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HOME NEWS

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FEDERAL.

SWISS REPLY TO HITLER.

The Federal Council replied to Herr Hitler's inquiries about the Swiss Government's knowledge of or attitude to President Roosevelt's recent message to the two dictators.

The Swiss reply says:—

(*a*) The Federal Council did not know in advance of President Roosevelt's intention to address a peace message to the German and Italian Governments.

(*b*) The Federal Council places its confidence in the respect of Swiss neutrality, which the Confederation will defend with its Army and which Germany, as well as the other neighbouring States, has expressly recognized.

Commenting on the questionnaire sent by the German Government, the "Journal de Genève" states:—

Switzerland, like the other little States, cannot assert that she is directly menaced by the Reich. On two occasions Chancellor Hitler has declared in the most precise way that "in all time and in all circumstances he would respect Swiss independence and Swiss neutrality." In replying that Switzerland had confidence in the respect for its neutrality which it would defend with its Army and which Germany as well as other neighbouring States had expressly recognised, the Federal Council has only faced a concrete reality. Nothing could permit it to reply differently to the precise and limited question addressed to it.

Nevertheless, if Herr Hitler wishes to be completely informed it is useful that he should know the public opinion of a little State which is always forced to judge impartially the politics of the Great Powers. If we have no reason to doubt the sincerity of the Reich with regard to ourselves, we are disturbed, along with all those who believe that the respect for engagements and the pacific settlement of disputes constitute the essential element of international life. Even if its existence is not immediately in question a weak nation no longer feels secure in a world where force becomes the decisive factor and where one can in the name of strategic interests destroy by surprise moves those countries which hinder the expansion of their neighbours.

The paper ends by saying that if Hitler understands the agony which his policy has caused the world he will know that Roosevelt's message has been welcomed by all the friends of peace, for they have seen in it an attempt to put an end to the present uncertainty.

SWISS PRECAUTIONS FOR AN EMERGENCY.

The Swiss Federal Government issued a decree ordering all importers of coal and coke, from May 1st, to make stores of fuel for domestic use, equal to 15 per cent. at least of the quantities imported in 1938. At the same time, the Cantonal Governments are appealing to all families to store certain foodstuffs, to be used only in an emergency. They are to be periodically renewed, when not used. The amount of food must be sufficient to feed a family for two months.

SWISS RELATIONS WITH RUSSIA.

The Swiss Federal Council has again refused "in the political and economic interests of Switzerland" to enter into diplomatic relations with Soviet Russia. The official statement is as follows: "Not sharing the illusion that the resumption of diplomatic relations with the U.S.S.R. would have the effect of opening important new markets for our exports, the Federal Council thinks that economic considerations cannot solve this problem. Always speaking generally, the Federal Council repeats that it would be happy if circumstances permitted it to renew normal relations with the government of a great country, if it had the assurance, such as is provided by all other governments with which Switzerland has diplomatic relations, that the Government of the U.S.S.R. would abstain from interference in questions of her internal politics. The 18th Congress of the Communist Party, held at Moscow between March 9th and 21st, which proved once again the identity which exists between the Government of the U.S.S.R. and the Comintern, makes it clear that such would not be the case."

PRADO PICTURES

By an arrangement concluded between the Canton of Geneva and the Swiss Federal Government on the one side and the Government of General Franco on the other, it has been decided to hold an exhibition of the Spanish pictures at the Musée d'Art et d'Histoire of Geneva. The arrangements are in the hands of M. Gielly, the Curator of the Museum, and the Director of the Prado. It is to be opened in June, and although no decision has yet been reached as to the duration of the exhibition it is expected that it will remain open till the end of September.

The pictures to be shown have been selected from the collections of the Prado and the Academy of San Isidoro. Only the best examples have been taken, including the most famous of the Velasquez, El Grecos, and Zurbarans. Part of the exhibition is to be devoted to an historical series of pictures illustrative of Spanish art from the Primitives to the masters of the nineteenth century. The exhibition will also include a small representative collection of non-Spanish masters from the Prado. There will be in all about 150 exhibits.

GOLD STATUE DUG UP IN SWITZERLAND.

An important find has been made at Avenches, in Canton Vaud, on the site of the Roman town of Aventicum, which was destroyed by fire at the time of the barbarian invasions. Excavation has been in progress since last January under the direction of Professor Aris, and recently at a depth of about 5ft. the workers found a bust of pure gold weighing over 3½lb. and representing a man in armour.

The bust is supposed to be that of Emperor Antoninus Pius (A.D. 86-161) and it probably stood in a temple, the remains of which have been unearthed near by.

NEW SECRETARY OF THE SWISS PEASANT ASSOCIATION.

Professor, Dr. Howald (Brugg) has been appointed Secretary of the Swiss Peasant Association in succession to Professor Laur.

REVISION OF WAVELENGTHS.

The conference on broadcasting which has been in session at Montreux for over six weeks concluded on Saturday. At the close representatives of 31 States signed a new wavelength plan which is to come into force during the night of March 3rd-4th next year, the countries that refrained from signing being Greece, Iceland, Luxembourg, Turkey and Russia. Under the new plan the wavelengths (in metres) of the British stations will be as follows:— Droitwich 1,511, Northern Regional 447.1, Burghead and Scottish Regional 380.2, Penmon and West Regional 334.4, London Regional 327.8, Northern Ireland Regional 285.4, Midland Regional 276, London, Northern and Scottish Nationals 262.9, Stagshaw 253, Start Point (new station) 245.5, Norwich (new station) 214, Aberdeen 212.6 and Clevedon (new station) 204.8. The transmitting power limits fixed by the Montreux Convention, unless otherwise indicated in the plan, are, for long-wave stations, 500 kW by day and 200 kW by night; for waves between 1,250 and 230.8 metres, 120 kW; waves between 230.8 and 200, 30 kW; and between 200 and 192.3, 10 kW.

LOCAL.

ZURICH.

M. Rudolf Morf, in Elgg near Winterthur, has died at the age of 36. The deceased won the Swiss Marathon race on several occasions.

* * *

Dr. Hans Steiner, at present assistant at the Zoological Institute in Zurich, has been appointed Professor of Zoology at the University in Zurich.

ZURICH.

The annual "Sechseläuten" Festival was held in Zurich on Sunday last. —

This picturesque event celebrates the passing of winter and the arrival of spring, and an effigy of winter, known as the "Bögg" is burned at the stake with impressive ceremonies at six o'clock in the evening.

* * *

Dr. J. Weber, Director of the "Aluminium A.G." in Neuhausen, has received the degree of *doctor honoris causa* from the University of Zurich.

BERNE.

M. Fritz Gertsch of Wengen, the well-known skier who had taken part in many competitions, fell from the summit of the Titlis while training for the Titlis Slalom race on Sunday last. His body was found south-east of the mountain.

LUCERNE.

The Hotel "Wissifluh" above Vitznau has been completely destroyed by fire.

BASEL.

Dr. Werner Kuhn, has been appointed Professor of Chemistry at the University of Basle, in succession to the late Professor Bernoulli.

ST. GALL.

The death is reported from Uzwil of M. Adolf Bühler, at the age of 70. The deceased was for 46 years senior partner of the well-known "Maschinenfabrik & Giesserei Gebrüder Bühler" in Uzwil.

M. Bühler was for a number of years a member of the Grand Council of the canton of St. Gall, he enjoyed a great reputation in Swiss Industrialist circles.

VALAIS.

Mgr. Theophile Bourgeois, Prior of the Great St. Bernard Monastery, has died at the age of eighty-four, at Martigny. Born in 1855, he entered the monastery in 1871, and was elected Prior in 1888, a function he exercised for over fifty years. During this period the monastery adopted many improvements and extended its activities. In 1891 the Prior founded an agricultural school in Econe; between the years 1895 and 1904 the Alpine Hospice of the St. Bernard was enlarged and later the Prior installed the telephone, central heating, and electricity. The greatest event in the history of the monastery since its foundation by St. Bernard of Menthon (A.D. 1008) was the erection, of Mgr. Bourgeois, at the request of Mgr. Guébriant, of a monastery in the Tibetan mountains to carry on there the same work as had been done for a thousand years by the Great St. Bernard, i.e., to provide travellers with the hospitality of a rest-house. The two missionaries who went out first have been since followed by three expeditions of priests and lay brothers who, after untold difficulties and sufferings, have at last succeeded in building their monastery and getting it into working order. It is standing on the main route of the caravans that enter from China into Tibet over the mountain passes, which men and animals usually reach in appalling conditions. Now that modern conditions of travelling in Europe have rendered the Great St. Bernard less useful than it was in the Middle Ages, this Tibetan offshoot has once again restored to the monks their favourite work under medieval conditions, and raised it to the level of a great public utility service.

The "Ordenskapitel" has appointed "Domherr" Nestor Adam from Etroubles-Aosta, at present Vicar in Rayoire-Martigny, as successor to the late Mgr. Bourgeois.

GENEVA.

This year's Geneva Motor Show proved a great success. The number of exhibits was higher than last year, and the motor car and lorry section included the stands of 65 firms, 17 American, 15 German, 12 French, 5 Italian, 3 Czecho-Slovakian, 3 Swiss, 1 Belgian and 9 British.

Among the 14 exhibitors of motor cycles four are British, and the pedal cycle section includes five British out of 22.

The motor trade has been much developed in Switzerland during the past ten years, and there are now 197 firms selling motor vehicles and 650 garages together employing 17,000 workers.