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SWISS NEWS SUMMARY .

On December 10th., 1940 the Federal Council assembled to vote for the successors of Federal Councillors Minger and Baumann respectively. The Council opened at 8.30 and long before this crowds had gathered outside the House. The Hall was packed at the beginning of the Session. All the seven Federal Councillors were present, 148 Councillors and 43 "Staenderaete", thus only four members of the Assembly were absent.

After reading out and accepting Messrs. Minger and Baumann's resignations, the National President thanked them for their services.

M. Eduard v. Steiger, of the Peasant and Citizens Party, was chosen as successor to M. Minger. He gained 130 out of 226 possible votes. Other Candidates were the Socialist Bratschi, who gained 56 votes, the Independent Wahlen - 13 votes, Feldmann - 12 votes and Stucki - 7 votes.

M. v. Steiger, who was born in June 1881, comes of an old Bernese family. After studying Law at the Universities of Geneva and Leipzig, he carried on in a practice of his own in Berne. He was a member of the Conservative Party which later amalgamated with the Bourgeois Party. He also belonged to the Bernese Bürgerrat body and the Cantonal Council. He was at one time President of the "Schweizerische Alt-Zofinger Verein".

The succession of Federal Councillor Baumann took up rather more time as the vote was carried only after five rounds of voting. The candidates were Messrs. Kobelt, Critin, Du Pasquier, Huber and Burckhardt. In the fifth round Dr. Karl Kobelt of St. Gall carried the vote.

Dr. Kobelt was born on the 1st August 1891 and was for some time active as Ingenieur in the "Eidgenössische Wasserwirtschaftsamt". In 1933 he joined the Government of St. Gall. He is a member of the General Staff having the capacity of Colonel.

The voting once concluded, the oath was then taken by the newly elected Federal Councillors and the assembly went on to vote for a Federal President and Vice-President.

Dr. Wetter, who is in charge of the Federal Finances, was elected President. He is 63 years of age. Dr. Etter was elected Vice-President.

The President of the Federal Court of Justice in Lausanne is M. Léon Robert, hitherto Vice-President. Mr. Hans Steiner is Vice-President.

At a recent meeting of the farmers of Uri, Schwyz, Unterwalden and Lucerne, held in Zug, a resolution was passed that they would defend the freedom of Switzerland and do their utmost to supply the country with the agricultural products she needs.

The Federal Council has approved a plan giving further assistance to the aged and infirm, orphans and unemployed.

The Federal Police in collaboration with the Cantonal Police have recently made searches amongst members of the Communist Party, which was dissolved by order of the Federal Council some time ago. Many books as well as a large amount of Communist propaganda were seized on these occasions. In spite of its dissolution last August, it was found that the party had continued its work by illegal means. Searches were also carried out by the Authorities at the offices and amongst members of the pro-Nazi movement in Zürich, Geneva and Berne. In the same way the offices of the "Jeunesse Suisse" were searched. From material seized, it was established that this movement had about 2000 members in the German speaking part of Switzerland. The houses of all such persons are being watched by the Police.

The "Grand Conseil d'Etat Genevois" has decided to exclude four Communist deputies, recently elected and who form part of the Léon Nicole group, from participation in the Government. This decision is based on the Federal Order that the party be dissolved

Appenzell Ausser Rhoden has accepted an increase in salary of 7% for Cantonal employees. A sum of Frs.Sw.20,000.000 has been voted in order to assist the weavers of this Canton. The money will be furnished partly by the Canton, and interested Boroughs, and partly by the Bonus resulting from the Devaluation of 1936 (Reserve funds kept in the Banque Nationale).

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A member of our Society has just received a most interesting and enlightening letter dated 15th November, 1940. It says:

"The war has now raged for over 12 months and things have not yet changed for better. Still we must call ourselves most fortunate to enjoy good health.

" It is to a great advantage and at the same time a huge saving in coal to the country, that now most of the railways are run electrically. The many restrictions which the state has imposed upon us are a small matter when we compare our conditions with those of the many belligerent countries.

" So far we had our worst experience about last Whitsuntide (Pfingsten) when our country passed through the most critical time. A large number of people lost their heads entirely. The ever staid tranquility of Switzerland was sadly upset, thanks to all sorts of rumours. Evacuations from their homes were common occurrences where all sorts of rumours were rudely accepted as facts, and people of more rational minds had a very hard row to hoe trying to pacify them. The Railway station in Zurich was littered with luggage, bedding material, furniture etc. We Appenzeller kept calm and saved ourselves a lot of unnecessary expense. But nevertheless we were ready for emergencies, as nobody could tell what was going to happen. Day and night evacuees would travel from the Rhine Valley over the "Stoss" into the Appenzellerland. Many rented habitations in Graubunden, Glarus, Western and Central Switzerland. Now the situation has considerably improved. We have still enough to eat and as long as it does not get worse we must not complain. A great deal is now rationed, that is we receive an allotted quantity of certain articles, but the portions are generously large and keep us from going hungry. It was also very good advice on the Government's part to recommend a continuous stock of provisions for two months. Bread is not yet rationed, it is darker than before and can only be sold when 48 hours old. Butter is getting scarce, because of increased manufacture of cheese. Its ration per person for November is 300 grammes. The Government is also issuing cards for clothing. The worst trouble we have are coal and benzine. It seems that this winter we shall feel the cold as the supply of coal has been greatly reduced. Motor cars are practically gone off the road and small trucks have taken the place of large ones. The doctors have to reduce their visitings. A friend of mine, a medical man, has resorted to the old time practice of visiting his patients on horseback.

" The farmers have to do their share by utilizing a certain percentage of their acreage for grain etc., or in higher regions for potatoes. Cattle fodder is at a premium and is very dear. Refuse is carefully collected and it is to be hoped that it will feed thousands of pigs.

" We are a regular island amongst all the world's happenings and we are obliged to rely on the goodwill of our neighbours."

Continuing the letter on 13th December, he writes that clothing and boots are now rationed. No wonder that dire poverty is creeping in gradually, but we shall cheerfully carry on as long as we are left in peace."

This most interesting letter gives us some idea of the sad conditions at home, and that our compatriots in Switzerland are quite cheerfully resigned to bear their heavy load of troubles as long as they are spared the frightfulness of war.

By the way Dr.W.Schmid, our respected Consul is still prepared to accept money for our Swiss soldiers while Mrs.Schmid will be pleased to accept knitting of any kind and clothing for the needy mountain folks at home who are having a very hard time just now.

LET'S GET ON WITH THE GOOD WORK.