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SWITZERLAND AND THE SOVIET.

Berne, March 29 -- Denying any ideological motive or desire on the part of the Swiss to prolong ill-balanced foreign relations, Marcel Pilet-Golaz, chief of the Diplomatic Department (Foreign Office), in a seventy-minute address before the National Council this morning, swung the Social Democratic party back into line long enough for the withdrawal of a motion for a debate on the subject of immediate renewal of diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union.

The motion had been presented by Ernst Reinhard. It said: "So that it may enjoy correct relations with all states, the Federal Council is invited to do its utmost, in so far as circumstances permit, to reestablish normal relations between Switzerland and Russia."

The motion was reduced to an expression of the party's desire for future consideration by the Federal Council at such time as "circumstances lend themselves to the normalization of relations with the Soviet Union".

The address, largely a recapitulation, surveyed all aspects of the problem since diplomatic and economic ties were cut in 1917, concluded that, however desirable it may eventually be to renew those relations, the delicate balance of Swiss wartime neutrality has a prior claim to consideration.

SUNDRY NEWS FROM SWITZERLAND.

The war has brought a very considerable increase in the number of civil servants employed by our government. The ordinary administrative personnel has risen from about 42,000 to 49,000 while an additional 10,000 have found work in the special departments necessitated by war conditions.

The notion and introduction of Summertime which has never been popular amongst our agricultural population has been definitely discarded by the Federal Council.

Rumours of an early resumption of diplomatic relations with Soviet Russia are still persisting though no tentative announcement from official circles in Berne has so far appeared. The generally well-informed correspondent of the "Manchester Guardian" reports the following on January 26th: "Switzerland is the only neutral State in Europe that has never resumed diplomatic relations with Moscow since the Russian Revolution, although many times during the past twenty years public opinion in favour of doing so has found expression in Parliamentary discussion. The Federal Council's refusal to take action was always supported, however, by a considerable majority in the Swiss Parliament, particularly during the long years of the late Dr. Motta's tenure of the Foreign Ministry. The present demand for establishing diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union, though not universal, is certainly stronger than ever before. There is no doubt, however, that a decision by the Federal Council to reopen diplomatic relations with Russia would be endorsed by the greater part of the population.

The well-known Hotel Rigi-Staffel has been acquired by the town of Lucerne for 142,000 francs and with additional adjoining land under negotiation will be converted into a holiday home for the children of the canton.

The Fribourg government in order to encourage the insurance against damage caused by hail storms is assisting the farming community by contributing up to 30% of the respective premiums.

A meeting of musicians of Geneva convened by the director of the local "conservatoire" appointed a small committee to draw up rules and the constitution of a professional association whose membership would be limited to qualified musicians. This is to restrict the existing practice that practically anybody can style himself a professor of music.

At a conference given at Zurich Prof. Max Huber stated that the expenses of the International Red Cross Committee which consists entirely of Swiss citizens are now Frs. 700,000 per month.

The Federal Council has granted a credit of Frs. 250,000 for the establishment of special university camps to enable the 515 Italian students - all military internees - to continue their studies at the universities of Fribourg, Geneva, Lausanne and Neuchatel.

Unqualified success has followed the experiments made during the last few years in curing whooping cough by taking children so affected on an aerial trip to a 4,000 meter ceiling.

A committee has already been formed under the chairmanship of National Councillor Colonel Eugen Bircher to collect funds for the erection of a monument to keep alive the memory of the present mobilisation, similar to the "Rangiers" after the last war.

Mr. Stampfli, President of the Confederation, expressed himself on the suspension of postal automobile courses on Sundays. He declared that it would simply be impossible to achieve the necessary 20% reduction of courses without this drastic measure. He recalled that in the last war, during a rather long period, not even trains were running on Sundays and that, nevertheless, the world did not come to an end. Therefore, the suspension of postal automobile courses on Sundays must be maintained.

The States Council occupied itself on March 22nd with the postulate Wahlen which demands that the duty for young people to do labor service also after the war should already now be established legally. The debate on this subject gave the impression that the members of the States Council are well aware of the blessings which labor service means for the whole country and also for the young people who have to do it. Nevertheless, the senators did not approve of the enforcement of the obligatory labor service for the postwar period and rejected the postulate with 20 against 14 votes. In the course of the discussion, President Stampfli remarked that the good idea at the basis of the postulate Wahlen has unfortunately come off badly.

On the question of licensing home distilleries, the new head of the Federal Department for Finances, Federal Councillor Nobs, spoke for the first time to the Federal Chambers. From his declarations it can be taken that the consumption of alcohol in Switzerland, which stood at 7 litres per head every year from 1923 to 1932, has gone down to 2.3 litres in the years 1941 and 1942. This happy development is not only due to the increased prices of alcohol but also to the enlightenment of the population and the efforts of the movement of sports.

The negotiations carried on by a Swedish and a Swiss commercial delegation, which started last February, has ended in an agreement which maintains commercial exchange between the two countries on a basis similar to that of 1943.

It is prohibited for all civilian people to go near any airport or places where foreign planes may have to make a forced landing. Acts contrary to this decree are treated as military disobedience and will be punished accordingly.

It is officially announced that the death sentence against the traitor Hans Pfister whose appeal for mercy has been rejected by the chambers on March 30th has been carried out the same evening.

The Federal Veterinary Office has just published interesting statistics on the consumption of meat in Switzerland. The whole consumption of meat in 1943 amounted to 113 million kilograms. This means an annual average of 26 kilograms of meat per capita. In 1942, the corresponding figures were a total consumption of 118 million kilograms or 27.7 kilograms per capita. Only 0.3% of these figures is made up by imported meat, 0.37% by imported cattle slaughtered in Switzerland, and 4.16% by the non-rationed meat, fish, game and poultry.

The democratic party of the Grisons assembled in Congress expressed its gratitude to the cantonal government of the Grisons for having rejected the plan of the construction of a dam and an electrical power plant in the Rheinwald.

The Gurten cable railway in Berne will soon be modernized. Although built 45 years ago last winter, it still transported 45,000 ski enthusiasts to the snow slopes of the Gurten.

From Bologna it is reported that during an air-raid, the Swiss deputy military attache in Italy, Captain Fritz Burckhalter from Langenthal has been killed.

Since mountaineers and their sons are often obliged to prepare their own meals in the chalets of the high alpine region, the authorities of St. Stephan in the upper Simmental in the Canton of Berne have decided to organize cooking classes for boys in the last class of the primary schools. These courses, which are offered by women teachers of home economics, have met with great favor on the part of the pupils.

It is officially announced that the United States Minister in Berne has placed one million dollars at the disposal of the Political Department as a first payment for the reparation of damage caused by the American bombers at Schaffhausen.

The statement made recently by an American journalist following the bombing of Schaffhausen caused a real satisfaction here. This journalist publicly invited his government to put a bit more rubber in its economic policy towards Switzerland. How happy would we be were this voice to fall on receptive ears and were full justice done to our cause.

The Swiss Legation in the British capital has been heavily damaged. During an air raid at the beginning of March, the chancellery has been damaged by fire to such an extent that it will not be possible to have any more offices in it until the end of the war. The dislocation of some of these offices has to be arranged and part of the legation staff has been installed at the residence of the Swiss minister, while others moved to a building which had been purchased recently by the Swiss government for enlargement of the legation after the war.

The Grand Council of Schwyz adopted without opposition the project for the improvement of the financial situation of the "Sudostbahn". The project will cost the canton 600,000 francs. It will be submitted to the people.

For some time past the Swiss Society of Hotel-Keepers has been asking for an adjustment of hotel prices. It made a request with the Department of Public Economy that minimum prices be fixed, but it was refused as it would be contrary to the efforts of the authorities of keeping the cost of living as low as possible.

The Federal Council held a meeting on April 18th. A report was presented on the results of the last federal loan. This loan met with great success. The Confederation had asked for 550 million francs in three installments. Subscribers offered 960 million. The Federal Council decided to accept 945 million, 338 million in obligations at 3.5%, 282 million in obligations at 3.25% and 325 million in bon de caisse at 2.5%. The government found it particularly satisfactory that the long term loan carrying a 3.5% interest was subscribed beyond the amount set. This is proof that confidence prevails in the promises of the Confederation and in the Swiss franc.

The Federal Council further examined reports for 1943 of the various branches of the federal administration and approved the report of the Federal Department of Police and Justice. From this report it can be learned that at the end of 1943, the total number of refugees in Switzerland amounted to 70,493, or 44,000 more than at the beginning of 1943.

The "banking secret" was discussed in the Grisons Grosse Rat during an examination of the existing practice of assessing and collecting taxes. On behalf of the government it was stated that the compulsory disclosure of private accounts or deposits would lower the confidence in the Kantonalbank and would generally endanger the finances of the canton.

Time and necessities have matured plans of which nobody would have dreamed. In the coming spring an attempt will be made to plant rice in the ticinese plain of Magadino, where the climatic and soil conditions are similar to those districts of Upper Italy where rice is grown, yielding 50 cwts. per ha.

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AUCKLAND SOCIAL NEWS.

1ST OF AUGUST CELEBRATION.

The Auckland Social Club takes pleasure in announcing the final arrangements for their social on July 29th 1944, at the Overseas League Rooms, 3rd Floor, Queen's Arcade, Queen Street, Auckland.

The doors open at 7, be early. Anyone who would care to contribute to the program, please give their names and nature of item to Mr. Fred Steyer, upon arrival.

B. HALTMEYER,

Secretary.

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SWISS BROADCASTS.

According to cable information received the twice-weekly broadcasts to Australia and New Zealand transmitted from the Swiss National Broadcasting Station at Schwarzenburg are now:

Wave length: 23.14 m and 25.61 m  
Time: 8 - 9.30 p.m. on Tuesdays and Saturdays.

We should be pleased to hear from members their experiences regarding the reception of these broadcasts.

NEW MEMBERS:

We have pleasure in welcoming the following new members:

Mrs. M. Sattler, Wairak Hospital, Wairaki.

Mr. A.S. Schicker, C/- Mr. B. Truetsch, Hangawhera Road,  
Morrinsville.

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ADVERTISEMENTS.

MR. JOHN BUTLER, Butcher, Tariki:	Varieties of Swiss Sausages.
MR. TONY KOMMINOTH, Wellington:	Visit his new "Lido" Tea Rooms, 118 Courtenay Place, Wellington.
MR. F. GRAEDEL, Orini R.D., Taupiri:	Manufacturing Mountain Chalet Cream Cheese- 4d per cake - plus postage. Orders promptly dealt with.
MR. L. LEUTHARD, New Plymouth:	Visit his "Hygienic Dining Rooms".

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C O R R E S P O N D E N C E.

Please address to the Secretary - Mr. E. Merz, P.O. Box 85, AUCKLAND. C.1.