 years, although a few of them occasionally advanced for a few years.

SWISS PETROL CONCESSIONS.

The Swiss Government have prolonged until May 31st, 1940, the special petrol concession by which motorists spending at least three consecutive days in Switzerland are refunded part of the money which they spend on petrol. On entering the country, they are handed a form at the Swiss Customs. This form should be produced at every filling station called at, so that the assistant may endorse upon it the amount of petrol bought. On leaving the country the Customs Officer at the frontier will refund part of the money spent on all petrol bought up to 300 litres (66 gallons). This scheme operates for each separate visit of three or more days. To qualify for the allowance, motorists must not leave Switzerland earlier than the fourth day after arrival in the country.

Two classes of petrol are sold in Switzerland, "Touring" and "Super." Though pump prices may be modified slightly from time to time, as in England, visitors under the present scheme will pay only 30 centimes net per litre for "Touring" petrol, since anything which they have been charged above that at the pump is refunded upon leaving Switzerland. Exactly the same amount per litre refunded on "Tourist" petrol is refunded on "Super."

Actual net costs of petrol, to visitors, calculated at an average exchange rate of 20.60 Swiss francs to the £, work out as follows: "Touring" at 42 centimes per litre at the pump, 1/4 per gallon; "Super" at 47 centimes per litre at the pump, 1/6½ per gallon.

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Le Comité.

BRITAIN'S YACHTS WIN IN SWITZERLAND.

The Anglo-Swiss 30 square metre yacht races, which concluded on Lake Thun, resulted in a win for Great Britain by 1,589 points to 1,387. Stewart Morris, the British captain, won the individual prize with an aggregate of 802 points. The sixth and last race of the series, resulted:

Espoir (Great Britain, Helmsman, Stewart Morris), 1 hr. 43 min. 19 sec., 1; Stine (Swiss, H. P. Roost), 1-43-44, 2; Aloha (Swiss, A. Itten), 1-44-31, 3; Passat (Great Britain, David Wilson), 1-44-51, 4; Polana (Great Britain, Peter Scott), 1-45-21, 5; Foehn (Swiss, E. Moggi), 1-45-23, 6.

FINAL INDIVIDUAL RESULTS. — Morris (Great Britain), 802 points; Roost (Switzerland), 621; Wilson (Great Britain), 457; Moggi (Switzerland), 450; Scott (Great Britain), 330; and Itten (Switzerland), 316.

NAZI SPY CHARGES IN SWITZERLAND.

Reports sent to Germany by an alleged Swiss Nazi spy organisation about the movements of a British Vice-Consul and a French diplomatic official are mentioned in the indictment of the Swiss Federal prosecutor's office, published in the "National Zeitung" of Basle, against eight members of the so-called "Federation of Loyal Swiss Professing the National Socialist Philosophy."

Of the defendants seven are Swiss and one a German. A ninth member succeeded in escaping to Germany.

They will appear before a Federal Court shortly on charges of espionage.

The defendants deny most of the charges, and say they can give satisfactory accounts of their movements.

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