# News at random

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# The Swiss Observer

FOUNDED BY MR. P. F. BOEHRINGER.

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## NEWS AT RANDOM

Normal conditions are gradually operating in most of the international train services running through Swiss territory. The Simplon Orient Express rolls again with its luxurious sleeping cars from Paris via Milan to Istanbul and five fast trains in each direction are circulating between Frankfort o/M and Basle.

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As the staffs of the fire brigades throughout Switzerland have been heavily thinned out in consequence of the mobilisation the local authorities are compelled to fill the vacancies so created by volunteers.

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Friendliness and fellowship characterize the relations of the military guards on both sides of the frontier; cervelats and "Stumpen" seem to be working miracles.

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The imposition of a special tax deducted at the source from interest and dividends is one of the revenues contemplated by the Federal Council in order to clear the present extra-ordinary military expenses.

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It is stated on good authority that long train loads of coal carrying 25 to 30 thousand tons daily are passing through the St. Gotthard from Germany to Italy.

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German interests in Great Britain are being taken care of during the present hostilities by the Swiss Legation in London; the special division is in charge of Mr. Preiswerk of Basle.

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Switzerland may join the Oslo group of nations the deliberations of which so far have been attended by a semi-official observer; the group consists of Belgium, Holland, Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden and Luxembourg, and is considered the nucleus of a neutral peace bloc.

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Dr. Karl Burckhardt (Basle), the League Commissioner in Danzig, who was reputed to enjoy the patronage of the Nazis received the order of the boot; he was given two hours to pack his trunks and had the privilege of a Gestapo escort as far as the frontier.

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An unidentified German plane flew over Swiss territory near Schaffhausen last Tuesday week and after being fired at by the frontier guards disappeared across the Rhine.

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In order to counteract profiteering the cantonal authorities are empowered to close any shops or stores which contravene the Federal decree of September 1st regulating the cost of living.

* * *

Basle and its immediate neighbourhood has now the appearance of an armed camp. Blockhouses and machine-gun nests have been installed and even the approach to the bridges in the interior of the town is obstructed by barbed wire barricades. According to an unconfirmed report reaching us on going to press some districts in this vulnerable frontier junction are being evacuated.

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All the eight sons of M. Numa Martin of Corcelles (Neuchâtel) are on active service in the Swiss army. Of fourteen children in the family Straumann of Giebenach (Baselland) ten sons have joined their regiments.

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Federal Judge Robert Guex in Lausanne is the president of a special commission charged by the Federal Council to supervise the news service; in addition a censorship is also exercised by the army council.

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Oberstdivisionär Wilhelm Schmid died in Berne at the age of 82; during the last war he commanded the fourth division. His last will discloses a donation to the "Inselspital" in Berne of one million francs.

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An amount of Frs. 700,000 has been earmarked by the Basle municipality for the construction of air raid shelters.

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An order issued by the military authorities forbids the printing of fresh newspapers and the establishment of further news agencies.

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Two tourists from Berne, Werner Meyer and Hans Schär, met with a fatal accident when climbing the Grosshorn near Lauterbrunnen.

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The postal communications between our country and France and Great Britain have suffered considerable delays. The delivery of letters from and to Paris

is said to take five days or more. English newspapers which on account of their reliable news service enjoy wide popularity are over a week old when received. On the other hand it is stated that the postal service from Germany is practically normal.

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A.R.P. preparations are now completed throughout Switzerland. Black-outs so rigidly enforced in this country are so far dispensed with as it is held that a blaze of lights in towns and villages constitute a sure indication to foreign aircraft that they have strayed into neutral territory.

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The International Committee of the Red Cross which celebrates this year the 75th anniversary of its foundation has now resumed its operations and is installed in the "Palais du Conseil Général," a large building in the centre of Geneva. Many voluntary workers have already been inscribed and their services will be utilised as the organisation develops.

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Fanciful news is not the exclusive prerogative of the propaganda scribes; a report in some of the Swiss dailies recently stated that all the wild animals in the London Zoo had been destroyed as a precaution in case of air raids!

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All sorts of ruses to evade expulsion are being put into practise by foreigners in Switzerland who have no love for their own country. In Sarnen (Obwalden) an otherwise respectable thirty-year-old German immigrant committed a burglary in the hope that his sentence may give him a respite.

## "AUX ARMES."

Friday, September 15th and Saturday, September 16th, 1939, will remain for a very long time in the memory of many a Swiss. For these were the days when the members of the Swiss Colony in Great Britain, who had done military service in Switzerland were assembled at Swiss House in Fitzroy Square to answer the call the Motherland sent out to its sons, to rally round the flag and to protect the frontiers of Switzerland against any aggression.

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Perhaps never before was the necessity of having a home of its own in this great Metropolis brought so strongly to the notice of members of the Swiss Colony than on that memorable Friday and Saturday. Already in the morning young men from all over England came to Swiss House to inquire if this was really the right place from which they would leave, others again thought that it was the Legation, asked questions about when the train was leaving, which route they would be travelling; if they could bring their luggage here and hundred more similar inquiries were put.

One particular instance could not fail to give amusement to those who witnessed it. A taxi laden with about half a dozen large trunks arrived outside Swiss House and a young man who came from Glasgow, bringing with him all his goods and chattels, emerged out of it anxiously inquiring where he could put his luggage until he would leave London with the special train taking the Swiss home. When he was told that he should only take as much luggage as he himself could carry, he was most disappointed as he said he was told in his marching-orders that he should present himself at 2 o'clock at Swiss House bringing his luggage with him. Whether he expected to find porters waiting for him or not could not be ascertained but it took quite a considerable time for him to realise that the best he could do was to return to his Hotel, repack and leave the luggage in the custody of the proprietor until such time that the remainder could be sent on to him.

On Friday afternoon the sky began to shed tears, evidently in sympathy with the sweethearts left behind by many a young man. It was rather rough on these girls who had to wait outside to wave a last good-bye to their departing swains, or then give them the last kiss under an umbrella, as by an austere order of the Officer in charge no relatives could be admitted. But in spite of this instruction there were a few who risked the rather stern look of authority and who penetrated the precinct of Swiss House. Good luck to them for to the valiant belongs the world and they had at least the opportunity of spending the few remaining hours with their loved ones and of keeping out of the now drenching rain. On those who went on Friday, one could see a rather keen expression of more or less relief from the pent-up expectation and uncertainty when the moment of departure would arrive, which was very noticeable on the faces of some of the young fellows since the first intimation of mobilisation was received. There was certainly a martial air about the whole proceedings, particularly expressed in the person of the C.O. who, booted and spurred had arranged the whole organisation of the mobilisation according to schema F. After very little time the whole routine worked fairly well so that at about 5 o'clock the work of getting everyone of the nearly 300 people into their proper places was over and the eight buses of the L.P.T.B. were gradually filled with the flower of Swiss manhood residing in the British Isles.

Just before departure of the buses, witnessed by a considerable number of wives, sweethearts, friends, landlords and landladies, our Minister, Monsieur C. R. Paravicini, snatching a few moments from his arduous duties, paid a visit to Swiss House to bid God's speed to our soldiers.

On Saturday a similar picture presented itself at Swiss House when another party, this time of about