

**Zeitschrift:** The Swiss observer : the journal of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK

**Herausgeber:** Federation of Swiss Societies in the United Kingdom

**Band:** - (1940)

**Heft:** 950

**Rubrik:** News at random

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# The Swiss Observer

FOUNDED BY MR. P. F. BOEHRINGER.

**The Official Organ of the Swiss Colony in Great Britain.**

EDITED WITH THE CO-OPERATION OF THE LONDON COLONY.

Telephone: Clerkenwell 2321/2.

Published every Friday at 23, LEONARD ST., E.C.2.

Telegrams: FREPRINCO, LONDON.

VOL. 22—No. 950.

LONDON, 3rd FEBRUARY, 1940.

PRICE 3d.

## PREPAID SUBSCRIPTION RATES.

UNITED KINGDOM AND COLONIES	{ 3 Months (13 issues, post free) - - - -	3/6
	{ 6 " (26 " " " ) - - - -	6/6
SWITZERLAND	{ 6 Months (26 issues, post free) - - - Frs.	7.50
	{ 12 " (52 " " " ) - - - -	14.—

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## NEWS AT RANDOM

Bad weather failed to mar the impressiveness and solemnity of the funeral of the late Federal Councillor Motta which took place yesterday week at Berne. The cortege was preceded by a cavalry troupe and from the immense number of wreaths only those from the Federal Council, the canton Ticino and the commune of Airole were placed on the coffin, the remainder being carried by soldiers. The service in the Dreifaltigkeitskirche was conducted by Monsignore Franziskus von Streng, bishop of Basle, and was followed by a stirring address from Federal President Pilet-Golaz. A small circle amongst whom were the widow and his ten children and the members of the Federal Council witnessed the interment at the Bremgartenfriedhof in a large family grave presented by the Bernese authorities. — During the time of the funeral all the church bells in the canton Ticino were tolling.

The gross takings of the Federal Railways for the year 1939 amount to over 358 million francs against expenses of about 212 million; the surplus of 146 million compares with 39 million for the twelve months to end of December 1938.

By a decree of October 1936 the cantonal authorities of Geneva were empowered to forbid the opening of new shops if in their opinion aesthetic considerations or the existence of a similar shop in the immediate neighbourhood made the new venture undesirable. The validity of this cantonal law has now been tested by an appeal to the Federal Tribunal with the result that it has been declared unconstitutional, and abrogated.

Further particulars have now been published dealing with the evacuation of certain towns in case of emergency but the army command points out that this does not indicate any new danger or a changed outlook; these plans are now completed and it is considered desirable that they should become common knowledge. Some of the instructions are very comprehensive such as that domestic animals must be let loose, gas and water mains turned off and doors of houses left unlocked.

A new law in the canton Ticino makes it compulsory for all medicos, veterinary surgeons, dentists and chemists exercising their profession within the canton to have sat for their degrees at one of the Swiss universities.

\* \* \*

The St. Gall Education authorities have addressed a circular letter to teachers and school officials notifying them that complaints have been received about the bad-mannered and disrespectful behaviour of pupils under their charge.

\* \* \*

In order to facilitate trade relations between the Zones and the Geneva district, pass control offices have been established in Annemasse and Gex; so far applications for visas had to be addressed to Lyons, the nearest Swiss Consulate.

\* \* \*

The second instalment of the military exemption duty (Militärsteuer) for the year 1939 is due on February 1st and must be paid within 30 days of receipt of demand note. The cost of postage and a small fee are added to the original amount where further applications have to be made.

\* \* \*

A reduction of 12% on the amount of the licence is offered to car-owners in Basle on condition that their cars are kept in service for the whole of the twelve months.

\* \* \*

Dr. E. Gagliardi, professor at the University of Zurich, died after a prolonged illness at the age of 58. He is the author of many works dealing with the history of Switzerland and illustrious compatriots of recent generations.

## CITY SWISS CLUB.

Messieurs les membres sont avisés que

**L'ASSEMBLEE MENSUELLE**  
aura lieu Mardi le 6 Février à 6.30 h. précises au  
Restaurant PAGANI 42, Great Portland Street,  
W.1.

**ORDRE DU JOUR:**

Procès-verbal.	Décision concernant les fonds suisses du Club House Fund.
Admissions.	
Démissions.	Divers.

Le souper est facultatif et les participants sont priés de bien vouloir s'inscrire au plus tôt auprès de Monsieur P. F. Boehring, 23, Leonard Street, E.C.2. (Téléphone: Clerkenwell 2321/2).  
Le Comité

The well-known surgeon, Dr. F. de Guervain, died in Berne at the age of 78; he first practised at La-Chaux-de-Fonds but soon moved to the university centres of Basle and Berne where his lectures and many publications earned him international fame. He has been in retirement since 1938.

\* \* \*

A water shortage is reported from districts along the Jura; receding of the springs and the custom of allowing the water to flow during the night to prevent freezing are said to be the causes.

\* \* \*

All the roads leading into Germany are closed during night time, i.e., from 8 p.m. to 6 a.m. Opposite Basle a high barbed-wire barrier is being erected to prevent unauthorised persons (Schwarzgänger) crossing into Switzerland. Local workmen engaged in German factories along the border are, however, allowed unimpeded passage.

\* \* \*

On behalf of the Committee of the International Red Cross, Mr. R. A. Haccius, who has many ties with the London Colony has been surveying prisoners of war and internment camps in this country. He is one of the five delegates charged with this mission in the belligerent countries.

### GIUSEPPE MOTTA.

("Irish Independent," 24.1.40.)

It is not only the man who was five times President of Switzerland, not just the statesman who for more than twenty years was her Minister of Foreign Affairs, whose loss his own country mourns to-day. It is the deeply Catholic leader, the undaunted upholder of the rights of small nations, who has passed away at a time when Europe can ill afford to lose a man of his calibre.

He was born at Airolo, son of the concessionaire of the mail coaches down St. Gotthard. That giant among Alpine giants, is more than the geographical centre of the country, it is the watershed of a Continent. To-day electric express trains thunder through its enormous tunnel, a masterpiece of engineering. No longer have man, horse and mule, to conquer its passage by their own humble devices.

## SWISS BANK CORPORATION,

(A Company limited by Shares incorporated in Switzerland)

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Motta had still known it thus in his youth. At his father's place, those who had just made the descent mingled with those who still had to do the ascent. His character was formed by this medley of men and professions, of races and languages, round the very cradle of his youth. The great international statesman was born in the Swiss village where the North meets the South.

As a boy of nine, young Giuseppe went to Ascona to the College which St. Borromaeo had built three centuries before, between the forests, the mountain slopes and the magic mirror of the upper reaches of the Lago Maggiore, loveliest and greatest of the lakes. Here, in the perfumed silence of this veritable garden of paradise, the poet and the romantic within the realist ripened, influences which could be traced in all his official speeches.

From there he went to the Catholic University of Fribourg, in French-speaking Switzerland, and finally to that greatest of all German seats of learning, Heidelberg, where he graduated as Doctor of Law with the highest distinction. Hence, though Italian was his mother tongue, which he always spoke at home, he could switch over into the German of a Cabinet meeting at Berne or to the French of a League of Nations speech in Geneva, without being so much as aware of it.

As a young man of twenty-four he had returned home. These were his happiest years. With buggy and horse, the young lawyer went round the mountain slopes to look up his clients, and though the Tessiner is known to like litigation even more than law, he managed — it remained his proudest boast — to settle the great majority of his cases by agreement. This sense of balance marked also the budding politician. Hence he was selected to represent his *petite patrie*, the Tessin, in the Government of his *grande patrie*, Switzerland.

His long and honorable career was a worthy epitome of Switzerland's typical democracy. He was a devout Catholic in a country preponderatingly Protestant; Italian-speaking amidst a population mostly of German, partly of French tongue; politically he belonged to a small minority party. The secret of his charm and his success was that the three greatest European civilisations had shaped his personality — Italian grace and humanity, clear French logic, and the methodic German order with which he was accustomed to work.

The world got to know him at the League of Nations. He was President of the First Assembly, and he held another unrivalled record, that of being the only Foreign Minister who has headed his country's delegation, ever since the League was founded.

More than once the universal regard in which he was held by the statesmen of all countries made him their spokesman at many a tense moment. At such times he was the keeper of the League's conscience. Only once did he speak out without that moderation which was so typically his — when, supported only by Holland and Portugal, he warned against admitting Soviet Russia amidst the council of civilised nations. On eternal values, on great principles, this astute diplomat did not know of any bargaining, though no one worked more convincingly for a better European collaboration.