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The Swiss Observer

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NEWS AT RANDOM

A large distinguished gathering filling all the tribunes and galleries of the Palais Fédéral was present on Thursday (February 22nd) when a new Federal Councillor had to be elected. There were two official candidates: Enrico Celio proposed by the liberal-conservative-catholic parties and Guglielmo Canevascini nominated by the socialists; both candidates hail from the Ticino. The first round of voting showed some indication of the respective chances; with an absolute majority of 111 Celio secured 107 and Canevascini 53 votes. The following round terminated the proceedings, Celio scoring 118 votes out of a possible of 222, his opponent retiring with 50 votes. The new Federal Councillor accepted the mandate in moving terms asserting that the sublime example of his predecessor would be his guiding star for all times. Federal Councillor Celio took the customary oath in Italian; early next morning he went to the Bremgarten cemetery and deposited a wreath on the grave of Federal Councillor Motta.

The news of the election was received with demonstrations and jubilations throughout the Ticino; in Bellinzona the local council had a salvo of 21 guns fired.

Judge Albert Comment, from Berne, was elected a member of the Federal Tribunal with 142 votes out of 207.

The Federal Council has decided to issue a national defence loan of 200 million francs to repay the short-dated loans recently raised from Swiss banks to cover the cost of mobilisation. The interest will be $3\frac{1}{2}\%$ and the price of issue 90.40.

An amount of Frs.427,800 is to be spent in Berne on the erection of a central alarm station in connection with air-raid precautions.

The St. Gall schoolmaster, Otto Pfändler, who recently won a seat in the National Council, has tendered his resignation to the local board of Education which definitely refused to grant him the necessary leave of absence. He intends to lodge an appeal with the Federal Tribunal.

The press comments caused by the official confiscation of Dr. Rauschning's book ("Gespräche mit Hitler") bring to light the delicate, and one might almost say the "un-neutral," position into which the Federal Council has been forced in their sincere endeavour to keep the war-wolf from our doors. The book was banned following remonstrations by the German minister on the ground that it contained reflections on the character of a foreign head of state with whom we entertained friendly relations; at about the same time a 24-page leaflet recording the German Chancellor's speech of January 30th and attacking in the vilest of phraseology the English Prime Minister was freely distributed in the northern and central part of our country. Contrary to regulations this propaganda sheet which was accepted for transmission by several post-offices omitted to state the name of the printer or responsible party. Recipients wondered how all this was done with the strict control exercised upon the publication and distribution of this kind of literature. When the matter came to the knowledge of the authorities of Berne the assurance was given that it would be looked into. We are sure that the sound judgment of our people and the in-born resentment against such impositions is our best and only real defence and we will not stress the point that we Swiss in this country think that what is good for the goose is good for the gander. — Similar foreign interference with the normal course of activities are evident in other spheres of public life. Cinema managers are forced to show German news reels and booksellers and kiosks have to exhibit German periodicals and papers which thanks to a clever display and stimulating captions are enjoying increased sales. On the other hand the sale of Swiss papers with very few exceptions is prohibited in Germany.

CITY SWISS CLUB.

Messieurs les membres sont avisés que

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aura lieu Mardi le 5 Mars à 6.30 h. précises au Restaurant PAGANI 42, Great Portland Street, W.1.

ORDRE DU JOUR:

Procès-verbal.

Démissions.

Admissions.

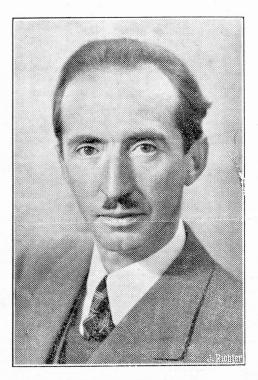
Divers.

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

Le Comité

Heavy losses have been incurred by a Geneva bank and private industrialists through defalcations. A clerk, F. J. Wasesca, said to hail from the Grisons, managed to multiply the amount of bank drafts by occasionally adding a zero and doctoring the written figure. 120 so enriched drafts have so far been discovered and the amount involved is in the neighbourhood of a million francs.

A learner, in charge of a petrol tank lorry, lost control of his vehicle when descending the steep incline leading into Ursy, near Romont. The lorry came to a standstill in a carpenters' shop and the escaping petrol caught fire destroying the whole of the building; the driver perished in the flames.



The new Federal Councillor Dr. Enrico Celio was born on June 19th, 1889, at Ambri. After absolving the local schools and the College at Balerna he completed his early education with the jesuits at Milan and the benedictins at Einsiedeln, at the same time as Federal Councillor Etter. He studied literature and law at the universities of Milan, Florence and Fribourg. Returning home, Dr. Celio was entrusted with the editorship of the catholic-conservative "Popolo e Libertà." In 1924 he was for the first time elected a member of the National Council but in 1932 he had to relinquish his seat on being chosen — in succession to Cattori — president of the Ticinese Government as the cantonal constitution forbids contemporaneous membership of the Federal Parliament.

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A NOTABLE BICENTENARY.

(Little notice was taken in the Swiss press of the two hundredth anniversary of the birth of Dr. H. B. de Saussure. A number of laudatory articles appeared in English papers; the first one reproduced here is from "Nature" (17.2.40) and the description of the ascent of Mont Blanc is taken from "The Manchester Evening News" (19.2.40).

On February 17th occurs the bicentenary of the birth of the celebrated Swiss naturalist and geologist Horace Bénédict de Saussure. He was born at Conches, near Geneva, in which city he passed most of his life and in which he died on January 22nd, 1799. As a boy he was a diligent collector of plants and minerals, being stimulated in his studies by his uncle, the naturalist Charles Bonnet (1720-93). At the age of twenty he made his first tour to the glacier of Chamonix, an excursion regarded generally as dangerous. This was the beginning of his many journeys in the Western Alps and his travels in England, Germany, Sicily and Italy. At the age of twenty-two he was given the chair of physics and philosophy at the Academy of Geneva, and this post he held until 1786 when he resigned and was succeeded by his pupil Marc-Auguste Pictet (1752-1825). his earliest writings was a volume on electricity published in 1766. Year by year he extended his knowledge of the Alps, and in 1787 on August 2nd with Michel Cachet he ascended Mont Blanc. The first Englishman to make the ascent, Mark Beaufoy (1764-1827), reached the summit a week later. In 1788 Saussure spent about a fortnight on Col du Géant and between 1789 and 1792 climbed Monte Rosa, the Breithorn, and other mountains. The upheaval in Switzerland due to the revolutionary movement in France drew him for a time into political life, but in 1794 most of his activities were brought to an end by a stroke of paralysis. From this he never really recovered.

Saussure's great work "Travels in the Alps 1779-1786" was described by von Zittel as a model of clear language, exact observation and cautious reasoning. His "glowing descriptions of the Alpine world removed the prejudice against the 'Montagnes Maudites', and awakened a feeling of enthusiasm for the infinite wonderland of beauty and delight in the higher altitudes of the Alps. Apart from his achievements