

# News at random

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# The Swiss Observer

FOUNDED BY P. F. BOEHRINGER.

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## TO OUR READERS.

Wages disputes, which have taken place recently, in the Printing Trade, have resulted in an increase of wages and hence the costs of production of the "SWISS OBSERVER" have once again increased in accordance.

This is perhaps an appropriate moment to remind our subscribers that, although time after time, wages and cost of paper have considerably increased since pre-war days, such increases have never been passed on to our readers, and the price of the "SWISS OBSERVER" is still exactly the same as in 1939.

This has been possible through our advertisers giving us their generous support, and through some of our supporters having increased their annual subscriptions by donations, which we herewith gratefully acknowledge.

Whilst we do not intend to increase our subscription, we would like to make a fervent appeal to all our supporters to procure for us new readers, and thus help us to meet the increased costs of production. We shall be pleased to forward specimen copies of the "SWISS OBSERVER" to all addresses which are given us. On your support depends the existence of our paper which for the last 26 years has rendered many services to the Swiss Colony in Great Britain.



## NEWS AT RANDOM

### Federal

Nothing official has yet been published about the result of the negotiations with the secretariat of the UNO as regards the use of the former Palace of the League of Nations at Geneva. Unofficially it is stated in the press that the matter is still under consideration by the Federal Council. While the United Nations Organisation would naturally be welcome on Swiss soil its activities would have to be subject to certain guarantees; the stipulation that no preparations for or operations of a military character would be conducted from our territory would remain a *sine qua non*.

The issue of a new Federal loan of 400 million francs is announced; half will run for 12 years at 3% and the other half for 25 years at 3½%.

The preliminary figures of the total Federal budget for 1947 exhibit a deficit of over 330 million francs — a slight improvement on the likely outcome of this year's accounts.

### Cantonal

The "iron lung," recently lent by the American army command in Frankfurt, has after a short use proved to be so beneficial and even vital in the efficient treatment of infantile paralysis that the canton Zurich has ordered two apparatus from America. They will be housed in the children's clinic at Zurich and be at the disposal of hospitals throughout the canton.

Another two iron lungs have been ordered by the Swiss Red Cross; one will be stored, and released as required, at Berne and the other one at Lausanne.

An unusual decision was taken at Ebnet by the votes of the people especially assembled for that pur-

## ROYAL VICTORIA HOTEL

ST. LEONARDS-ON-SEA

(Extract from the "Neue Zürcher Zeitung.")

"The Swiss Students staying in England celebrated their National Independence by beginning in earnest at the best Hotel in the South of England, namely, the Royal Victoria Hotel, St. Leonards-on-Sea, in Sussex. In this Anglo-Swiss establishment a warm welcome was extended to the visitors.

During the excellent dinner, music of Tchaikowsky and Mozart was played by the orchestra, which, after the dinner with versatility switched to dance music and Swiss tunes and dances; English guests succeeded in dancing in the Continental style and all enjoyed themselves.

Greetings were exchanged between the two oldest democracies over the microphone.

It is quite clear that the Swiss are welcome guests in the United Kingdom."

pose. Col. Dr. Ernst Wagner had already been granted the enfranchisement of this place by the local council on payment of Frs. 3,000; political antagonists, however, demanded a plenary vote on account of the colonel's former associations with the "200 adaptors." The people rejected the newcomer with 194 against 147 endorsers; the Ortsbürgergemeinde meeting had previously accepted him by a majority of 48 to 12.

\* \* \*

Nat. Counc. Dr. Albert Maag-Socin died in Zurich at the age of 57 after a months long illness. A local lawyer of repute since 1917, member of our lower house since 1939, he was for the last 25 years actively interested in cantonal politics.

\* \* \*

Some particulars are published in "Nature," October 21st, of two distinguished sons of Zurich of bygone days; they are taken from the current issue of the Swiss scientific journal *Atlantis*:

"Conrad Gessner (1516-65) was the pioneer of humanism in Zurich at the time of the great movements of the Renaissance and Reformation. That he was a man of immense industry is shown by his 'Bibliotheca Universalis,' published in 1545, a catalogue of all the writings in Hebrew, Greek and Latin which had appeared prior to that date. This great task completed, Gessner next set himself to describe, in systematic and scientific fashion, every known animal and plant. His 'Historia Animalium,' the first volume of which was issued in 1551, forms part of the basis of modern zoology, and contains a number of wood-cuts by Albrecht Dürer. The botanical part of this wide scheme of research, 'Historia Plantarum,' was incomplete when Gessner died. He was widely known for his writings, not merely in science but also in medicine, and he was held in high esteem as a physician.

Gessner's death from plague at the age of fifty-nine was indeed a great loss to science and medicine alike. Among the friends who mourned him was John Caius of Cambridge, who had written, at Gessner's request, his monograph on British dogs, 'De Canibus Britannicis,' and there were many others, since Gessner's house in Zurich was a meeting-place for scholars from all quarters.

A century later there was born another notable pioneer who became town physician of Zurich, Johann Jacob Scheuchzer (1672-1733). Scheuchzer lived at a time when the progress of science was greatly retarded by the rigid orthodoxy of the Church. Nevertheless, he was the first to describe, in a comprehensive and scientific fashion, the physical geography of the Swiss Alps, and he made many original observations on the meteorology, geology, botany and zoology of Switzerland. Those numerous observations, the results of many journeys in all parts of the country, led to the publication of his 'Naturgeschichte des Schweizerlandes' (1706-08) and 'Herbarium Diluvianum' (1709), but his greatest work is contained in the four folio volumes entitled 'Physica Sacra' (1731-35). They form a sort of commentary on the Old Testament such as could not fail to be accepted by the most bigoted churchmen of the day, without any sacrifice of scientific accuracy. Of outstanding interest are Scheuchzer's descriptions of fossil plants and animals and of *Homo diluvii testis* (the skull of a 'Rhinelander' man), the relics of an earlier flora and fauna which, he said, had been preserved beneath the waters of the Flood. The engravings which adorn this work are of great artistic merit. In medicine, Scheuchzer was less distinguished than Gessner, although in science he was a worthy follower — one of the leading pioneers in the wide field of natural philosophy."

\* \* \*

Regierungsrat Robert Grimm, at present director of building and railways of the canton Berne, has been appointed director of the Berne-Lötschberg-Simplon concern in succession to the late Dr. Paul Guggisberg.

\* \* \*

In the elections for 15 members of the Stadtrat in Chur the socialists lost one of their previous four seats to a communist, there being no change in the other three parties.

\* \* \*

The union of post office clerks in the Upper Ticino is protesting against the further engagement of female staff and insists that the present shortage be made good by the transfer of Ticinesi employed in post offices on the other side of the St. Gothard.

\* \* \*

The latest news from the wild animal plague in the Valais comes from Terpel where two women encountered one of the beasts; both parties took flight panic-stricken. When later on men in possession of a gun-licence (without which a kill would be a punishable offence) could be found the intruders had decamped into safety.

\* \* \*

A 3½% loan of 2½ million francs issued by La Chaux-de-Fonds has been over-subscribed.

\* \* \*

A member of the International Red Cross Committee, Col. F. von Planta, died in Geneva at the age of 82; in former years he represented our country abroad on several diplomatic missions.

\* \* \*

A protracted law suit alleging defamation of character brought by Léon Nicole and his communist party against former Nat. Counc. Flückiger ended in a verdict in favour of the former; apart from a small

## UNIONE TICINESE (Ladies' Section)

# CHRISTMAS BAZAAR

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~~~~~

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fine and the costs of the proceedings the defendant has to pay Frs. 1,000 as reparation. The action rested on statements made by Flückiger in the course of a party lecture when he said that the party of labour was undemocratic, set on creating a communist form of government, that the party entertained direct communication with Russia, that secret cells were in existence for training in the use of machine guns and for detecting the sites of munition depots, etc. The court found that the evidence produced to substantiate the last charge was unconvincing.

### Traffic

Writing in the "Observer," October 6th, the chairman of Thos. Cook and Son, Lt., stated that "Switzerland was the first European country to open the door to our tourists, and since April 1st has received some 65,000 of them." Placed against a statement in the House of Commons by the Chancellor of the Exchequer that English tourists have spent three million £ during the last twelve months in Switzerland it would appear that about £46 was the average individual expenditure (!).

\* \* \*

Lucerne is the latest claimant to aviation facilities. At a meeting held at Emmen a unanimous resolution was passed demanding the extension and conversion of the existing military airfield into a regional aviation ground.

\* \* \*

The issue of the 20 million franc new share capital of Swissair is said to have been over-subscribed; no actual figures are given. Apart from Zurich and Basle, with a million each, other cantons have subscribed as follows: Lucerne Frs. 200,000, Glaris Frs. 30,000 and Zug Frs. 15,000.

\* \* \*

The Swiss steamer "Lugano" which, in the harbour of Genoa, was being fitted out as a floating exhibition for a trip to South America was badly damaged by fire. The ship should have left at the end of last month but her departure is now indefinitely postponed.

\* \* \*

Here is a cutting from the "Railway Gazette,"

## ACADEMY CINEMA

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### Last weeks

## LE GRAND JEU (A)

with

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MARIE BELL, PIERRE RICHARD-WILLM

### Next Presentation

CARL DREYER'S

## DAY OF WRATH (A)

October 20th, giving some advance information about the railway centenary to be celebrated next year:

"There are indications that elaborate preparations are being made to celebrate appropriately next year the centenary of the Swiss railways. Of added interest to the ceremonies will be the 14th International Railway Congress, to be held in Switzerland. The last congress held there was at Berne in 1910. The Swiss Locomotive Works at Winterthur is constructing a full-scale replica of the original Zurich-Baden Railway train, which is to travel all over the country, with staff dressed in the old-style uniforms, and in which passengers will be conveyed at reduced fares. A special exhibition of models is being collected — no doubt with the assistance of the several model railway clubs active in Switzerland — and will be exhibited in some twelve cities. Special functions will be held at Zurich and Baden, and attractive jubilee publications are announced. An appeal is being made to all with articles, photographs, or publications of historical interest to make them available. Clearly every effort is being exerted to do justice to the occasion."

\* \* \*

An old pre-war scheme is being revived by the Federal Council appointing a commission to study a plan for constructing a 180-mile canal running from the Lago Maggiore to the Adriatic coast.

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And here is another scheme which so far is very much in the air but about which the *Leader*, October 26th, has secured the following particulars :

"The most modern underground railway in the world is planned for Zurich, Switzerland. It will be only three miles long at first but its single carriage train will do 125 miles an hour. The running time from end to end of the first short section will be 2½ minutes. Biggest technical innovation is that the carriages, designed by Professor Wiesinger of the Swiss Institute of Technology, can't possibly derail. Both wheels and rails are placed at an angle. They slope outwards towards the base and the flanges of the wheels grip under the inner surface of the inclined rails, so it's physically impossible for the carriage to lift off the track.

The locomotive carriages will be about 80 feet long, weighing 15 tons each, and will be driven by a 300 horse power Diesel engine. Each will accommodate 200 passengers.

The initial section of the new tube, which will link the centre of the city with Oerliken, one of the most densely populated suburbs, will take two and a half years to build at a cost of £600,000. Later the system will gradually be extended along the lake shore and out into the countryside."

\* \* \*

A huge increase in motor-driven vehicles has taken place since September 1945 when petrol rationing ceased. The number was then 46,212 and reached on July 1st this year 108,397, about a third being private cars. The figure for motor cycles for the same period showed a sixfold increase.

\* \* \*

Grenchen is likely to be our emporium for the marketing of civil aircraft and the centre for instructing and training civil pilots. At the aviation school under the direction of Dr. Farner anyone who has not been involved in police court proceedings can acquire the necessary qualification and obtain a flying licence at a cost of Frs. 450 to Frs. 600. It also operates a hire service under which light planes can be secured at an inclusive fee of Frs. 36 to Frs. 90 per flying hour, according to size; for longer distances and airtaxis the charges are based on the rates fixed by the large international companies. In conjunction, though separately, Dr. Farner also superintends an aircraft factory and repair shop which has, it is stated, sold over 200 light aircraft since the beginning of this year.

### **Economics**

A slight increase in inland postal rates has been decided upon by the Federal Council; it comes into force on January 1st next and will result in an annual revenue increase of about seven million francs.

\* \* \*

After protracted negotiations the guild of Swiss bank clerks and the Schweiz. Kauf. Verein — stated NOT to have acted in unison — have concluded an agreement with our banks. Apart from a general salary-rise of 12% in addition to the existing cost of living bonus, uniform working conditions and a distinct classification have been decided upon.

\* \* \*

Instructive information is gleaned from statistics now appearing in the home press. The wholesale price

of coal before the war varied little from Frs. 3.50 per cwt but gradually rose to four times this figure in 1945, viz. Frs. 13.46. In the same period Benzine (petrol) rose from Frs. 12.90 to Frs. 78 and at one time in 1944 touched Frs. 87.60. The industrialisation of our country during the last few decades shows marked intensification in a general way; exceptions are the cotton industry which in 1895 employed 35,000 hands which gradually diffused to 20,000 in 1944 and the embroidery branch which before the first world war gave work to 29,000 people and according to the recent census employs scarcely 2,000.

### **OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE NEW PREMISES OF THE SWISS OFFICE FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF TRADE.**

The above-mentioned office which hitherto occupied temporary quarters at the Swiss Legation, 18, Montagu Place, W.1, has now moved to new premises at 1, Great Cumberland Place, W.1.

To celebrate this event a small party was given by Mr. A. J. Stahelin, the Delegate for the United Kingdom, who, together with his charming wife, received the guests.

Mr. Stahelin, in welcoming the guests, expressed his appreciation to the Swiss Legation for having, for over a year extended their hospitality to his administration; he mentioned that, although a separation has now taken place, that this would not mean a divorce, and expressed the wish that the always cordial relationship would be continued in the future. He especially expressed his appreciation to Monsieur de Grafenried, Commercial Counsellor at the Legation, for his help and advice.

Monsieur A. Escher, the Swiss Chargé d'Affaires, in the absence of the Swiss Minister, Monsieur Paul Ruegger, in a happy little speech in "Schwyzerdütsch," thanked Mr. Stahelin, on behalf of the guests, for the "house-warming" party, saying that the relations between the Legation and the Swiss Office for the Development of Trade have always remained very happy, and expressed the wish that the relationship should remain so. He then declared the new premises officially as opened.

Monsieur de Grafenried, Counsellor of Legation, referred to the successful collaboration between the two administrations, expressing the wish and hope that, although separated, their mutual good relations would continue.

The new offices, which are spacious and comfortable, were then inspected and we, on our part, wish the Swiss Office for the Development of Trade every success in their new headquarters.

The following gentlemen attended the opening :

Dr. A. Escher, Swiss Chargé d'Affaires; Messieurs de Grafenried, P. H. Aubaret, Ch. Weibel, H. Bähler, H. Suter; Messrs. E. Steiner, A. Renou, Dr. P. de Wolf, J. J. Boos, W. Deutsch, V. P. Ceresole, A. P. Moehr, C. Voegeli, John Steiner and A. C. Boller. The Swiss Press was represented by Dr. Egli, Gottfried Keller and A. Stauffer.

The following were unavoidably prevented from attending: Messrs. C. Wüthrich, A. Oboussier, A. Bon and P. F. Boehringer.