

# News at random

Objekttyp: **Group**

Zeitschrift: **The Swiss observer : the journal of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK**

Band (Jahr): - **(1948)**

Heft 1086

PDF erstellt am: **19.04.2024**

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# The Swiss Observer

FOUNDED BY P. F. BOEHRINGER.

**The Official Organ of the Swiss Colony in Great Britain.**

EDITED WITH THE CO-OPERATION OF MEMBERS OF THE LONDON COLONY.

Telephone: CLERKENWELL 2321/2.

Published Twice Monthly at 23, LEONARD STREET, E.C.2.

Telegrams: FREPRINCO, LONDON.

VOL. 31. No. 1086.

THURSDAY, MARCH 25th, 1948.

PRICE 6d.

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## NEWS AT RANDOM

### Federal

The Federal Council has appointed Monsieur Henry de Torrenté, as Minister Plenipotentiary and Envoy Extraordinary to the Court of St. James, in succession to Monsieur Paul Ruegger, who has been nominated President of the International Red Cross in Geneva.

Minister de Torrenté was born at Sion (Ct. Valais) on the 5th of November, 1893.

He studied at the University of Geneva, where he obtained the *license en droit*, *license ès sciences sociales* and *licenses ès sciences commerciales*.

After several stays abroad he entered, in 1925, into the service of the Federal Economic Department in Berne, where, a year later, he was promoted as secretary of the commercial section.

In 1928 he went to the Swiss Legation in Paris with the rank of 1st Secretary of Legation, and in 1932 was promoted to Counsellor of Legation. In 1935 he acted as Chargé d'Affaires in Paris.

When, in 1941, the offices of the Swiss Legation in Paris were closed, he took over various commands in the Swiss army where he is holding the rank of Colonel on the General Staff.

In 1942, again he entered the Federal Economic Department in the capacity of Delegate for commercial treaties, and in 1945, was promoted to the rank of Minister, and sent to Nanking as Minister Plenipotentiary and Envoy Extraordinary.

The official celebrations for the centenary of the Swiss Confederation will take place in Berne on the 19th and 20th of June.

The Federal Council will invite the following official guests to take part in the celebrations: All members of the two Federal Chambers; (States Council and National Council), Delegations from the Federal and Insurance Tribunal; Authorities of the canton and municipality of Berne; Delegations of all cantonal governments, army, universities, churches, Swiss Federal Railways, etc., etc.

On June 20th, religious services will be held in all churches of the Federal capital; during the service

at the Minster in Berne the President of the Swiss Confederation, Dr. Celio will speak in Italian, the President of the National Council in French, and the President of the States Council in German. The mayor of the town of Berne will also speak.

\* \* \*

The two Federal Chambers, in a combined sitting, have elected cantonal-judge, André Panchaud, as Federal Judge, in succession to Robert Guex, who recently died.

Federal-Judge Panchaud was born in 1901, and received his schooling at the Collège in Vevey and at the Gymnase in Lausanne. He studied law at the Universities of Lausanne, Leipzig and London, after which he established himself as an advocate in Montreux. In 1935, he was elected a member of the cantonal tribunal. He is the author of a number of standard works on matters of law.

\* \* \*

Monsieur Desay, Minister Plenipotentiary and Envoy Extraordinary of the Government of India, has presented his credentials to Monsieur Celio, President of the Swiss Confederation in the presence of Monsieur Petitpierre, Swiss Foreign Minister, at the Federal Palais in Berne.

\* \* \*

The Spring Session of the two Federal Chambers (States Council and National Council) was closed on the 12th of this month.

\* \* \*

Customs receipts in February 1948, amounted to 30.1 million francs. The result for the first two months is reported to be 65.3 million francs or 16.1 million francs more than in the previous year.

\* \* \*

Due to end-month requirements, the note issue of the Swiss National Bank during the week to February 28th rose by Frs.142,200,000 to Frs.4,166,000,000.

The gold reserve was Frs.20,900,000 higher at

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Frs.5,624,000,000, while foreign exchange holdings dropped by Frs.21,300,000 to Frs.101,000,000.

On February 28th, notes in circulation and other obligations at sight were covered by gold to the extent of 106 per cent.

Egypt and the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan no longer belonging to the sterling area, the Swiss Federal Council has decreed new measures which are to govern payments to these territories.

All payments now have to be made to the Swiss National Bank or to specially authorised banks.

The Swiss Press published denials of a report that Russia had demanded a loan from Switzerland. A Foreign Office source stated that no news of any such demands had been received from the Swiss delegation at present negotiating a trade treaty in Moscow.

Denmark and Switzerland have reached agreement on the exchange of goods in 1948 to the value of Kr.74 millions. Danish imports, however, will total only Kr.64 millions, the difference being applied to the settlement of the financial obligation.

Danish exports will include 2,000 tons of butter, 1,500 tons of bacon and 1,400 tons of eggs. Imports will comprise textiles, chemicals and industrial goods. Switzerland will pay in dollars for a further 3,000 tons of butter and 2,500 tons of bacon.

Regarding the formation of a "Western Union" one of the Dailies writes:—

"There is natural interest throughout Europe about

the attitude of Switzerland to Western Union, especially after the "revolution" in Czechoslovakia.

Events in Czechoslovakia have been followed in Switzerland with intense regret but without much surprise. Of all the free countries in Europe perhaps Switzerland was the least surprised, since the changes are universally accepted as one of the inevitable consequences of the Marshall Plan. Switzerland, which requires no aid under the Marshall Plan, had even before the end of June, 1947, determined to work in with other nations in Europe in drawing up the details required by the United States. The dates are of interest:

1. Mr. Marshall made his historic pronouncement on June 5th, 1947.

2. On June 27th the Swiss Federal Council, having examined the question in detail, decided to answer in the affirmative to the original Marshall proposal.

3. On July 6th the Soviet Minister in Berne made representations to the Swiss Government to induce Switzerland to refuse to take any part or interest in the Marshall Plan.

4. On July 9th Switzerland officially accepted the invitation to the Paris Conference.

Switzerland thus fully supported the underlying ideas of the Marshall Plan, even against pressure from the Soviet Union. Since then events have moved far and fast — generally for the worse from the point of view of international peace. Will Switzerland, could Switzerland now join a Western block?

The answer is plain and decisive; it is "No." To the Swiss neutrality is what the safety of the narrow seas and therefore the comparative independence of Belgium is to Great Britain. Swiss neutrality is not a diplomatic invention, as some think, of the Congress of Vienna (though the treaty of Vienna did preserve Europe for a century from a world war), but a re-affirmation in 1814 of what had been for nearly 200 years before then the cardinal point in the foreign policy of the Alpine cantons which founded the Swiss Confederation.

After the 1914-18 world war Switzerland joined the League of Nations only after express and special guarantees that her political neutrality should be respected. This being granted she was a good League of Nations member on all technical questions. When the United Nations came into being Switzerland reluctantly decided that she could not comply with the political conditions of membership. In all other spheres she has co-operated to the utmost of her ability.

Now after the Prague coup d'état Europe comes to the parting of the ways. Where is Switzerland? There is talk of a Western Union. Can that change the traditional policy of Switzerland? There is only one answer. It will not. The Swiss man in the streets puts it like this: "If we regretfully refused to join the United Nations because of its political clauses, how could we possibly join a Western Union which is only an alliance directed against a possible political enemy." The Federal Foreign Office has the Swiss people entirely behind it in this matter. This is not a party question."

The Swiss people, by over 470,000 votes to 260,000, rejected a National Referendum Bill passed last year providing for increased State control of sugar-beet farming and more sugar-beet factories.



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**Cantonal**

Four people lost their lives, when a motor-car skidded round a sharp curve, between Hergiswil and Stansstad (Ct. Nidwalden). The car grazed a tree and fell into the lake, four passengers: Mrs. Krebs, of Zurich, and her daughter, Mrs. Brüner and her fourteen year old son, were drowned. [A.T.S.]

The International Music Festival in Lucerne, will take place from the 11th to the 29th of August this year.

The following guest conductors will be associated with this festival: Furtwängler, R. Kubelik, Charles Munch, Volkmar Andrea and Herbert von Karajan. Amongst the soloists are: Brailowsky, Stern, Francescatti, Casadesus, Fischer, Lulenkampf, Artur Schnabel and Wilhelm Backhaus. [A.T.S.]

Walter Weibel, a mechanic from Lucerne, on an ascent to the Pilatus, lost his way in deep snow and fell down a rocky wall, he died during the transport to Hergiswil. [A.T.S.]

Dr. Hans Konrad Brunner, at present head of the gynaecological section of the cantonal hospital in Winterthur, has been appointed Director of the hospital in succession to Professor O. M. Schürch, who has retired from his post. [A.T.S.]

The well-known glider pilot, Ernst Schaffroth, was killed during a display of aerobatics over the Regensdorf-Dällikon airfield (Ct. Zurich). While he was demonstrating a jump his parachute became caught in the fuselage of his plane and was damaged. There was nothing to locate his fall. [A.T.S.]

This year's "Sechseläuten" will take place in Zurich on Sunday, April 18th. [A.T.S.]

The well-known painter and writer, Gustave Gampfer, has died in Zurich at the age of 75 [A.T.S.]

Damage amounting to over 100,000 francs was caused through a fire which broke out in one of the buildings (Kesselschmiede) at the works of Gebr. Sulzer in Winterthur. [A.T.S.]

Burglars entered the premises of the Jeweller's firm, Benno Dreifuss, in the Bahnhofstrasse in Zurich, and got away with goods (mostly watches) amounting to 70,000.—frs. [A.T.S.]

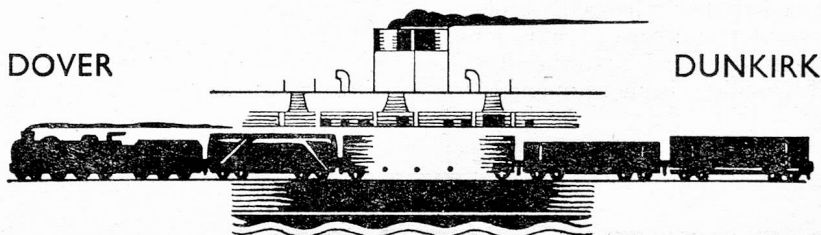
Dr. Louis Kollros, Professor of Geometry, at the Federal Technical University of Zurich, has tendered his resignation. [A.T.S.]

Mgr. Hubert Savoy, formerly rector of the College St. Michael and Director of the paper "Liberté", has celebrated his 80th birthday anniversary in Fribourg. [A.T.S.]

On March 5th, 1798, one hundred and fifty years ago, the Bernese forces, gained a victory at Neuenegg over the French invasion army, but were beaten at Grauholz, and thus the collapse of Berne was sealed. Not "pour fêter la défaite," but to recall events of one of Berne's darkest hours, the cantonal parliament (Grand Council) held a solemn meeting, previous to which, a delegation from the cantonal government, and the Grand Council travelled to Neuenegg and Grauholz, to place wreaths at the war memorials.

The solemn meeting of the Grand Council, which took place at the "Rathaus" in Berne, was attended by the members of the cantonal government *in corpore*, Federal-Councillor Steiger, former Federal-Councillor Minger, and a large number of cantonal authorities and institutions.

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After a performance of the Municipal Orchestra, K. Geissbühler, President of the Grand Council, recalled in a moving address, the fateful days at the turn of the century. He described the development and the circumstances, which led to the downfall of the old city of Berne.

He said, that if they had given the conquered territories of Aargau, Thurgau, Rheintal, Livinental and Vaud equal rights and privileges, instead of treating them as conquered subjects, (Unterthanen) these catastrophic events would have never happened, which should be a lesson to all conquerors of foreign lands.

Dr. Feldmann, President of the government of the canton of Berne, also spoke.

A luncheon was held afterwards at the "Kornhauskeller" at the same place, where 150 years ago the French invasion forces celebrated their victory.

[A.T.S.]

From Lyss comes the news of the death of Colonel Hochuli, aged 83, notary, and for four years head of the community of Lyss. The deceased was commander of the "Seeländer" regiment and "Platzkommandant" of Lyss during the first world war.

[A.T.S.]

During the month of February, altogether, 178 road accidents occurred in the canton of Berne. Ninety-three persons were injured, and thirteen people were killed.

Dr. Henri Mouttet, since 1928 a member of the government of the canton of Berne, has informed the executive of the Liberal Party, that he wishes to retire from his post on the 30th of June next. He also intimidated that he would give up his seat in Parliament (States Council) in November of this year.

[A.T.S.]

The death is reported from Solothurn of Walter Hirt, from 1916-1933 "Stadtammann" of the town of Solothurn, at the age of 79.

The deceased was for fifteen years a member of the "Kantonsrat." In the army he reached the rank of Colonel (Cavalry).

[A.T.S.]

Following negotiations between the Allied occupation forces and Switzerland the railway traffic from Germany to Basle has been resumed again and the "Badischen" railway station has been re-opened.

[A.T.S.]

An explosion which occurred at the confectioner's shop, W. Heim-Baumgartner, in the Therwilerstrasse in Basle, caused the death of the proprietor's wife, aged 40. The explosion caused considerable damage.

[A.T.S.]

Festivities throughout the canton of Basle-County took place, when the news became known, that the National Council had refused to agree to the joining up of the two half-cantons, Basle-town and Basle-county. The authorities have declared that Friday, March 12th, should be an official holiday.

[A.T.S.]

From Herisau (Appenzell A.Rh.) comes the news of the death of Colonel A. Schlaepfer, at the age of 68.

Colonel Schlaepfer was geometrician of the canton of Appenzell from 1909-1936. He was a pioneer in road construction.

[A.T.S.]

The community of Jenaz (Grisons) has received a gift of 10,000.—frs. from one of its member's, Gustav Zingg, who lives in Venezuela.

[A.T.S.]

The Chair and Table factory, Karl Mutter, at Zurzach (Aargau), was partly destroyed by fire. The damage caused is estimated to be more than 100,000.—frs.

[A.T.S.]

The accounts of the canton of Aargau for the year 1947, close with an amount of 184,233.—frs. "on the right side." The budget anticipated a deficit of 641,159.—frs.

[A.T.S.]

A serious motor accident happened on the Thur bridge, near Anlikon, when a car containing a wedding party collided with the railing of the bridge. Of the eight passengers, seven, amongst them the wedding couple, had to be taken to the cantonal hospital in a serious condition.

[A.T.S.]

The Grand Council of the canton of Thurgau held a solemn meeting on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of the independence of the canton of Thurgau. In order to commemorate this event the Council voted a credit of 55,000.—frs. for charitable purposes.

[A.T.S.]

A fire which broke out at the Pharmaceutical works Sanaro, in Montreux, caused considerable damage.

[A.T.S.]

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Charles Gilléron, has been elected a member of the Grand Council of the canton of Vaud, in succession to P. Oguey, who has entered the cantonal government. [A.T.S.]

\* \* \*

Dr. Florin Cosandey, Professor of Botany at the University of Lausanne, has been elected rector of the University for the period 1948-50. [A.T.S.]

\* \* \*

By a large majority the Liberal party of Neuchâtel, has decided against giving votes to women. "Absolute political equality between man and woman is not desirable," the party decided, "because it would involve complete overhauling of civil law concerning the family." [A.T.S.]

\* \* \*

The accounts for 1947, of the canton of Neuchâtel, show a credit balance of 2,780,661.— frs. [A.T.S.]

\* \* \*

The death has occurred at Sanges (Béroche) of Robert Lavest, at the age of 78. The deceased had been Director of the School of watch-makers in Le Locle from 1939-1947. He had been connected with this school since 1925. [A.T.S.]

\* \* \*

The International Motor Exhibition in Geneva was opened on the 11th of this month by Dr. Celio, President of the Swiss Confederation. [A.T.S.]

\* \* \*

Georges Verdène, for the last thirty years editor of the 'Tribune de Genève,' has died in Geneva at the age of 69. In 1944, the deceased celebrated his 50th jubilee as a journalist. [A.T.S.]

## SWISS INDUSTRIES FAIR

B A S L E

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### Army

Colonel (General Staff) Franz Wey (born 1896) from Rickenbach (Ct. Lucerne), a member of the Federal Instruction Corps, has been promoted to Colonel of Division, in succession to Colonel of Division Combe, who has retired on reaching the age limit. [A.T.S.]

\* \* \*

Army-Corps Commander, Colonel Hans Frick, has celebrated his 60th birthday anniversary in Berne. [A.T.S.]

### Traffic

Swiss railways hope within ten years to have eliminated all noise and bumps from their light express trains by equipping them with pneumatic rubber tyres.

Two trial coaches, the result of 15 years' research, are being built in Swiss factories in collaboration with the French Michelin rubber factory, and will be running before the end of the year.

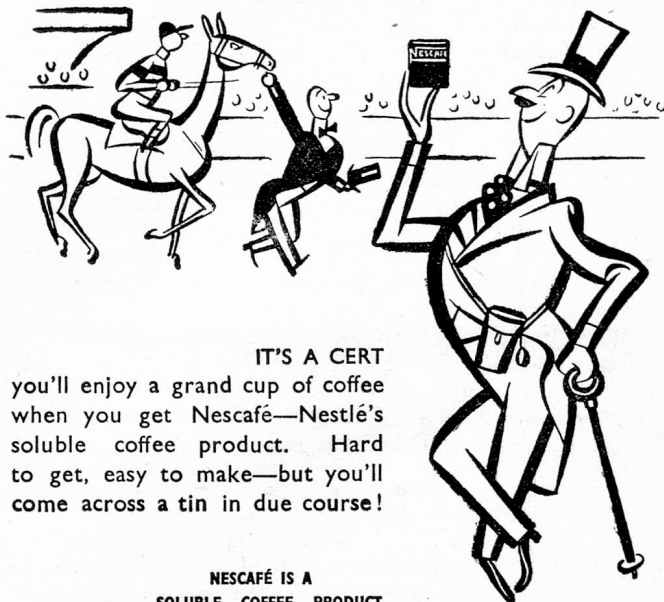
Each coach is to have 20 wheels, as a tyre can take only a little more than a ton weight, and the passengers will weigh five tons.

One coach is to be built of aluminium alloy and the other of soft steel to test which metal is the most suitable. Forty-six passengers will be carried in one and 76 in the other.

France experimented with this type of passenger car in 1932, and last year three trains of six coaches each were ordered.

In the same year tests were made in this country by the L.M.S. between Bletchley and Oxford, the 31-mile stretch, which included six stops, being covered in 31 minutes, against 42 by a normal train.

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For the first time in history of the Swissair, one of their Air Liners, on the return journey from Johannesburg (S. Africa) landed at Accra (British West Africa).

The Swiss Colony, consisting of about 60 persons, headed by the Swiss Consul Knittel, gave the "DC-4" machine an enthusiastic reception.

After a stay of 1½ hours, the air liner continued its flight to Geneva.

The journey from Johannesburg to Geneva (4,700 kms.) took less than 14 hours. The machine was piloted by Flight-Captains Borner and Hans Kuhn. [A.T.S.]

The Union for Inland Navigation in northern Italy will hold a congress in Ferrara from May 20th to 22nd to study schemes for international waterways to link Switzerland with the Adriatic Sea and the development of inland traffic along the Po Valley.

The Congress will be attended by experts from all over Italy, as well as delegates from abroad.

### Economics

A delegation of Swiss bankers and Government officials has left for Washington to discuss the U.S. Treasury plan to sequester as "enemy property" dollar holdings in U.S. banks of foreign nationals who do not declare them before June 1st. The appointment of the delegation announced by the Swiss Government followed strong protests by the Swiss press against the U.S. Treasury's plan which, it was said, "violated the principle of bank secrecy."

—oo—

The following Universities in Switzerland: Basle, Berne, Fribourg, Geneva, Lausanne, Neuchâtel and Zurich, which, at the beginning of this year were invited to send delegates to the 600th anniversary of the Karls University in Prague (Czechoslovakia), have now declined the invitation owing to the recent events which have taken place in that country. [A.T.S.]

The Swiss Colony in San Francisco has sent a donation of 6,000\$ to the Swiss Red Cross to be used for needy children in the countries which were at war. In appreciation of this gift one of the "Chalets" of the "Kinderhilfe" will bear the name "Chalet of the Swiss Colony San Francisco." [A.T.S.]

The Central Committee in Zurich of the Swiss National Day announced that the total result from the sale of 1st of August badges in 1947 amounted to 1,070,000.—frs.

The proceeds from the sales of those badges amongst Swiss citizens abroad produced the amount of 44,000.—frs.

The 1948 collection will be used for the fight against tuberculosis. This year's badge represents the Great Seal of the Confederation with the escutcheons of the Swiss cantons and has been struck on the occasion of the centenary of the Swiss Constitution.

[A.T.S.]

Good news for all wine lovers comes from Switzerland. The 1947 vintage is reported to be of fine quality, in fact it is stated that it will be the "wine of the century." The last three vintages are considered to be of excellent quality, a thing which seldom happens. [A.T.S.]

The Federal Yodel Festival (Eidg. Jodlerfest) will take place in Berne in 1949. [A.T.S.]

### NEWS OF THE COLONY.

#### Concert of the Swiss Male Choir, Swiss Orchestral Society, Swiss Accordion Group.

Not since March 29th, 1939 — nine long and eventful years — has the Colony been able to attend a Swiss Concert, and now comes the welcome news, that three of our Societies have joined forces, to present their supporters and friends with an attractive and well-chosen programme.

The combination is a most fortunate one, and everyone should find amongst the many items on the programme something to his or her taste. The aim of the performers is not only to entertain, but also to put their talents at the service of a good cause; the profits of this entertainment will be handed over to the Swiss Benevolent Society, which is doing such splendid work for our less fortunate compatriots.

The organisers have been successful in obtaining the collaboration of a fine artist, in the person of Albert Ferber, who has made a name for himself as a first-class pianist, both in this country and abroad.

The name of Albert Ferber, a countryman of ours, is on any programme a big asset, and those, who have had the pleasure of attending some of his recitals, during the last few years at Wigmore Hall, will, no doubt, look forward to hearing this gifted artist again.

The Swiss Male Choir, needs but little introduction, this active Society has on many occasions given their whole-hearted support to various functions in the Colony, such as the 1st of August celebration and the

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