

News at random

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NEWS AT RANDOM

Federal

Quite a shock amongst the Swiss in this country followed the news published in the Sunday papers of November 5th that the Soviet Government had refused to acquiesce in a resumption of diplomatic relations between our two countries. The Federal Council after a meeting considering this "deus ex machina", issued an official statement on November 7th. It commenced with a reference to a declaration of March 29th last, expressing the anxiety of the Swiss Government of upholding correct relations with all countries and consequently a wish to normalise the existing status with Russia. The Swiss Minister in London who had taken up his duties in July last received the necessary instructions to contact the Russian Ambassador to Great Britain and to take whatever steps desirable to bring his important mission to a successful issue. On September 7th Minister Ruegger conveyed to Ambassador Gusev of the Soviets the wishes of the Swiss Government underlining *inter alia* their mutual interest of maintaining the trade agreement of February 24th, 1941, and a sincere desire to achieve a friendly settlement of other questions still awaiting a solution. The Soviet Ambassador suggested that these proposals might be confirmed in writing and after requesting and receiving the necessary authority from the Federal Council an official memorandum was handed to Monsieur Gusev on October the 10th. In a written reply handed to the Swiss Legation on November 1st, further negotiations were rejected on the grounds that the Swiss Government had in no way disavowed its hostile attitude to the Soviet Union. The Berne communiqué ends by repudiating the accusation which misconceives the attitude of the Swiss people and its government and which is apparent to any impartial or well-informed opinion.

For the information of readers who are not very conversant with the foreign policy of our highest magistrates, we may say that our attitude towards Russia was dictated by the late Federal Councillor Guiseppa Motta—no doubt the greatest Swiss statesman which our country has produced in this century. In the main his policy was based on ideological principles to which at that time every Swiss was prepared to

subscribe. However, some radical changes have taken place and for an impartial observer it appears somewhat strange that for over a quarter of a century this policy has not been reviewed or revised and that we have blindly ignored the writing on the wall. There is some satisfaction in the belated admission—perhaps retarded by the complete military and economic encirclement which obscured our vision—that whilst Russia can ignore and can do without Switzerland, we certainly cannot choose and maintain a similar course. There is nothing undignified in changing one's mind; even a great prime minister has admitted mistakes. It looks as if the Federal Council will have to undertake a journey to some Canossa; our foreign minister, M. Pilez-Golaz, whose resignation was accepted without much ado has already taken the first step. It is unlikely that our Government will not be able to find some acceptable formula, the more so as Great Britain and the U.S.A., at all times staunch and sincere friends of our country, can be relied upon to lend us their guidance and influence.

Here is a report from the *Daily Telegraph* correspondent in Geneva and published in the paper dated November 7th:

"Discussions of the cause and probable effects of Russia's rejection of Swiss overtures for a resumption of diplomatic relations naturally fill many columns of the Press here. The matter is also a main subject of conversation.

The newspapers do not try to conceal the fact that Russia's 'No' represents a diplomatic setback of the first magnitude, the full significance of which can at present hardly be estimated. Public opinion has now crystallised into two main currents.

Those persons and political parties inimical to Soviet Russia would like to have seen trade, but not diplomatic relations resumed. They remark that

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| | |
|----------------|-------------|
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Les membres sont priés de s'inscrire par écrit pas plus tard que le 9 décembre auprès de M. P. A. Moehr, Hon. Secr., Imperial House, Kingsway, W.C. 2. Prière de s'abstenir de téléphoner.

LE COMITE.

Russia showed no qualms about taking up diplomatic relations with Germany and Fascist Italy, because collaboration with those countries was at the time necessary.

But Switzerland, they say, is a country that Russia can afford to ignore. In the words of the *Basler Nachrichten*, 'the Kremlin can therefore, without embarrassment, draw Switzerland into the confines of its Continental terrorisation policy'.

The opposing trend of opinion dwells on the fact that for twenty-four years there has been agitation in Parliament for a resumption of relations with Russia.

The Socialist newspaper *Volksrecht* states: 'We have never been able to grasp why our democratic country, which saw no objection to being represented at the court of the former Czars in St. Petersburg, and which has not for a moment renounced relations with Hitler Germany and Mussolini Italy, constantly refused to recognise Soviet Russia, the one Power that was growing in Europe'.

The paper emphasises that the Swiss Federal Council was quick to acknowledge Franco-Spain and was not opposed to Italian policy in Abyssinia.

Those who were opposed to Swiss policy in this respect now argue that Russia, after being ignored for over two decades, can hardly be expected to respond to overtures made at the eleventh hour in circumstances such as now prevail'.

Here is another editorial reference in the *News-Chronicle*, November 14th, which amply shows the generous sympathy extended to us in our difficulties:

"Making full allowance for bitter memories, I think the Soviet Government has made a serious mistake in refusing to reopen diplomatic relations with Switzerland. The British people certainly will never be persuaded to place Switzerland on the same level as Spain and Portugal, particularly after all that the Swiss have done to help our sick and wounded and the prisoners who have escaped from Germany.

Soviet Russia is a great Power, great enough in all conscience to sponge out any factless and unfriendly actions of which the Swiss, like other non-Fascist nations may have been guilty in past years; and if a high Soviet official in Bucharest can convey congratulatory messages to King Michael of Rumania, whose country was so recently at war with Russia, one would have thought the attitude to Switzerland might have been less rigid than it seems to be.

Here is a good opportunity for Marshal Stalin, who has acted with such marked restraint to a defeated Finland, to use his enormous influence in promoting further the unity of non-Fascist Europe."

"The Times" publishes the following cable, dated November 11th, from the Geneva correspondent:

"It was announced to-day after this morning's meeting of the Federal Council that M. Pilet-Golaz, chief of the political department, had resigned. His resignation was to some extent related to the failure to renew Swiss-Soviet diplomatic relations: but M. Pilet-Golaz had resigned before the Government discussed the Russian refusal to resume relations on November 7; and he asked that his resignation should not be announced until to-day.

For five years M. Pilet-Golaz has been strongly criticised in the Press, except for the Radical Press, and he was opposed, too, in his native canton of Vaud. It was not forgotten that in 1940, after the collapse of France, he stated in a broadcast that new times had arisen, and that Switzerland, while maintaining her independence, would have to keep pace with the new order.

It seems to many that the time has come to have at the head of Swiss foreign affairs a man who, by virtue of his political views, would be in a position to negotiate with the allies on terms of friendliness and confidence.

M. Pilet-Golaz was elected a federal councillor in 1928 as a Radical, and in 1940 he succeeded M. Giuseppe Motta at the head of the political department, which is equivalent to Foreign Minister'.

The generally well-informed "Observer" has the following article on November 12th, from a diplomatic correspondent. M. Pilet-Golaz is credited with being guided by his catholic politics; the fact is that this hyphenated name stands for two protestant families well-known in the canton Vaud:

"The reaction inside Switzerland to the Soviet rebuff has been strangely different from what was expected outside the country. Instead of a solid national front against what might have been construed as an affront to Swiss democracy, the Left and progressive parties and newspapers take a more realistic attitude.

It must be remembered that they have been attacking the Political Department — and particularly its head, M. Pilet-Golaz, ever since he assumed the post of Foreign Minister in 1940.

He was accused of unnecessary pandering to the Germans and of strict adherence to neutrality in the case of the Allies. He was also charged with letting his Catholic politics guide him in the demand for the resumption of relations with the Soviet Union.

More recently this demand has increased among wide sections of the Swiss Social Democratic and Liberal Press. Pilet-Golaz was accused as late as last September of deliberately going slow in the negotiations with Russia and in the resumption of more friendly relations with the Allies as a whole.

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To the consternation of the democratic and Left Opposition, who all along had stood up for the Allies against Pilet-Golaz, the Foreign Minister produced a declaration from the British Foreign Minister expressing complete satisfaction with Pilet-Golaz's stewardship. For the moment his position was strengthened.

The Russian rebuff was pounced upon by his opponents. The Liberal, as well as the Left Press, blamed not the Russians but Pilet-Golaz. And his resignation is a success both for Soviet foreign policy and the Swiss Left. It is, incidentally, a cause for satisfaction among all the Allies.

It is a matter of considerable interest who will be his successor. For the last 25 year, though Switzerland has steadily moved to the Left (and local elections last week showed a continued movement) Swiss foreign policy has been continuously in the hands of *devout* Catholics, first Motta, then Pilet-Golaz.

These men have never fully reflected the feeling in the country, and throughout the war the Swiss Left, in particular, has played a part the full story of which cannot yet be told; but when one day this is possible it will reflect great credit on the international solidarity which Swiss Labour showed to its comrades in France, Italy and elsewhere."

In a leading article on November 10th, the "Tribune" takes the same liberty:

"The Soviet rebuff shows an acute knowledge of the Swiss domestic scene, which has been divided into two fairly even camps on the subject of Soviet recognition. The Socialists, Liberals and Communists (now re-formed as the Party of Labour) have been attacking the Government for a long time for delaying recognition. In particular M. Pilet-Golaz has been under fire as the main source of reaction. Pilet-Golaz has dominated Swiss foreign policy since Motta's death. Like his predecessor, he is a *devout political catholic* with some authoritarian strains in him."

Somewhat unkind is the opinion of the "Daily Worker, November 15th:

"Gallant little Switzerland, whose Government has spent the war earning German gratitude, Papal

blessings, and Allied money, is beginning to feel the draught of victory.

A first victim of the changed situation has been M. Pilet-Golaz, Foreign Minister since 1940, and adept interpreter of the Vatican's amiable policy toward the Reich.

Suggestions are now being made that his departure from office means an entirely new departure in Swiss policy. Efforts are being made to dust off the Swiss Government and present it as an entirely deserving and estimable member of the community of anti-Fascist nations.

That remains to be seen."

Speculation as to the name of the new Foreign Minister has prompted Reuter to circulate the following news item to the English Press; it is taken from the "Evening Standard", November 11th:

M. Eugen Hirzel, president of the Liberal Democratic Parliamentary Group, is the most likely successor to M. Pilet-Golaz as head of the Political Department of the Swiss Government (equivalent to Foreign Minister), says Reuter.

Among other possible candidates are *Professor William Rappard*, authority on Anglo-American affairs, and M. Paul Ruegger, Swiss Minister in London.

M. Pilet-Golaz stated in his letter of resignation that the new situation created by the check to Swiss-Soviet negotiations on the establishment of diplomatic relations called for fresh and new forces."

(All the italics under this heading are our own.—Ed., S.O.)

Customs receipts in September last were nearly half the total for September, 1943. For the first nine months of the current year these receipts amounted to 69,3 million francs against 98,5 million in the same period last year.

Referring to the War Criminals ban a statement issued at Berne, on November 15th, defines the official attitude as follows: "In maintaining the indisputable rights of every sovereign State to give refuge to fugitives, it must be stressed that such refuge will not be granted to persons who have shown an unfriendly attitude towards Switzerland, or have not respected war conventions or whose past has proved a spiritual contradiction to the principles and traditions of justice and humanity."

It seems somewhat ambiguous—it cannot be otherwise as long as an inflexible written definition is not universally accepted.

Cantonal

In order to make provision for unemployment in the immediate post-war period the canton Lucerne anticipates spending about thirty million francs for this purpose.

In the private motor boat accident — as reported in our last issue — when thirty-three participants returned at night time from a wedding celebration at St. Niklausen, half of two families living at Escholzmatt (Entlebuch) were drowned in the lake. The bridegroom, Gottfried Studer, a schoolmaster at Escholzmatt, who was one of the thirteen passengers saved and unable to render assistance, could not help witnessing his bride, Pia Portmann, his father and three brothers being drowned. Amongst the twenty

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victims were the wife and daughter of National Councillor Studer, who had left earlier by the regular boat.

* * *

The case of the forty-eight musicians of the Beromünster orchestra is receiving financial support from members of other orchestras such as the Zürich Tonhalle and those at Basle and Berne who threaten to disallow any broadcasting of their concerts if the dispersal of the existing Zürich radio musicians is insisted upon.

* * *

The last scene of the farcical comedy that took place on New Year's eve at the district prison of Pfäffikon was enacted at the Zürich Appeal Court where some of the interested parties solicited a reconsideration of sentences imposed by the lower court. It will be remembered that the daughter of the jailer eloped with the only prisoner, a certain Emil Knüttel, a former clerk of the German consulate, who was sentenced to 15 years' hard labour for espionage, and who was lodged in Pfäffikon to await the result of an appeal. The proceedings brought to light the idyllic conditions enjoyed by the convict; he had his evening meal in the kitchen with the family and spent his time afterwards in the attic in installing a wireless and explaining its intricacies to the daughter of the establishment. The latter had a duplicate key controlling his official apartment to which he had to retire before her father returned from his "Stammtisch" in the village inn. The possession of this lock-opener gave her the additional and no doubt gratifying opportunity of preventing her Lothario from bestowing his favours on a possible rival had he been so disposed. The janitor, Jakob Müller, was defended with obvious success, his

counsel maintaining that he had acted throughout with inborn humanity and kindness, the strict discipline and severity desirable for the discharge of his duties being entirely alien to his nature. He got away with three weeks' imprisonment, although on no less than eight previous occasions he had been sharply reprehended for his otherwise commendable weakness, and at the beginning of his distinguished career two occasional boarders had taken French leave. A point weighing heavily in his favour was his long service: nine years as a police constable and twenty-eight years as prison custodian. His daughter, the enchantress, was satisfied with the sentence of the lower court, which was eight months' imprisonment, and which in view of her experience with prison life may hold some alluring prospects for her. Two German nationals were also implicated; they had given temporary shelter to the honeymoon couple who imagined that the Consulate would assist them in crossing the Rhine, but for once the German Consul would not oblige. One of them, L. Kaltenbach, raised no objection to one months' imprisonment and five years' expulsion, but the other one, B. Schriever, who had lived in Switzerland for over twenty years, appealed on the plea that as a true catholic he did not have the heart to slam his door on two homeless runaways. The judge was not impressed by his philanthropic protestations and increased his "cure" to ten years, so that he will also have to return to his native land, should he desire it or not.

* * *

A lively scuffle took place at the Hungarian Consulate in Zürich, when two callers affecting to be diplomatic couriers invited some of the officials for a "joy-ride" across the frontier. The Consul, in view of events in his own country, had expected the visit, and had taken the precaution to ask for police protection. When the representative of the law insisted on production of their papers they were found to be out of order which resulted in their detention.

* * *

The budget for 1945 of the canton Fribourg anticipates a deficit of four million francs on the basis of an expenditure of nearly 25 million francs.

* * *

Schaffhausen is to celebrate its 900th anniversary next year. A charter signed by Kaiser Heinrich III, dated 10th July, 1045, conferring the right of coining its own money is the first historic document in existence mentioning the town.

* * *

A credit of Frs. 300,000 has been voted in the canton Ticino to relieve distress and the Grand Conseil has guaranteed a maximum of half a million francs loans which the Cantonal Bank may grant to impoverished communes.

* * *

Former States Councillor Pierre Barman died in Monthey (Valais) at the age of 64. Solicitor by profession he was a well-known personality in the political life of his canton.

* * *

For embezzling Frs. 7,700, the municipal cashier of Chaux-de-Fonds, Arthur Piccolo, was sentenced to two years' imprisonment; the whole of the amount was refunded before the trial took place.

* * *

Professor Max Huber who, since the death of Gustave Ador in 1928, has been president of the International Red Cross Committee, is to be made an honorary citizen of Geneva.

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Army

The army command has urged Cantonal authorities to prevail upon property owners residing near the frontier to hoist large Swiss flags which can easily be identified by aircraft. Roofs of prominent buildings, particularly railway stations, have to be painted over with big white crosses. The violation of our air space has now shifted from the western to the eastern frontier. According to unconfirmed reports some twenty bombs were dropped near Eglisau, hitting a Rhine bridge and killing three people.

Federal Councillor Kobelt, head of our military department, is reported to have declared that after the war our country will probably retain the armed forces in order to safeguard our independence. We do not know of any country that is likely to become a danger again for some time, so the statement (if true) may probably prepare us for conditions on the post-war labour market.

New military barracks will be constructed in Fribourg as soon as the present negotiations for acquiring suitable land are completed.

Traffic

A conference between French and Swiss railway officials has settled, in principle, details for the re-opening of railway traffic between the two countries — on a limited scale for the beginning. A daily service between Paris and Geneva and Les Verrières is now being worked. Arrangements have also been made to clear the heavy accumulation of goods at the Franco-Spanish frontier destined for our country. A convoy of forty railway trucks in tow by three locomotives actually left Geneva-Cornavin on the 1st inst., but it is doubtful whether a regular traffic can be maintained. The following appeared in the "Evening Standard," November 4th, and may not reflect the actual state of affairs:

"The Allies have stopped Swiss trucks which run supplies across France into Spain from crossing the Spanish border.

German Gestapo agents across the border were attempting to interrogate drivers to obtain information about the Allies' movements in areas through which the trucks passed.

Now the trucks stop on the French side of the border and unload their freight on to trains which proceed into Spain.

Twelve trucks per day across France, coming from Geneva into France by St. Julien, through Lyons, down the Rhone Valley and across to Spain.

These peaceful trucks, all marked with the Swiss Cross and bearing the colours of Switzerland, France and Spain, pass through Allied convoy routes, through lines of guns, munitions and supplies.

On their return journey from Spain they carry American goods, also Red Cross parcels for prisoners of war. From Switzerland their cargoes are generally watches, instruments and jewellery."

From other sources the news comes that military necessities do not allow the use of the French railway and road system for Swiss supplies, which will be a serious matter for our country as this ban is upheld for any length of time.

In referring to the centenary of the Strasbourg-Basle railway, the S.F.R. bulletin states that the first three locomotives were built by Sharp, Roberts & Co. Ltd., of Manchester. Two brothers, Nicolas and Edouard Kœchlin, who were then textile spinners at Mulhouse, became interested in the Strasbourg-Basle Railway; they were quick to see the possibilities of the situation and determined to inaugurate locomotive-building works in Alsace, and to cease to be dependent on Great Britain and Belgium, then the chief countries supplying locomotives to Western Europe. Thus the engineering firm of André Kœchlin & Company, of Mulhouse, came into being. Their first locomotives followed the Sharp, Roberts type exactly. It is interesting to read that at that time a tender locomotive cost 50,000 fr.; the English machines were stated to be cheaper in their price at the works, but the cost of transport to Alsace made the total cost of the latter approximately equal to that of the local product. Some excellent models of the early rolling stock, of every variety, have been placed on view at a centenary exhibition at Basle.

The Federal Railways report that revenue derived from passenger transport in September last amounted to frs. 17,790,000 or frs. 1,150,000 more than in the corresponding month of 1943; about 200,000 more passengers were carried. Although the volume of goods traffic decreased, revenue increased by frs. 1,250,000 to frs. 20,960,000. Expenses for September were frs. 1,900,000 higher than for the same month of 1943.

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Budget estimates for the Federal Railways for 1945 show construction costs at 37,4 million frs. General expenses for the year are to be kept as low as possible, it is stated, and a preliminary estimate amounts to 450,5 million frs.; of that sum 163,2 million frs. is to be spent for the maintenance of rails and rolling stock, and on purchases of material.

The SS. "Henri Dunant", flying the Swiss flag, has completed her first crossing of the Atlantic and has landed a large cargo at Marseilles destined for prisoners of war. Another steamer "Caritas II" has discharged at the same port a valuable cargo of medicaments.

Dr. Fritz Wanner has been appointed general secretary of the Swiss Federal Railways in place of the late Francis Torche, to whom he acted as first assistant. Dr. Wanner, who is thirty-eight and comes from Zürich, was for some time on the staff of the London Agency of the S.F.R.

Great importance has always been attached to the development of international air routes and even plans for transatlantic lines have already taken definite forms. Our country was therefore not slow in realising the significance of the Chicago Conference on Civil Air Lines and eagerly accepted the American invitation to send a delegation. Unfortunately influences in no way connected with the purpose of this conference marred the usefulness of our delegation. Our three delegates chose to travel by German plane from Berlin to Lisbon on their way to the U.S.A., which may have given offence in certain quarters and may have strengthened the objection of Russia to sit at a conference table with representatives of countries that, in their belief, harboured hostile feelings. It seems to us that a mistake has been made originally in inviting states to participate that were not in normal diplomatic relations with any of those that constituted the "United Nations". Probably no harm is done by this unexpected development as the three of our chief actors have not been able to agree on a common procedure or policy, thus opening the likelihood of bilateral agreements. Comment in the English Press does not endorse the Russian attitude as will be seen from the following two typical extracts. The first is from "Truth", November 10th:

"Soviet Russia has made another of its incalculable lunges into the realm of foreign relations. Its curt rejection of Swiss overtures to re-establish diplomatic relations followed quickly on its sudden withdrawal from the Civil Aviation Conference at Chicago. In the first case, the reason given was Switzerland's hostile policy to the Soviet Union, and in the second, that Switzerland, Spain and Portugal were taking part. Here again hostility to the Soviet Union was alleged".

and here is another from the "Tablet", November 4th, never fascinated by Russian policy:

"The Soviet Government has declined to par-

ticipate in the very important Chicago Conference on Civil Air Lines, on the grounds that Governments for long unfriendly to the Soviet are taking part: Switzerland, Portugal and Spain. The Swiss have so good a record in international affairs that it is a great piece of tactical ineptitude to draw attention to the way they have no diplomatic relations with Russia. The familiar expedient of labelling everything anti-Communist as "Fascist" cannot seriously be attempted towards the Swiss, and the only conclusion the world will draw is that the Soviet system did, from the beginning, seem to the Swiss to be quite unlike other Governments, and to be unsuitable for the treatment which the Swiss normally extend. It is an ungrateful gesture, all the same, because it was from Switzerland that Lenin and his associates went to make the Revolution of 1917 in Russia, and the Bolsheviks found Swiss hospitality an extreme convenience over many years. In this war the Swiss, with general confidence, are the custodians of the interests of the Great Powers among their enemies. They are pre-eminently men with the right spirit for building up international life through international institutions, and their citizens provide a panel of men whose judgments can be accepted, for the Swiss have no ambitions or alliances or special ties, and to every country they are acceptable".

Economical

There is every reason to believe that the food position in our country will be considerably improved before long. Large quantities of wheat from Philadelphia are piling up at Lisbon and waiting to be shipped to Marseilles as soon as the road transport from there is sanctioned by the Allies.

A new hotel school has been inaugurated at Lucerne on October 31st.

Swiss watches have been in the limelight of late. Considerable quantities are said to have been smuggled into this country chiefly via Gibraltar and English airfields. Some of them have been disgraced by being used as packing in cases containing champagne. When present investigations are completed it is expected that the still growing stock of our time-pieces will be sold by auction.

Humanitarian

The Swiss Red Cross is making an urgent appeal to the population for the surrender of used clothing so as to provide garments for the thousands of refugees.

A much appreciated contribution towards the repair of the many houses damaged by war action in Lyons is a consignment of 100,000 square metres of window glass sent from our country.

Over 2,000 allied prisoners of war — mostly eighth army men — arrived in this country from Switzerland in the course of the last four to six weeks. They were all full of praise for the good time they enjoyed in our country during their enforced residence. A good many of them had become engaged or even married but had to leave their Swiss treasures behind; they were allowed, however, to import souvenirs such as a Swiss watch on each wrist. Local reporters did

not miss the opportunity of interviewing the lucky ones and the provincial papers are crammed with records of their experience. Here are a few extracts selected at random. The first is from a private from Margate whose appreciation is published in the "Isle of Thanet Gazette", November 3rd:

"In Switzerland all the escaped men, Canadians as well as British, were classed as "evadees" and were not interned. They were under both Swiss and English military law and billeted in luxurious hotels and schools.

No restrictions were placed on them, and they were lavishly entertained by the Swiss people, who invited them into their homes and practically 'adopted' them.

"I would like to say how much we appreciated this," said Private Moore, "for it must be remembered that at that time Switzerland, one of the smallest countries in Europe, was surrounded either by Axis countries or countries that had been overrun, and they were in a difficult position."

The troops took part in winter sports, particularly ski-ing and tobogganing, and swimming, football, basket-ball and other games were arranged for them. They even had their own weekly newspaper, run by men who, before joining up, were connected either with the printing industry or journalism. Swiss children, as well as their parents' became great friends with the troops, and many of the men got married to Swiss girls while they were there.

The weather out there is good, for, while it is not unusual to have a snowfall of four feet in a night, the atmosphere remains dry and crisp. Since arriving home Private Moore has caught an 'awful' cold, and his opinion of the English climate has deteriorated."

In the Dundee paper "Weekly News", October 21st, an army chaplain records his impressions thus:

'Switzerland to-day is a strange country,' Captain Allan said.

'It's nothing unusual to see British, Canadian and American and other Allied Servicemen rubbing shoulders on the pavements with out-and-out Nazis.

'But our lads behave very sensibly. They just ignore the Hun, and a disturbance of any kind is very remote.

'The word "interned" gives a wrong impression of the life the soldier really lives.

'Disused hotels, schools and factories have been taken over for billets. There's no barbed wire. No guards. No piercing searchlights.

Xmas Greetings

Following last year's practice we propose to publish in our December issue a collective greeting. Those of our readers and friends wishing to be included should forward name and address to our office not later than Thursday, 14th December 1944, together with remittance for 5/-

Delicious Ovaltine

The Cup that Cheers Strengthens & Sustains

'The Allied soldier and the Swiss man-in-the-street are close friends. Our lads receive a warm welcome into Swiss homes. It's a common thing, too, for our boys to be invited by Swiss families to spend their leaves with them.

'Over a hundred of our boys have married Swiss girls and two or three times that number are engaged.

'Many of the lads are working. This, of course, is voluntary. Some of them are on the land. Others are engaged in their own trade or have started as trainees.

'Public cinemas and dance halls are open to them and mobile cinemas visit the camps.

'Switzerland is not suffering much through the war raging so close to her borders. Food, clothes, soap and other necessities are rationed but there are few real shortages.

'Cigarettes, silk stockings and other luxuries are plentiful—and the only queues you see are those outside entertainment houses.

'German influence in official Swiss circles is great—far greater than realised. It was the Nazis who insisted that at ten o'clock every night the whole country should be blacked-out. Then no lights can guide Allied raiders heading for the Reich.

'The Swiss are very anxious to maintain their neutrality and will go to any length to keep it.'

A newspaper—probably the only one printed in Switzerland not blue-pencilled by the censor—was published and circulated among the British prisoners as recorded by a Cameron Highlander in "Inverness Courier", November 3rd:

In Switzerland the escaped prisoners were not internees but evadés, since they were not belligerents in uniform but escaped prisoners in civilian clothes seeking refuge in another country. Accordingly although they were housed in camps they moved freely among the Swiss population, and got ten days' leave every three months. Several of the evadés got married during their stay, and about 100 of them became engaged to Swiss girls. The escaped prisoners produced their own newspaper, appropriately entitled 'Marking Time'. It is a remarkably fine modern production. The last issue, dated September 15, 1944, is one of sixteen pages with a four-page photographic supplement headed 'So long, Switzerland'. 'Marking Time' began modestly as a type-written sheet, but developed into an admirable magazine complete with war news and photographs, cartoons, news from the camps, short stories, articles of general interest, reports of sporting and other activities, and advertisements. And when the evadés took farewell of Switzerland a Swiss representative who addressed them remarked appropriately, 'For you, gentlemen, it is no longer "Marking Time". It is "Marching Time!"'

No surprise will be felt that a Swiss maiden has responded to the call of a drum, evidently beaten with

conclusive success by a Camberley Guardsman, a drummer, whose wooing is commemorated with some pride and length in the Aldershot local, the "Camberley News", November 8th:

"Doy and his friend had acquired civilian clothes. Now they obtained a bicycle each, and they cycled into Milan, a city alive with Germans. They passed patrols of German troops without any untoward incident, and eventually reached the city. Here they hid in a school, until an ex-sergeant-major of the Alpini took them to his mother's house near the Swiss frontier.

From the house they could see the lights of Swiss towns shining like beacons of liberty. 'It was very tempting', admits Doy. After lying low for a few days arrangements were completed for the crossing of the frontier into Switzerland.

Doy and his companion climbed a mountain, and there they met a gang of former smugglers, who took them along wild mountain trails. The party climbed several thousand feet until they had left Italy, and reached Switzerland in a region where frontier guards were not to be found, and there their guides left Doy and his companion. The two Englishmen were on a narrow mountain path with treacherous ravines about them. Then a mountain mist, more opaque than night, came down, and they could see nothing. Somewhere in the neighbourhood they heard the tinkle of cattle bells, and Doy and his friend yelled their loudest.

Footsteps were heard, and then they heard the voices of those approaching. They were speaking German! Then it was found that they were Swiss soldiers, and German-speaking though they were, they gave the Britons a cheery welcome. Taking them to a patrol hut, the soldiers turned them over to an officer.

The officer's first question was a puzzler. 'Have you got your passport?' he asked. Doy and his companion looked at each other, and mentally remarked that prisoners of war are not issued with such aids to escape. The officer read their thoughts. 'Yes,' he laughed, 'you have your passports. An English soldier's passport is a comb, a shaving brush, a razor and a toothbrush. They all have those, even if they lack everything else.'

Doy had his passport, and he was quickly taken to a place where he was provided with British Army uniform. Then he was sent to the little town of Wolfertswil, placed in a camp, and treated with kindness. He was given almost £1 a week, and was free to walk within certain limits. Christmas came, and the boys had a very good time. The villagers found a gift for each of them, and they fed them like honoured guests.

Now pretty Anna Eichmann, a 22-year-old brunette from Obfelden, went to Wolfertswil to work as a weaver in a cloth factory. Anna lodged next door to the inn in which Doy was housed, and fate ordained that she had to go to the inn to get her midday meal. And there she made the acquaintance of the 'Tommies'.

'After a little competition' (that's the gallant drummer's phrase) Doy took Anna for a walk, but strange to our ears is it to learn that local opinion insisted that a second British soldier should accompany them as chaperone!

Tommy, the chaperone, could not have been a great handicap to Anna and the drummer, because in two weeks they had agreed to marry! It was then that other difficulties had to be surmounted. 'You must get your birth certificate,' insisted the Swiss authorities. This was no end of a difficulty, but somehow or other the British Consul provided the necessary document.

Then other legal difficulties reared their heads. It was here that a Swiss padre joined forces with the Guardsman, and, overcoming all difficulties, he had the pleasure of uniting them in the little Swiss church.

The marriage took place on July 4th last, and then the lucky bridegroom was granted a marriage allowance and, with his bride, transferred to Arosa—a mountain resort where all the shopkeepers speak English, and the newly-weds gather for honeymoons in peace-time days.

Anna and her husband honeymooned gloriously until an October morning, when Drummer Wilfred Doy was roused from his early morning slumbers to start a repatriation trip to England. He is home now, but his happiness is incomplete. Not until Anna arrives will the gallant Guardsman feel that this is the best of all worlds. He hopes that day will not be long delayed."

(At next year's First of August celebration in London we shall certainly look out for Anna, the brunette from Obfelden.—Ed. S.O.)



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