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by suction from a specially constructed and hermetically sealed tank which was deposited last June in the Thunersee near Därligen; the wheat after four and a-half months' immersion proved to be in excellent condition. This war measure was originally suggested by National Councillor G. Duttweiler.

\* \* \*

Among the stewards of the mined Dutch liner "Simon Bolivar" were four Swiss: Oskar Hoffmann, Bernard Torgler, Otto Kilcher and E. Imhof; they all lost their papers and personal belongings. The first three were wounded and are being cared for in an English hospital.

\* \* \*

Sentences ranging from two to twelve months imprisonment are announced by the Federal Penal Court on five members of the "Volksbund" for conspiring against the security of the state. Two only were present in court, the other three having taken French leave in good time. This is another scurrilous circle directed by the notorious Leonhardt from somewhere across the border.

### THE SWISS ELECTIONS.

(The "Economist" 18.11.39.)

Switzerland is one of the best-governed countries in Europe. Its cantons and communes make up a democracy about which we in England know only too little. Switzerland is a Confederation. Its Federal Parliament consists of a Nation Council, elected by the whole male population, and a Council of States, to which each canton sends two representatives — with several half-cantons each sending one. These two bodies are elected every four years; and since they then join together as a National Assembly to choose the seven Federal Councillors who will govern the country for the next four years, the fact that the latest Swiss national elections took place on the 29th of last month is a matter of no mean interest when democracy and dictatorship are at war just over the Swiss borders.

From the beginning of the war Switzerland has been fully mobilised to defend her neutrality. This

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means, since Swiss women do not vote, that a very large proportion of the electors were on duty on the frontier when the polls were held. Some people in Switzerland were in favour of automatically returning the old Chambers, without any voting, for another four years. It was in fact agreed that this should be done in eight cantons, including Lucerne, Vaud and Ticino, and also in one of the Appenzell half-cantons. In the other Appenzell, in Uri and the Unterwaldens, formal but unopposed voting took place. Out of 187 members of the National Council, 57 of those elected in 1935 were automatically returned or replaced this autumn; they included 21 Radicals, or *Freisinnige* as they are actually called by the German Swiss, 17 Catholics and 11 Social Democrats.

These, Radicals, Catholics and Social Democrats, are the three main political parties. They had 48, 42 and 50 deputies, respectively, in the National Council elected in 1935, and Agrarian or Peasants' Party coming next with 21. The main executive body, the Federal Council of seven members, was then composed of four Radicals, two Catholics and one Agrarian, with the Social Democrats more or less occupying the rôle of official Opposition.

Each of the bigger parties had its young and progressive enthusiasts in 1935, Young Liberals, Young Catholics and Young Peasants, who were ready — especially, for instance, the Young Catholics of Lucerne — to co-operate with the parties of the Left. The Young Peasants, led by Dr. Hans Müller, were strong in the canton of Berne, and succeeded in 1935 in returning an independent group of seven deputies to the National Council. Two other unprecedented events took place in the 1935 voting, mainly in the Canton of Zürich. One was the election of a group of seven deputies representing the *Landesring der Unabhängigen*, the other the election of Dr. Richard Tobler. The seven deputies of the *Landesring* were the followers of a certain Herr Gottfried Duttweiler, a successful pioneer with American business methods who had established the so-called "Migros" big stores, and claimed not only to stand for the interests of consumers, but also for the amateur element in politics. Dr. Tobler, on the other hand, was the leader of the *Nationale Front* which, with many cries for Swiss regeneration, preached anti-Semitism and anti-Marxism and praised both the domestic and foreign policy of Herr Hitler; from the spring of 1934 the

Frontists gained seats, first on the town council of Zürich, then on the cantonal council.

Warning voices were raised at once that Dr. Tobler, perhaps unconsciously, was the tool of the Nazis, who, like the Pau-Germans before them, planned to annex *Gau Schweiz* to Great Germany. It was not until 1936, however, that the Swiss public began to stand on its guard, and not until after the Munich Agreement that it utterly rejected the Frontists as in effect the representatives of Hitler; in the Zürich cantonal elections in March, 1939, they were turned out *en masse*. The Swiss public boycotted German goods, notwithstanding the contrary injunctions of the Federal Government, and the fate of Poland has done nothing to weaken the determined opposition of the Swiss — German-Swiss though most of them are — to the tenets and aggressive practices of National Socialism. Dr. Tobler was condemned as the virtual agent of a foreign tyrant, and, with the national elections of October 29th, 1939, in sight, he bowed to necessity and retired from the political scene. Before the nation went to the polls, it was evident that those who favoured the Nazis no longer counted.

The disappearance of the pro-German *Front* was only to be expected. The actual surprises of the 1939 elections themselves were the success of the two "bad boys" of Swiss politics, Herr Duttweiler and Monsieur Nicole. The *Landesring* not only maintained its five seats in the canton of Zürich and one in St. Gallen; to everyone's astonishment it gained two seats in the town of Basle, a very sensitive spot in view of its position on the frontiers both of Germany and of France. Herr Duttweiler's success is generally attributed to the novelty of both his candidates (one was disqualified in Lucerne on account of the judicial convictions recorded in his dossier) and his propaganda, and his general line of "Away with politicians." Among his supporters are said to be Professor Jung and a number of literary people. He also shows eager enthusiasm for national defence, and recently revised his demand for a thousand Swiss military aeroplanes in favour of a Swiss Maginot line. His pro-consumer attitude, too, was likely to win popularity at a time of steeply rising retail prices. When, in September, the notorious Genevese Socialist, M. Nicole, declared himself in agreement with MM. Stalin and Molotov, the Swiss Socialist Party expelled him. Yet so strongly do French-Swiss Socialists react to the personality of M. Nicole that his group will send two Genevese representatives to the National Council against only one orthodox Social Democrat, while the Socialists of Vaud, where no voting actually took place, provide him with two more supporters.

The general result of the elections is a contraction, as it were, towards the centre. The two Communist deputies elected to the National Council in 1935 have now disappeared together with Dr. Tobler. The Nicole dissident group in the Council consists of four,

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but the Social Democrats have fallen from 50 to 45 in strength, though they gained a seat in Zürich and Aargau. The Young Peasants, intermittent allies of the Socialists, lost one of the seats they won in 1935. The Catholic Conservatives, who stand for old-fashioned federalism, gained two seats; the anti-Socialist Radicals or *Freisinnige* did the same. Thus, since the Agrarians neither lost nor gained, the Government coalition is strengthened; and the Radicals have now replaced the Socialists as the largest party in the National Council — which they were before 1935 — in spite of the big industrial population in towns like Zürich, Winterthur and Basle. And the six National or Liberal Democrats, a group which is strong in French Switzerland and Basle, stand close in sentiment to the Radicals.

Since the voting for the Council of States shows no appreciable change, the elections may be regarded as a display of democratic conservatism and stability and of cautious satisfaction with the Swiss *status quo*. The percentage of electors who voted was up to the average, and a good deal higher than in the wartime elections of 1914. From the Socialist side, both before and after October 29th, the cry of "Khaki elections" was raised, with the reproach that the Government parties were glad to exploit the war situation against the Left. Actually, it may safely be assumed that mobilisation did not appreciably distort public opinion — it only delayed the voting. The long-standing menace from Germany has turned the Swiss people firmly towards feelings of moderation and close national unity. The results of the elections simply reflect this sentiment; and from the international point of view, without any departure from the Confederation's strict neutrality, they spell a demonstration against Berlin and Moscow — and in favour of the West.