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# The Swiss Observer

FOUNDED BY PAUL F. BOEHRINGER.

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## NEWS AT RANDOM

### Federal

Minister Georges Wagnière, a former Swiss Minister in Rome, has died at the age of 86.

Monsieur Wagnière was a citizen of Fey, Rueyres (Ct. Vaud) and was born in 1862 in Florence. He studied law at the Universities of Lausanne, Leipzig and Pisa. From 1896-1902 he was Vice-Chancellor of the Swiss Confederation.

Minister Wagnière then left the Federal Administration to become Foreign Editor of the "Journal de Genève" of which paper he became Editor-in-Chief in 1908, and two years later Director.

In 1918, he was appointed Swiss Minister in Rome, which post he occupied for 18 years.

He retired in 1936, and settled at Geneva; during his retirement he put his services at the disposal of the International Red Cross.

Minister Wagnière has written a number of books, amongst the better known were his memoirs as Minister in Rome, entitled "Eighteen Years in Rome," "La Démocratie en Suisse," "Lettres du front italien" and "La Suisse parmi les nations."

The newly appointed Minister of the Government of India, Dr. Dhiraylal Desai, gave a reception in Berne, in honour of Minister Armin Daeniker, who is shortly taking up his post in India. Amongst the many guests present was Monsieur Celio, President of the Swiss Confederation.

Under the new Swiss-Dutch Agreement Swiss Frs. 11 million have been reserved for Dutch tourist traffic for the next thirteen months.

No more Visas will be required for travel between France and Switzerland.

Colonel of Division, Gonard, who has been offered the post as chief of the Police in Jerusalem, according to a communiqué from Lake Success, has declined the offer.

Captain Roger Dürr, at present Secretary of Legation in Paris, has been appointed Military Attaché in Sofia.

The Swiss Federal Railways have carried during the month of March altogether 20.22 million passengers, or 2.40 million more than in March, 1947. The receipts from passenger traffic show an increase of 3.73 million and are given as 24.46 million francs.

1,070 million tons of goods were dispatched, or 275,719 tons more than during the same period in 1947, the receipts of which reached 29.91 million francs or 2.98 million francs more than in March, 1947.

The Swiss cost of living index, based on prices in June, 1914=100, was lowered in March to 222.9 from 223.5 in February, and the index based on prices in August, 1939=100 was lowered to 162.5 from the 162.9 in February.

The United States is to pay Switzerland £2,651,750 for war damage caused by planes.

The Swiss Government announces that the Argentine Government has, without warning, put an embargo on exports to Switzerland. "The embargo, appears to be intended to force Switzerland to agree to a revision of the trade pact signed last year," the announcement added.

The pact, signed for five years, provided that the balance of payments in Argentina's favour should not be settled until the expiry of the pact.

The Federal Government is asking Parliament to vote an initial sum of about £1,200,000 for the first instalment of the work of restoring within the shortest possible time those parts of the defence system that have been destroyed. Work will be started

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as soon as possible on adapting the St. Maurice fortifications to the needs of modern warfare.

The Swiss defence system is based on three main strongpoints: the Sargans fortifications in the east, looking towards the Austrian border; the St. Gotthard forts in the centre, commanding the St. Gotthard, Oberalp, and Furka Alpine passes; and the St. Maurice fortifications in the west, controlling the entry of the Valais or upper Rhône Valley and covering the western flank of the Swiss national "redoubt." On May 28th, and 29th, 1946, the St. Maurice forts were severely damaged by an explosion, when some 50 tons of ammunition stored in underground galleries went up.

### Cantonal

The elections for the "Kantonsrat" of the canton of Schwyz took place on the 25th of last month, the new Council, which numbers 99 members, is composed as follows:— 53 Conservatives (as before); 29 Liberals (31); 12 Socialists (as before); 5 Independents. (Three of the latter have since intimated that they intend to join the Conservative party.)

The following were also elected as members of the cantonal government: Bettchart (Conservative), Bösch (Conservative) Dober (Conservative) Dr. Schwander (Conservative), Bachmann (Liberal) Dr. Sidler (Liberal). With regard to the seats of the Socialists, a second ballot will have to take place.

[A.T.S.]

The "Landsgemeinde" of the canton of Obwalden took place on the 25th of last month. The following

members of the government were re-elected for a further term of office: Alois Abächerli, Dr. Gotthard Odermatt and Arnold Ming.

National-Councillor Dr. G. Odermatt was elected "Landammann." [A.T.S.]

The death has occurred of Leo Spichtig, since 1944 a member of the government of the canton of Obwalden.

The deceased was, since 1936, a member of the "Kantonsrat." [A.T.S.]

The Children's Home Celerina, in Zurich, has received a donation of 10,000.—frs. from Dr. Emil Schoch-Etzenberger. [A.T.S.]

Dr. Ernst Wetter, a former Federal-Councillor, has been nominated President of the Administration of the "Aluminium Industrie, A.G. Chippis."

Albert Hoffmann, Banker in Zurich, was appointed as Vice-President. [A.T.S.]

Five homesteads and three stables were destroyed by fire in Linthal (Ct. Glarus). The damage caused is estimated to be in the neighbourhood of half a million francs. [A.T.S.]

The late Madame Marie Schindler, of Mollis (Ct. Glarus) has left an amount of 108,000.—frs. to various charitable institutions of the canton of Glarus. [A.T.S.]

Ernst Hess, formerly "Kurdirektor" of the Lenzerheide and Bad Ragaz, has been engaged as "Kurdirektor" of Adelboden (Ct. Berne). [A.T.S.]

Dr. Fritz Bracher, a well-known surgeon and medical practitioner, has died in Nidau (Ct. Berne) aged 52. [A.T.S.]

Werner, A. Laesser, since 1930 Director of the Federal Grain Administration, has celebrated his 60th birthday anniversary in Berne.

Mr. Laesser was entrusted with several missions abroad by the Swiss Government, he was responsible, during and after the war, for the provisioning our country with cereals and bread. He hails from Rothrist (Ct. Aargau) of which he is an honorary citizen. [A.T.S.]

The Swiss Sample Fair, in Basle, closed its doors on the 20th of last month. More than 600,000 people visited the Fair which is considerably more than last year.

8,537 visitors (1947: 7,494) from abroad, representing 54 countries were registered. This year's Fair has again proved a great success. [A.T.S.]

The traditional "Landsgemeinde" of the canton Appenzell a Rh. took place at Herisau; amongst the visitors was Federal-Councillor Rubattel.

The accounts for 1947, which close with a credit-balance of 221,000.—frs. were accepted.

Professor Adolf Bodmer, rector of the "Kantonschule" in Trogen, and Jakob Stricker (Stein) were elected members of the Government in succession to "Landammann" Ackermann and Willi. Jakob Bruderer (Teufen) was elected "Landammann." [A.T.S.]

At the "Landsgemeinde" of the canton Appenzell J.-Rh. which took place at Appenzell, all the members of the government were re-elected. [A.T.S.]



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The death has occurred in St. Gall, of Professor, Dr. Ernst Fiechter, the well-known archaeologist, architect and art historian, at the age of 73. [A.T.S.]

Karl Willi, notary in Baden (Ct. Aargau) has been elected President of the District Court in Baden.

The community of Amriswil (Ct. Thurgau) has received a donation of 50,000.—frs. for their "Krankenhaus & Bürgerheim." [A.T.S.]

The 225th anniversary of the death of Major Davels was celebrated at Cully (Ct. Vaud). Edmond Jaquet, President of the government of the canton of Vaud, spoke at the monument of Major Davels, which was erected in 1941. [A.T.S.]

The town council of Brigue (Ct. Valais) has conferred honorary citizenship on Colonel of Brigade Bühler, who during the last war was in command of the 11th mountain brigade. [A.T.S.]

### Army

The military Tribunal of the 4th Division, sitting at Basle, has condemned Ernst Haldimann, from Pfeffingen (Ct. Basle-County) to twenty years penal servitude and expulsion from the army, for espionage. [A.T.S.]

—oO—

At the 28th annual meeting of the British Chamber of Commerce in Switzerland at Montreux, Mr. Harold Wilson, President of the Board of Trade, stressed the importance of the Anglo-Swiss Trade Agreement and paid tribute to the "generous way in which the Swiss Government took account of Britain's difficulties in which we were placed through no circumstances of our own but because of our position as bankers for the sterling area."

Switzerland's open door for United Kingdom exports was a challenge to British manufacturers to develop the Swiss market, he continued, and he hoped that exports in 1948 would achieve £20,000,000 — six times the pre-war rate.

Mr. Wilson said he regarded resumption of British coal exports on a substantial scale (expected to amount to 100,000 tons this year) as one of the encouraging things in the restoration of Anglo-Swiss trade. He also stressed the importance of motor-car exports to Switzerland of £2,000,000 in 1947, against £46,000 in 1938.

The British Government, he stated, had agreed to reconsider the question of making some provision for children's education in Switzerland for the coming school year.

### ALPINE SCHOOL AT DAVOS.

*For Delicate Children From Birmingham.*

An offer made by Mr. C. Kunzle to Birmingham Education Committee to place accommodation in his chateau at Davos at the disposal of the committee for the use of groups of delicate children from Birmingham schools will come before the Educational Committee on Monday on a report from the Special Schools Sub-committee, which recommends its acceptance in principle, providing a satisfactory report is received from an officer visiting the chateau and subject to approval by the Finance Committee of the City Council and of the Ministry of Education.

Mr. Kunzle's offer is that each group would consist in the first place of about twenty-five boys. The possibility of increasing the number, and of sending girls as well, would be considered later. They would be selected by the School Medical Officer from children most likely to benefit. It is also suggested that the first group should consist of boys from about ten to twelve years of age. The period of stay will depend upon the recommendation of the School Medical Officer, and the availability of foreign currency, but it will not be less than eleven weeks. The children should be accompanied by two teachers and one foster mother, who would be responsible for their educational and social welfare. The domestic staff would be provided by Mr. Kunzle from his staff in Birmingham.

Mr. Kunzle is unable to bear the full cost of maintenance of children and staff and would make a charge of five Swiss francs per day for board and lodging for children up to fifteen and ten francs per day for child-

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ren and adults over fifteen. This would include the cost of heating, lighting, beds, bedding, crockery, and all incidental costs except the cost of medical care. The committee would pay travelling expenses of children, the teachers, and foster mother. Medical attention would be provided by the Pro Juventute organisation in Switzerland at about £90 per year, which would also be a charge on the Education Committee.

The committee feels, however, that an officer should visit the chateau in order to reach a decision as to the best use of the available accommodation.

It is estimated that the total cost to the committee of carrying out the scheme on the basis of twenty-five children going at three-monthly intervals will be in the region of £4,300, during the current financial year. It is anticipated that the salaries of the two teachers and of the foster mother, amounting to about £800, can be met from the estimates. No provision has been made, however, for the balance of approximately £3,500. The proposal has been submitted to the Finance Committee of the Council for approval.

(*Birmingham Post.*)

\* \* \*

Owing to the unusual scarcity of snow the Matterhorn was climbed several times in March, and three of these ascents are claimed to be first winter climbs.

On March 9th two Turin students, Enrico Gamma and Ettore Sisto, climbed to the Italian hut (12,763ft.) by the Couloir and Col du Lion. Next day, after a difficult crossing of the Linceul, they found the Giordano Ladder and all the ropes clear of snow, but had more than an hour of step-cutting in the ice before they reached the top at 4 p.m. They were overtaken by nightfall near the Grande Tour, and had some difficulty in finding the hut. Next day they were back in Turin.

On March 25th M. Masson, of Paris, and the Zermatt guide Edmund Petrig made, in ideal conditions, the first winter ascent of the Matterhorn by the Zmutt ridge. Starting soon after midnight from the Hörnli hut, they arrived on the summit at 2 p.m., and at 7 p.m. they were back to the hut after an almost uneventful climb.

At Easter two young alpinists of Bienne (Canton Berne), MM. R. Monné and J. Fuchs, made the first winter ascent by the Furggrat. After spending the night at the Solvay hut (12,526ft.), they crossed in three hours the wide eastern rock face, and it took them another seven hours to ascend the ridge itself. After 10 hours of strenuous effort they reached the top of the Matterhorn, whence they descended by the usual

route. During their ascent they made use of six *pitons* and of nylon ropes, which proved very satisfactory.

\* \* \*

Switzerland has been invited by the Football Association to play England on December 1st in London, according to a statement in Zurich.

\* \* \*

#### OVERSEAS TRAVEL.

The Treasury has issued the following advice about allowances and currency:—

The allowance of £35 a year in foreign currency for adults and £25 for children under 16 may be obtained from a bank or some travel agencies. It will be provided mainly in travellers' cheques, for more than £10 in foreign currency notes cannot be taken out of the country.

Travellers may take up to £5 in sterling notes with them on the understanding that they are not to be spent in foreign ships or aircraft or anywhere abroad, neither must they be exchanged for foreign currency. They may be spent in British ships or aircraft, but the main reason for allowing them to be carried during the holiday is to enable the returning traveller to have enough cash to cover the expenses of his journey from the port of disembarkation to his home.

Should a traveller arrive at the port or airfield of departure with more than £5 in notes the excess will be seized, and it is unlikely that he will get it back. Similarly, a traveller is not allowed to take a large number of silver coins with him. No objection will be raised to loose change up to £1.

Sterling notes must not be bought abroad or accepted against travellers' cheques. A traveller, whether British or foreign, will not be permitted to bring more than £5 in sterling notes into this country. Any excess will be seized.

\* \* \*

The 3rd International Fur and Leather Fair will take place in Basle from March 30th to April 6th, 1949.

[A.T.S.]

\* \* \*

The 8th Federal "Yodlerfest" will be held in Berne, on the 11th, 12th and 13th of June, 1949.

[A.T.S.]

\* \* \*

The following couple have celebrated their diamond wedding anniversary (60 years): Mr. & Mrs. Auguste Chatelain in Villeret. [A.T.S.]

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