

# News at random

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# The Swiss Observer

FOUNDED IN 1919 BY PAUL F. BOEHRINGER.

## The Official Organ of the Swiss Colony in Great Britain

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### NEWS AT RANDOM

#### Federal

The Defence Minister Mr. Kobelt, has warned Switzerland not to become phlegmatic about the existing "state of latent danger" and declared that the country's regular defence budget for next year would amount to 600 million francs (about £49 millions).

Speaking at Lucerne Mr. Kobelt also defended the mobile strategy which the Swiss Army intends to apply in the case of war, and tried to justify next year's defence burdens, which are over and above the current defence estimates of 1,464 million francs (about £119 millions). He said:

"It seems that the tendency of our people to agree to sacrifices for the sake of defence decreases in direct ratio to the increase in its wellbeing. . . . What is neglected to-day in our preparations will be impossible to make up when the danger of war becomes imminent."

These views are in full conformity with Switzerland's idea of armed neutrality which has been emphasised by the Government in Berne ever since the short-lived post-war honeymoon between East and West had come to an end.

According to Mr. Kobelt defence materials, including construction, represented 5,800 million francs (about £483 millions). Once the current rearmament programme was concluded, he said, the Army would still require annually 135 million francs for training; 242 millions for weapons, munitions, vehicles, and aircraft; 132 millions for maintenance and construction; 14.5 millions for administrative purposes; 8 millions for improving fortifications; and a further 64.5 millions for miscellaneous items.

The Government has now publicly condemned five schools of thought on defence strategy. They are:

1. The idea that the Government should wait to acquire new material until further technical progress has been made is dismissed because "with this method no decision will ever be taken."

2. The criticism that Switzerland is imitating other armies by reproducing them on a pocket scale is

dismissed on the grounds that the smallness of the country requires sufficient stocks of foodstuffs, fuel, ammunition, and other defence materials which are bound to be costly at the outset.

3. The thesis that Switzerland should concentrate on setting up a home guard which in the case of enemy occupation could fight from underground is dismissed because this would reduce security to a minimum.

4. The "Hedgehog plan," according to which the Army should be broken up and concentrated at a certain number of fortified points, is rejected because once the forces are dispersed an aggressor could proceed by liquidating one stronghold after another.

5. The "Alpine fortress" idea is not even taken into consideration now because it would enable an invader to occupy the Swiss plains with their dense population centres and major resources and then concentrate on starving at his leisure the "alpine fortress." It is admitted that this approach was used during the war, when Switzerland was entirely encircled by German might, but the reason for this was that the forces and armaments then available would not have sufficed to hold an extended front.

"Our present aim," said Mr. Kobelt, "is rather to utilise to the utmost the ground which is favourable to us and to start defending ourselves as near to the frontiers as possible." This, however, required a numerically strong and mobile Army using modern and powerful equipment. Readiness to give one's life, he concluded, was not enough; financial sacrifices were also needed.

### CITY SWISS CLUB

## Monthly Meeting

AND

## Xmas Dinner

ON

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 15th, 1953

(6.30 for 7 p.m.)

AT

DORCHESTER HOTEL, PARK LANE, W.1

Monsieur Alfred Escher, Swiss Minister in Teheran, has also been accredited to the Government of Afghanistan, but will reside in Teheran.

Monsieur Helge von Knorring, Minister Plenipotentiary and Envoy Extraordinary of the Republic of Finland, has presented his credentials to the President of the Swiss Confederation, and M. Petitpierre, Swiss Foreign Minister. The newly accredited Minister was recently representing his country in China.

The President of the Swiss Confederation, and M. Petitpierre, Swiss Foreign Minister, have received Monsieur Abolghassem Foronhar, on the occasion of his presenting his credentials as Minister Plenipotentiary and Envoy Extraordinary of the Kingdom of Iran.

### Cantonal

Mr. & Mrs. Vinzenz Meyers-Steiger of Heimburg-Buttisholz, (Ct. Lucerne), lately deceased, have left an amount of 200,000.— frs. to various charitable institutions. [A.T.S.]

On the occasion of a visit to his native town of Meilen, Mr. Eugen Wissmann, an "Auslandschweizer" residing in Sao Paulo (Brazil) has made a donation of 100,000.— frs. to the community of Meilen towards the costs for a home of old people. [A.T.S.]

Mr. Jaques Uhlmann, Trade Union Secretary (SMUV) of Wynigen and Berne, has been elected a member of the National Council in succession to the late Hermann Oldani. [A.T.S.]

Johann Freuler, a former Swiss Consul in San Francisco (USA), who left his native town of Glarus 80 years ago, has celebrated his 103rd birthday anniversary in Oakland. (U.S.A.). [A.T.S.]

From the 1st of July to September 30th, 1953, 253 (1952: 225) traffic accidents have occurred in the canton of Solothurn. 230 persons were injured, of whom 7 succumbed to their injuries. [A.T.S.]

Mr. Willy Bourgnon (born in 1903 in Thun) has been appointed Director of the "Strafanstalt" Basle-Town in succession to Mr. Borel who has vacated his post on reaching retiring age. [A.T.S.]

Two men, both of German nationality, have been arrested by the Swiss Police in connection with the robbery at the "Bankhaus Rohner & Co." St. Gall, when an amount of 38,500.— frs. was stolen. A large part of the money has been recovered. [A.T.S.]

Dr. Walter Leber, rector of the "Bezirksschule" has been elected "Stadtammann" of the town of Zofingen. He was born in 1906 and is a citizen of Laufenburg and Wil. In the army he holds the rank of a Colonel of artillery. [A.T.S.]

The village of Küssnacht (Ct. Zurich) now numbers 10,000 inhabitants. This event was marked by suitable celebrations. [A.T.S.]

Mme. Louise Corminboeuf of Romont (Ct. Fribourg) has celebrated her 100th birthday. She was presented by the cantonal government with the traditional easy chair. [A.T.S.]

An anonymous donor has given an amount of 10,000.— frs. to the Synodalrat" of the canton of Vaud towards the creation of a Fund for spreading protestant teachings. [A.T.S.]

The late Dr. med. Charles Müller of Morges has left an amount of 50,000.— frs. for the poor of the community of Morges. [A.T.S.]

On the occasion of the 70th birthday anniversary of M. Ernest Ansermet, conductor of the "Orchestre de la Suisse Romande", the town of Geneva has nominated him an honorary citizen. [A.T.S.]

A serious explosion occurred at No. 5, Rue de Zurich, Geneva, in the Pâquis district. One person was killed and several injured. [A.T.S.]

The following deaths are reported from Switzerland:

Ernest Rochat, for many years a preacher in Plainpalais, and afterwards Professor of Theology at the University of Geneva, in Geneva, at the age of 85.

Arnoldo Filippello, conductor of the choirs "Bambini Ticinesi" and "Cantorini Ticinesi", in Lugano, aged 67.

Dr. Hans Schneider-Christ, a well-known art historian, in Basle, at the age of 65.

Otto Dätwyler, founder of the "Zürcher Lagerhaus, A.G." and for many years President of "Verbandes Schweiz. Lagerhäuser", in Zurich, aged 72.

Dr. med. Hans Walther-Zweifel, for 40 years connected with the "Schwesternhaus vom Roten Kreuz" Zurich, in Zurich, at the age of 70.

August Häberlin, from 1900-1940, a preacher at the St. Johann Church at Schaffhausen, in Schaffhausen, aged 84.

Heinrich Danioth, landscape painter, etcher and author, in Altdorf, at the age of 57.

Dr. Hans Gfeller, a former "Oberapotheker" of the "Bürgerspital" Basle, and a lecturer at the University of that town, in Basle, aged 66.

Josef Zingg-Blankart, a former President of the "Generaldirektion" of the Swiss Federal Railways, in Meggen, at the age of 90.

## Nouvelle Société Helvétique

(LONDON GROUP)

On Tuesday, December 8th, 1953,

**FILM SHOW**

at 7.45 p.m.

preceded by a Dinner at 6.30 p.m.

(Price 8/6).

at the

**Vienna Café, Berkeley Arcade,  
Baker Street, N.W.1.**

Admission Free — All Swiss and friends welcome.

Godefrey Etter, the oldest notary in the canton of Neuchâtel, in Neuchâtel, aged 92.

Dr. Walter Frey, since 1935 Public Prosecutor of the canton of Zurich, in Zurich, at the age of 61.

Albrecht Siegfried, senior partner of the "Chemischen Fabrik, vorm. B. Siegfried" Zofingen. He entered the firm which was founded by his father in 1903. He died at the age of 74.

Ernest Flückiger, late States Councillor, in St. Gall, aged 69. The deceased studied German literature, history and national economy at the University of Zurich after which he became a member of the editorial staff of the "St. Galler Tagblatt" as "Inlandredaktor" and from 1935-1950 he held the post as Editor-in-chief. He was a Member of Parliament (States Council) from 1947-1952.

Beat Schnider, since 1953 head of the Sarnen branch of the "Strohwarenfabrik Georges Meyer & Co.". Wohlen. The deceased had been a member since 1946 of the Cantonal Superior Court. He died at Sarnen at the age of 53. [A.T.S.]

The undermentioned anniversaries are announced in the Swiss Press:

Eduard Pfister (80) of Frauenfeld. He was, from 1917-1941, a member of the Grand Council of the canton of Thurgau, from 1922-1935, he sat in the National Council and from 1935-1939 in the States Council. In the army he reached the rank of Lt. Colonel.

Ferdinand Weissenbach (80) of Bremgarten (Ct. Aargau) Publisher and Editor of the "Bremgarter Bezirksanzeiger".

Walter Trüb (70) since 1943 a member of Parliament (National Council). From 1908-1913 the "Jubilar" was chief engineer of the Brown-Boveri, Baden concern. From 1920-1949, he held the post of Director of the Zurich Electricity Works. [A.T.S.]

The following couples have celebrated their diamond wedding anniversary (65) in Switzerland: Mr. & Mrs. Guillod-Johner of Môtier. (Ct. Fribourg), and Mr. & Mrs. Joh. B. Koch of Appenzell. [A.T.S.]

Switzerland beat France by four goals to two in an international Association football match in Paris.

The Swiss Federal Council decided to propose Dr. Fritz Wahlen, 54, for the post of Director-General of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation, says Reuter. The seventh F.A.O. general conference, opening in Rome on Nov. 23, must choose a successor to the present Director-General, Mr. Dodd. Dr. Wahlen is director of the Agriculture Division of F.A.O.

The Swiss Government have refused to discuss with China, Poland, and Czechoslovakia the complaints made by the three Communist Governments about the attitude of the Swiss members of the neutral nations repatriation committee in Korea.

The Benedictine Abbey of St. Gallen, founded in the seventh century by the Irish monk, St. Gallus, is to be completely renovated.

The two men convicted of spying against Britain and the other Western Powers were sentenced to twelve and nine months respectively imprisonment by the Federal Court.

The Court ruled that "systematic collecting of press cuttings can be considered as espionage", and sentenced Rudolf Rössler, a former German citizen, now stateless, to one year's imprisonment, and Xavier Schnieper, a Swiss journalist, to nine months in prison. Both men were accused of spying on the Western Powers for Czechoslovakia.

Quite apart from the merits of the case (it turned out that Rössler was, in fact one of the most picturesque spies during the last war), the Lucerne judgement caused foreign observers to feel that if the principle it contains were to be universally applied they would all end up in prison sooner or later.

The case was by no means a simple one, and called for the maximum of ingenuity. Rössler was one of the main wartime "contacts" of Admiral Canaris, the head of German Intelligence, and the anti-Nazi group of officers. He was publisher of the "Nova

## An Appeal . . .

The SWISS BENEVOLENT SOCIETY and the SWISS CHURCHES in LONDON appeal once more to their compatriots for their kind contributions in kind or cash, in order to provide a little extra cheer for Christmas to our Swiss in need. All kinds of wearing apparel, household goods and furniture would be much appreciated and gratefully received.

Please send parcels, if possible not later than the end of November, to 31, Conway Street, Fitzroy Square, London, W.1, and cash remittances to:

**SWISS BENEVOLENT SOCIETY, 31, Conway Street, W.1.** · The Revd. C. Reverdin, 7, Park View Road, Finchley, N.3. · The Revd. H. Spörri, 1, Womersley Road, N.8.  
The Revd. Father A. Lanfranchi, St. Anne's Church, Abbey Orchard Street, S.W.1.

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Vita" in Lucerne, but his actual function was to supply daily battle orders and other vital military intelligence to the Swiss. Without their knowledge, however, he also kept in touch with the Soviet network operating from this town, and he is said to have given warning to Moscow three weeks before the German invasion. In 1943 the Swiss authorities rounded up the Soviet network and Rössler was tried by a military court in secret but was acquitted in view of the valuable services previously rendered to the Swiss.

Last March, however, the Swiss alleged that Rössler got involved in the Czech network and that he had supplied between 110 and 160 intelligence reports hidden in figs and honey jars to Captain Volf, assistant Czech Military Attaché in Berne, and later to two agents calling themselves "Conrad the First" and "Conrad the Second," through his war-time Swiss Intelligence friend, Schnieper. This was supposed to have been going on since 1947 and the remuneration is said to have been between 33,000 and 48,000 Swiss francs (about £4,000).

Rössler claimed that the same people responsible for the initial success of the Hitler movement were again in power in Western Germany, that he wished to prevent the recurrence of nazism, and, moreover, that all the information he had supplied to the East was based on over twenty thousand newspaper cuttings which he had collected from Western newspapers and which did not constitute espionage. The prosecution was unable to prove anything beyond that, even though it warned the Western press to be more careful about publishing details of military defence arrangements. It confiscated Rössler's cuttings.

It may be surprising that any Intelligence service should have been prepared to pay so much for what Eastern press attachés could obtain and no doubt did obtain without any undue difficulties. It is argued here, however, that the money was well spent to keep in reserve a well-trying agent.

It is understood that the Swiss Intelligence was not keen at all on having Rössler tried but that it was the Swiss Federal police who insisted on bringing matters to a head. The police were no doubt right because Swiss neutrality requires that this country should not become a hunting ground for the various Intelligence services as Austria seems to have become, nor does Swiss law provide for any privileges or immunities additional to those universally enjoyed.

\* \* \*

In its latest report to the Swiss Government the Swiss delegation to the neutral Nations' Repatriation Commission at Panmunjon explains its reasons for opposing the use of force in inducing prisoners to submit to "explanations," and describes the differences which have arisen in the commission between Poland and Czechoslovakia and the other three countries.

The use of force, the report states, would "in our view be contrary to human rights and freedoms as well as to the spirit of our mission and the Geneva Conventions." In the view of "certain delegations" (that is Poland and Czechoslovakia), however, the terror created in the camps by anti-Communist prisoners with a view to dissuading the inmates from accepting repatriation was turning the whole procedure of explanations into a farce: these delegations had therefore reiterated their request, without

tabling a formal proposal, that the ringleaders should be isolated and the camp population reorganised by force, if necessary.

The Swiss delegation maintains that the real ringleaders cannot be separated from the other prisoners because they are not known. "Murders have, in fact, taken place in the camps," the report states, "and the victims were probably prisoners wishing to be repatriated." Yet in spite of thorough investigations it had so far been impossible to determine guilt. The report goes on:

"A reorganisation of the camps, which in any event could not be undertaken without bloodshed as was proved at Kojé, would not bring about the required result because this, in fact, is not a case of a majority being ruled by a minority. Moreover, the material prerequisites for enforcing any reorganisation are not available."

For these reasons the Swiss delegation feels that there is "little hope" that the Repatriation Commission will be able to carry out the task assigned to it by the armistice agreement. In order to enable the United Nations and Communist commands to eliminate existing difficulties and to find practical solutions the Repatriation Commission is stated to be drafting a report listing the problems which it has so far been unable to solve.

\* \* \*

A Swiss air guard, the members of which were trained by the R.A.F. at Abingdon, has now been established at Samedan, in the upper Engadin, a rescue station for climbers and skiers. Fredy Wissel, of St. Moritz, landed with his Super Piper aircraft on Diavolezza (9,767 ft.) and flew back to Samedan with a dummy, representing an injured person.

The capital of the Swiss Israel Trade Bank was increased from Swiss francs 2,036,290 to 4,065,000 at the recent meeting in Geneva.

\* \* \*

In Switzerland several new theatres are being opened and enlargements and improvements made to old ones. In Freiburg, the theatre is being modernised, and in Lausanne a Petit Théâtre is to be opened in December. The Lausanne Municipal Theatre has just concluded the first stage of a three-year improvement plan.

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WHOLESALE & SHIPPING

Car imports into Switzerland for the first six months of 1953 increased considerably. Figures rose by 24.7 per cent — from 19,750 to 24,616 units.

This is attributed to a growing demand for small cars (less than 800 k.g.). Imports of this type have gone from 6,448 to 11,800 units — in cash 22.91 to 44.77 millions of Swiss francs.

The increased imports are mainly from Germany, France and Italy; actual figures for each country being as follows:

	Units
Germany ... ..	8,350—11,675
France ... ..	2,667— 3,166
Italy ... ..	7,744— 2,857
	Sw. Frs. (Millions)
Germany ... ..	42.43—56.01
France ... ..	13.35—17.16
Italy ... ..	10.13—15.58

Imports from Great Britain and the United States declined: in terms of vehicles, figures are respectively, 3,516 to 3,314 and 3,095 to 2,435.

In Switzerland the railway from Martigny on the international Simplon line to Sembrancher has now been extended to Le Châble, a distance of four miles. In the past it has been necessary to leave the train at Sembrancher and travel the rest of the journey, through Le Châble to Verbier, by postal coach. The extension has been built largely to assist the giant construction work now in progress farther along the valley, where the Grande Dixence hydro-electric project is being enlarged to serve more power stations in the region. It will help to transport 600,000 tons of

cement needed for the construction of the Mauvosin dam.

The well-known manager of the Beaurivage Palace Hotel, Ouchy-Lausanne, Mr. W. Muller, is retiring after a very brilliant career. His successor will be Mr. E. Schaerer, presently manager of the Baur-au-Lac in Zurich.

An amusing hunting incident occurred near Geneva, where a round-up had been organised by 40 hunters to destroy or capture a herd of deer in a private estate where the deer were causing too much damage. Beaters drove the herd towards a certain gate, where the hunters were holding hands or standing ready to shoot. The animals, when brought to bay, suddenly faced the hunters and charged their line. Some animals jumped over them, others brushed them aside, and one man was knocked down.

The total energy generated by Swiss power stations during the year to 30th September last reached the new record of 12,583 million kWh (against 12,191 million kWh in 1950-51). Thermal generators were responsible for 126 million kWh (against 56 million kWh). Normal consumption, i.e. exclusive of boilers and pumps for feeding the reservoirs, rose from 10,429 million to 11.131 million kWh, or by 6.7 per cent, and total consumption increased from 11,554 million to 12,408 million kWh (4.3 per cent). The potential annual production of stations put into service during 1952 is 165 million kWh, while that of stations under construction is no less than 3,545 million kWh.

The 23rd "Fête des Narcisses" (Montreux) will be held from 9th-20th June, 1954. The Rome Opera Company will again be started for the performances traditionally billed during this period. The pageant, confetti battles and the Venetian Firework Display will take place on 5th and 6th June, 1954.

#### PETITES CHOSES QUI FONT PLAISIR.

"Semaine Suisse" (Service de Presse).

La dernière création de l'industrie horlogère suisse, après une mise au point qui a duré des années, a été exposée au congrès des joailliers américains, où elle a causé une véritable sensation: il s'agit d'une pendule de table actionnée par la lumière

Une voiture en métal léger des CFF a été incorporée, à titre d'essai, dans la composition du train le plus rapide du monde: le Mistral, train de luxe circulant entre Paris et Marseille. Elle s'y est parfaitement comportée, démontrant la qualité du travail suisse et faisant une excellente réclame pour nos chemins de fer.

Dans un article intitulé: "La garde des Alpes", la revue belge "Industrie" écrit que l'Europe occidentale ne peut que tirer des leçons de la volonté de défense si vivace chez chaque citoyen suisse. L'auteur met en évidence le contact personnel du Suisse avec la défense de son pays. On ne saurait former une armée de bataillons de psychopathes apeurés. L'armée suisse montre en outre dans quelles limites un petit pay indépendant doit concevoir son armement.



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