

Sundry news from Switzerland

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Switzerland means to maintain its independence and to be master of its own fate. The Swiss people must themselves work out and create whatever innovations might be called for by the present times - out of their own strength and of their own free will.

The Federal Council knew quite well why it suppressed the most extreme left and right organisations and groups. It was quite right in doing so.

SUNDRY NEWS FROM SWITZERLAND.

The "Initiative Pfaendler" which was voted upon by the people, on May 3rd, was rejected by a respectable majority 408,646 declining this constitutional change against 219,405 in favour. This initiative was originally launched by the secretariat of the "Landesring" (Duttweiler group) and had as its main object the reduction of the membership of the National Council to 139 Councillors by allowing one representative for every 30,000 voters instead of the existing ratio of 22,000. It also sought to eliminate a peculiarity in our somewhat complicated electoral system by disallowing the accumulation of votes recorded on the many party lists; contrary to the practice in this and most countries votes are not given to individuals but to candidates appearing on a multitude of lists issued by the political parties from which by cumulation the successful candidates emerge. Other reforms covered by this proposal were the restriction to twelve years of the occupancy of a seat in the National Council and the compulsion for its members to disclose their financial and business interests.

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The Federal Council proposed to the Federal Assembly the introduction of a bill to come into force on January 1st, 1943, wherein the canton of Tessin is to receive an annual subsidy of 225,000 frs. in favour of secondary and higher education in order to preserve its cultural and linguistic characteristics. The canton of Grisons is to receive an annual subsidy of 25,000 frs. for the like purpose to apply to the Italian speaking valleys of that canton. The government of the Grisons is, however, empowered to use part of that sum for the furtherance of the raeto-romansch language and culture. The federal subsidies up to now were 45,000 frs. for the Tessin and 4,500 frs. for the Grison valleys.

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A great number of belligerent nations on both sides have entrusted the safeguarding of their interests to Switzerland. To be able to fulfill this honourable as well as difficult task the Federal Council found it necessary to attach special divisions to the most important Legations as well as to the Federal Political Department in Bern, which divisions have the task to look after foreign interests. One of the most important of these special divisions is in Berlin, housed in the building of the American Embassy. A staff of about 100 linguists are occupied to represent the interests of the fifteen different States and their subjects living in Germany. From this centre Switzerland represents today to the best of her ability and strictly according to International law the interests of 35,000 Foreign subjects who are living in the German Reich and in countries controlled by it. The majority of these people are able to move about freely and are under the control of the protecting power. The subjects of States at war with Germany who are interned in civil internment camps are visited by and obtain the support of the Swiss representatives. Officials from the Swiss Legation together with Swiss doctors visit regularly the camps of British Prisoners of war in Germany, to observe the state of health of the inmates and to control the sanitary arrangements of these camps. They have an opportunity to converse unhindered with the prisoners and to receive their confidential complaints. To this individual task is added the administration of the properties of the protected States as well as the upkeep of Embassy and Legation buildings and their staffs. All these are duties which require energy, zeal and diplomatic ability.

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The Customs Revenue for March 1942 amounted to 13,000,000 frs., a decrease of 2,000,000 frs. on the corresponding month last year. Similarly, the first quarter for 1942 shows a decrease of 6,000,000 frs. on the first quarter of 1941, when the revenue was 41,000,000 frs.

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As a result of the recent census some of our cantons have secured an increased representation in the National Council; Zurich is entitled to three more councillors, Berne to two and Baselstadt, Ticino, Valais and Vaud to one each; on the other hand Neuchatel will lose one of its representatives. When next the National Council is re-elected it will consist of 195 members instead of 187 as at present.

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The agricultural directorate of the canton of Bern last year started a competition amongst the farmers for the drawing up of a chronicle of their farms, showing the historical and economic cultural development of the respective homesteads. A Committee of experts was able to distribute a number of good prizes amongst the authors who were mostly farmers or schoolmasters intimately connected with the life on these farmsteads. The success of this competition has encouraged a repetition of it which will be started this spring. The object of drawing up the history of the farms is to foster the love of the soil and to further the preservation of life and customs peculiar to the country.

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Coal prices increased in 1941 by 240 per cent. compared with the 1939 figure. The Federal Railways stated recently that although in 1941 only 15 per cent. of its total traffic was steam-operated, the expenditure on coal was frs. 16,000,000, while the cost of electricity for the remaining 85 per cent. of the traffic was only frs. 21,000,000. These figures shed an interesting light upon the importance of electrification.

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The Technical Section of the Federal Military Department which is distributing the contracts for military supplies is compelled by fixing prices to be paid to act on a decision of the Federal Council of 1924. This provides that all goods supplied to the Confederation shall be based on the wages and cost of materials ruling at the time of issuing the contract, observing of sound working conditions, consideration of the risk incurred and allowing a proper remuneration to the contractor. Excess profits are excluded from the start as the granting of orders is generally based on a limited competition amongst the firms coming into consideration. As the section has its own manufacturing experience of almost all the contracts to be given out, with its own exact calculations of costs, it is therefore in a position to check carefully the prices charged and can justify a reduction in price if necessary. In this way provision is made that supplies for the Swiss Army do not allow excess profits. On the other hand any war profits are cut down by a very severe special tax in favour of the Confederation.

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After protracted negotiations the interested States have granted the passage of Swiss import goods by sea from Lisbon to the Spanish port of Bilbao. The requisite vessels have to be chartered by Switzerland. The Spanish Railways have entered into an engagement to put daily ten railway trucks at the disposal of Switzerland in order to clear the goods as far as Canfranc on the Spanish-French frontier, also federal and private lorries for road transport are to be put into use. This new line is principally for imports of Portuguese goods.

A little easment has also taken place for the export of Swiss goods, for a service once a month between Dublin and Lisbon has been opened by which Swiss goods can be sent to Ireland.

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The fourth "Switzerland" as the Swiss abroad are sometimes collectively called, has through the new world war suffered great reduction in numbers. According to the latest informations received the number has gone down from 346,000 in 1928 to 266,400 in 1940. This shrinkage refers to Europe and America, whereas an increase has taken place in Asia, Australia and Africa.

In Europe the number of Swiss abroad fell from 251,900 to 181,200; the greatest reduction took place in France where it dropped from 144,000 to 80,000; in Germany inclusive of Austria and Danzig from 55,800 to 52,500. A strong

increase took place in England where there are 17,000 Swiss as against 15,000.

In America a reduction has taken place from 83,100 to 71,600, the drop in the U.S.A. alone being from 49,000 to 44,000; Argentine records a reduction from 16,000 to 12,000. Increases are registered in some central and South American States.

In Asia the number of Swiss grew from 2,500 to 3,300, in Australia from 1,500 to 1,900, in Africa from 7,100 to 8,400 most of them in the British Dominions. The reason for the reduction in the number of Swiss in European and American countries is probably the repatriation necessitated by the war, as well as the increased naturalisation in the respective countries.

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THE STEADILY INCREASING POPULATION OF OUR TOWNS.

The following table gives the population of towns according to the recent census together with comparative figures for previous periods. Places with less than ten thousand inhabitants at the end of 1941 are omitted; some of our readers will probably miss Montreux and Davos the residents of which have been decreasing since 1930 to below the ten thousand mark. On the other hand Burgdorf is a newcomer.

	1850	1900	1930	1941	x
Zurich	41,585	168,021	249,820	333,829	+ 39.2
Basel	27,844	109,161	148,063	161,380	+ 9.0
Bern	29,670	67,550	111,783	129,331	+ 15.7
Geneva	37,724	97,359	124,121	124,442	+ 0.26
Lausanne	17,108	46,732	75,915	91,738	+ 20.8
St.Gallen	17,858	53,796	63,947	62,360	- 2.5
Winterthur	13,651	40,961	53,925	59,192	+ 9.8
Luzern	10,068	29,255	47,056	54,841	+ 16.5
Biel	5,609	29,557	37,726	40,850	+ 8.3
La Chaux-de-Fonds	13,659	35,968	35,252	30,939	- 12.2
Fribourg	9,065	15,794	21,557	25,975	+ 20.5
Neuchatel	7,901	21,195	22,668	23,925	+ 5.5
Schaffhausen	7,700	15,275	21,118	22,400	+ 6.1
Thun	6,019	10,213	16,524	20,193	+ 22.2
Chur	6,183	11,532	15,574	17,074	+ 9.6
Lugano	5,142	9,394	15,184	17,025	+ 12.1
Solothurn	5,370	10,025	13,734	15,432	+ 12.4
Olten	6,969	1,634	13,484	15,282	+ 13.3
Köniz	5,984	6,886	10,987	14,358	+ 30.7
Aarau	4,657	7,831	11,666	12,851	+ 10.2
Horisau	8,387	13,497	13,599	12,737	- 6.3
Vevey	5,602	11,781	13,036	12,613	- 3.2
Zug	3,302	6,508	11,113	12,316	+ 10.8
Le Locle	7,493	12,559	12,001	11,363	- 5.3
Bellinzona	3,209	8,255	10,706	10,952	+ 2.3
Grenchen	1,581	5,202	10,397	10,900	+ 4.8
Yverdon				10,856	
Uster				10,588	
Rorschach	1,751	9,140	11,005	10,536	- 4.3
Baden	2,745	6,050	10,143	10,313	+ 2.7
Burgdorf				10,156	

x Indicates percentage of increase or decrease since 1930.

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CONDOLENCES OFFERED AT THE DEATH OF H.R.H. THE DUKE OF KENT.

The following letter of condolence was sent to His Excellency, the Governor-General of the Dominion of New Zealand by the Swiss Consul at Wellington in the name of the Swiss people in New Zealand.

"The sad news of the death of His Royal Highness the Duke of Kent has been received by the Swiss people in New Zealand with great sorrow, and I should like to be the interpreter to your Excellency of their expression of deep sympathy in the grievous loss suffered