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The Swiss Observer

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NEWS AT RANDOM

Federal

The Swiss Government announced that it has agreed in principle to represent the United States interests in Bulgaria after the break in diplomatic relations between Washington and Sofia.

* * *

The recent crisis in Egyptian and Swiss relations over the alleged publication in Swiss papers of articles on King Farouk, has been amicably settled.

* * *

Monsieur Antonio Ferro, has presented his credentials as Minister Plenipotentiary and Envoy Extraordinary of the Republic of Portugal to Monsieur M. Petitpierre, President of the Swiss Confederation.

The newly appointed Minister was for a number of years a member of the Salazar Government (Propaganda).

Cantonal

Mr. Charles J. Reed has been appointed American Consul General in Zurich.

A native of Ohio, Mr. Reed joined the American Foreign Service in 1928. His service includes posts in the Far East, in Yugoslavia and in Spain.

[A.T.S.]

* * *

Mr. Cosmus Schindler-Dorer, for many years President of the Board of the "Spinnerei Murg A.G.", has celebrated his 90th birthday anniversary in Zurich. Mr. Schindler, who hails from Ennenda (Ct. Glarus), has been at the head of this concern for exactly fifty years. [A.T.S.]

* * *

During January, 1950, 378 traffic accidents occurred in the canton of Zurich. 144 people were injured of whom seven received fatal injuries. [A.T.S.]

* * *

Mr. Fritz Weber-Lehnert, senior partner of the "Brauerei Wädenswil", has celebrated his 80th birthday anniversary. The "Jubilar" was from 1909-1919, President of the "Schweiz. Bierbrauerverein" and from 1919-1947, President of the "Zürcher Dampfboot Gesellschaft." [A.T.S.]

Mr. Theodor Gut, a former National-Councillor, and President of the Board of the "Buckdruckerei Stäfa, A.G.", has celebrated his 60th birthday anniversary in Stäfa. He was for many years Editor-in-Chief of the "Zürichsee Zeitung". Mr. Gut was elected a Member of Parliament in 1935 (National-Council) from which he retired in 1946. [A.T.S.]

* * *

The late Mr. Fritz Schmuziger, President of the firm of Landis & Gyr in Zug, has left an amount of 99,000.—frs. to various charitable institutions.

[A.T.S.]

* * *

Professor, Dr. Karl Weber has celebrated his 70th birthday anniversary in Berne.

Professor Weber was born in February 23rd in Liestal. He concluded his studies with the degree of doctor of Philosophy, after which he occupied posts as a teacher in Binningen and Basle.

In 1909 he received an appointment on the Editorial Staff of the "Basellandschaftlichen Zeitung" in Liestal, and eleven years afterwards (1920) entered the "Basler Nachrichten" as "Inland Redaktor," which post he occupied for 10 years. In 1930 he was appointed "Bundesstadt Redaktor" of the "Neuen Zürcher Zeitung" in succession to Dr. Welti.

From 1917-1920 Dr. Weber was a member of the "Landrat" of the canton of Basle-County, and in 1920/1921, he presided over the Swiss Press Association which made him an honorary member in 1933 for the work he had performed.

Since 1928, and again from 1942, Dr. Weber has been a lecturer at the Universities of Zurich and Berne respectively. In 1928 he organised the Swiss Pavilion PRESSA at the Exhibition in Cologne, in 1939 the Press pavilion at the "Landesausstellung" in Zurich, and in 1948 the Swiss Press Pavilion at the Press Exhibition in Munich.

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Professor Weber is the author of various "Festspiele," amongst them "Mutterland" of the Federal Singing Competition, 1935, in Basle, and various books dealing with historical subjects.

[A.T.S.]

* * *

M. Paul Vonderweid, "Domherr" of the St. Nicolas cathedral in Fribourg, has celebrated his 25th jubilee as a priest there. [A.T.S.]

* * *

The Board of the "Leih & Sparkasse" in Uznach (Ct. St. Gall) has given various amounts, totalling 80,000.—frs. towards the building of schools and "Kindergarten." [A.T.S.]

* * *

The book-keeper of the "Konservenfabrik", St. Gall, has been arrested for embezzlement of 250,000.—frs. [A.T.S.]

* * *

Mr. Albrecht Siegfried, head of the "Chemischen Fabrik, A.G. vorm. B. Siegfried", Zofingen (Ct. Aargau), has celebrated his 70th birthday anniversary.

[A.T.S.]

* * *

Mr. Brenno Galli (Liberal), has been nominated President of the Government of the canton of Ticino, and Mr. Lepori (Conservative), its Vice-President.

[A.T.S.]

* * *

M. Claude Payot, a former Journalist and since 1947 Head of the Press section of the "Verkehrsverein" of the town of Lausanne, has been elected Director of the same institution in Vevey, in succession to M. Marc Lamunière. [A.T.S.]

Army

M. Kobelt, chief of the Federal Military Department, dealt, in a statement, with various questions concerning the defence of Switzerland. He said that national defence must be total. The system of the national redoubt in the Alpine regions was not to be abandoned, but to be effective defence must be flexible and mobile, and the army must be ready to fight along the frontiers and in the low country, and hold these areas as long as possible before retiring to the redoubt, which covered about half the country. This meant that the army must be equipped with the most modern and effective armaments; and anti-tank and anti-aircraft defences must at once be reinforced.

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The seven-year rearmament plan decided upon in 1947 had been abandoned and replaced by a five-year plan. One difficulty was that because of the low birth-rate in the thirties the army would be short of 50,000 men; a peak would be reached in 1960-61, when the shortage was likely to be about 120,000 men. This made it necessary to increase the mechanization of the army and the use of automatic weapons. Expenditure on national defence in 1950 was fixed at 500m. francs, but M. Kobelt declared that a country could not decide to defend itself and at the same time refuse to make the necessary financial effort. The question was therefore whether the Swiss people were ready to make the necessary sacrifices for defending their neutrality and independence.

M. Kobelt's statement is a clear indication that the Government will before long ask the Swiss to agree to making a new financial effort to bring national defence up-to-date.

* * *

Two munition workers were killed and three injured when an experimental three-inch shell exploded at the Swiss Federal Armaments Centre in Thun.

* * *

A military court sitting at Berne sentenced to 20 years' imprisonment, degradation, and banishment from the army a non-commissioned officer named Willy Gerber, who, from 1939 to 1949, supplied to foreign Powers — including France, Britain, the United States, Sweden, Yugoslavia, and Turkey — secrets and plans concerning national defence. The court also seized a sum of about £2,500 which Gerber had received for his information.

Economics

Swiss banks are putting at the disposal of the World Bank a credit of about 30 million francs following negotiations in which the Bank for International Settlements also participated.

The credit is to be used to pay for Swiss machinery received by countries which have obtained World Bank loans for reconstruction purposes.

* * *

For the fourth week in succession a loss in the gold stocks of the Swiss National Bank is recorded in the weekly return.

During the week to February 23rd the drop amounted to Frs.11m., bringing the gold reserve down to Frs.6,223m.

Although no official explanation is given for this new decline, it is understood that it has been caused by the transfer of gold to a foreign central bank in connection with the granting of a credit by Swiss private banks.

Foreign exchange holdings during the period show a slight decline by Frs.0.3m. to Frs.263m. Notes in circulation advanced by Frs.34.7m. to Frs.4,143m., while other obligations at sight decreased by Frs.43m. to Frs.2,099m.

* * *

The Swiss-Russian trade agreement signed in March 1948, under which Switzerland was to import Russian goods to the value of 120 million Swiss francs and export goods to the value of 75 million Swiss francs during the year commencing April 1st, 1948, has not come up to expectations. During the two years 1948 and 1949 Switzerland bought Russian goods to the value of 33 million Swiss francs, i.e. in 24 months Switzerland succeeded in purchasing about 25 per cent. of the value of goods to be imported in 12 months under the agreement. Swiss exports amounted to 57.1 million Swiss francs during the two-year period, also well below the figure fixed for a twelve-months' period.

* * *

As Sweden has not been able to maintain her exports to Switzerland at the level of 9.2 million crowns' worth a month foreseen under the current agreement, and is very short of Swiss francs, trade between the two countries is deadlocked.

Swedish officials say Sweden's failure to maintain her exports is due to competition from other countries with lower prices. Three solutions have been mooted in Stockholm.

1. Using Marshall funds for so-called off-shore purchases in Switzerland. The E.C.A. administration in Paris has declared itself ready to discuss this suggestion.

2. A loan from Switzerland or permission to increase the swing fund. The Swiss have shown no enthusiasm for this and have suggested compensation deals instead. Sweden, however, is opposed to compensation deals in principle.

3. Permission from Great Britain to use Sweden's Sterling holdings for purchases in Switzerland. Little hope is held in Stockholm that Britain would agree.

* * *

It is learned that the loan Holland will shortly raise of Swiss Frs.50 millions is a twelve-year issue. The issue price of the bonds is to be 98 and the rate of interest 4 per cent.

These terms are extremely attractive considering that the current rate of interest for new Swiss loans is 3 per cent. and the issue price 100 and even 101 plus Federal tax. The proposed Dutch loan, it is understood, will be free from any taxes, present or future.

In connection with the raising of the funds in Switzerland, Holland will drop her claim for the return of looted gold which has allegedly found its way into Switzerland.

* * *

Sterling balances held by Switzerland at the end of December, 1949, amounted to Frs.130.8m., against Frs.138.2m. a month previously, according to official figures just published.

The credit ceiling opened by this country under the Anglo-Swiss payments Agreement of 1946 being £15m. or Frs.184m. at the present rate of exchange, Britain had an open credit of Frs.53.2m. at the beginning of this year, rendering the transfer of gold unnecessary.

* * *

A Swiss Frs.24m. credit it being raised by the Canton of Grisons at the present customary interest rate of 3 per cent. for the purpose of prematurely con-

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Advantage is being taken of the present difficulties in this country to invest money remuneratively as the issue price is fixed above par — 101 per cent. plus 0.6 per cent. Federal tax.

The following deaths are reported from Switzerland:—

Mlle. Marie Keiser, founder and head for 43 years of the Association of catholic teachers in Switzerland, in Zug, at the age of 90.

Erwin Broglin-Ruepp, judge and for many years a member of the "Landrat" of the canton of Aargau, in Liestal.

Dominican Pater, Gallus Manser, from 1901-1945, Professor of Theology at the University of Fribourg, at the age of 84.

J. H. Bolli, Builder, and for many years a member of the Grand Council of the canton of Lucerne, in Orselina, aged 77.

François Bouvier, a former member of the Grand Council of the canton of Neuchâtel, in Neuchâtel, at the age of 63.

Mlle. Madeleine Otth, a well-known sculptor, in Lausanne.

Frédéric Rouge, a noted painter in Ollon (Ct. Vaud), aged 83. The deceased was born in Aigle and studied in Basle, Florence and Paris. He lived in Aigle for over 50 years. Amongst his best known paintings are "Retour du bûcheron", "Braconnier" and "Agonie dans les Alpes."

Charles Roches, formerly "Feldpostchef" of the Swiss army, in Muri, near Berne, at the age of 77.

Dr. Eduard Geiser, District judge in Zurich, aged 69. The deceased had been since 1919, a member of the "Zürcher Tonhalle Gesellschaft" and President of the Board of the "Zürcher Konservatorium" from 1922-1935. [A.T.S.]

* * *

The following couple have celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary in Switzerland: Mr. & Mrs. Jean Gisiger in St. Imier. [A.T.S.]

—:o:—

An International Competition for Musical Performers is to be held in Geneva from September 25th to October 8th at the Conservatory of Music, whence complete details (in English) may be obtained.

* * *

The Swiss firm, Holzverzuckerungs A.G. of Ems (Graubünden), has confirmed reports circulating that

the company has started the production of a nylon-like textile fibre called "Grilon." The company states that tests so far have been promising and the necessary plant for the production of the required chemical elements is being built. The company also announces that the Swiss textile machinery industry has been given an opportunity to develop the necessary processing machinery.

"Grilon," the company states, is competitive on international markets as far as both quality and cost are concerned. The company hopes to commence production in 1951.

* * *

The Papal Swiss Guard, for the first time for many years, have now been allowed to have rifle practice. Although armed with the most modern rifles, under a Papal injunction no shot may be fired within the boundaries of the Vatican City.

The Commander of the Swiss Guard, Baron de Pfyffer d'Altishofen, recently obtained permission from the Italian Government for the use of a military parade ground for target practice.

* * *

Monsignor Franciskus von Streng, Bishop of Basle and Lugano, has been appointed assistant to the pontifical throne. This nomination permits him to take his place by the college of cardinals next to the Pope during religious ceremonies.

* * *

The Lucerne International Music Festival will be held from August 9 to 27. Conductors will include Furtwangler, Ansermet and Kubelik.

* * *

Two Swiss scientists, Colonel Rene Gouzy and M. Henri du Faux, will shortly undertake a trip through the Kalahari and will make a special study of its irrigation possibilities. They have been sent out by the Scientific Society of Geneva and the Swiss Ethnographical Museum. They will also try to contact Bushmen and Ovambos in the Kalahari for the purpose of anthropological and ethnographical study.

Colonel Gouzy and M. du Faux have already travelled widely together, and were the first white men to cross the French territory of Dahomey from the Niger to the Guinea Coast.

They have completed the first part of their present expedition, which was a visit to Basutoland to study rock paintings and the tribal life of the Basutos.

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