

# Home news

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# The Swiss Observer

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## HOME NEWS

During consideration in the National Council of the policy of the Federal Council our diplomatic representations abroad were subjected to some criticism for the alleged lack of understanding and persistency in dealing with questions of economic importance. In his reply, President Motta expressed himself against the system of commercial attachés at legations, and as regards consulates would continue to preserve the honorary character for future appointments.

Though the Federal Council has accepted a motion (Savoy) asking for measures to combat the spread of Bolshevism in Switzerland, the Commission of the National Council recommends that this motion be given no further consideration.

The Swiss claim to the military neutrality of Upper Savoy has now been definitely renounced, the National Council agreeing with the respective article in the treaty of Versailles by 94 to 5 votes, and the States Council by 29 to 3.

In the elections for 29 members of the two councils constituting the "Oberbürgererrat" of Lucerne, only three were successful, all the remainder failing to secure the necessary absolute majority.

The electors of the city of Zurich passed, during the last week-end, with large majorities four uncontested financial proposals, authorising the expenditure of nearly 3½ million francs for the construction of small tenements, a new tramway shed and road improvement; the annual subsidy to the "Tonhalle" society has also been increased from Frs. 20,000 to Frs. 55,000.

In the new bill regulating the terms of employment of municipal workers now under consideration by the Zurich Stadtrat, an article was agreed to legalising a partial stoppage of the tramway service on the 1st of May (Labour Day).

Through discounting forged bills of exchange, most of the local banks in La Chaux-de-Fonds have suffered considerable losses, said to exceed Frs. 400,000. The documents are said to have been uttered by Edmond Meyer, a local speculator in real estate and former proprietor of the "Astoria" and "Splendid" tea-rooms. He has mysteriously disappeared after a supposed boating trip on the Doubs, where an oar and his hat were subsequently discovered floating. A preliminary examination of his accounts has disclosed unsecured liabilities of nearly a million francs. Later news states that his body has now been recovered from the reeds on the French bank of the Doubs.

It is stated that the number of telephone subscribers in Switzerland exceeds 165,000, i.e., one subscriber for every 24 inhabitants.

Legacies to the amount of Frs. 600,000 in favour of benevolent and philanthropic institutions have been made by the will of Frau Marie Lehmann-Seiler, of Langenthal.

Dr. Joh. Büttikofer, who spent most of his life in Holland and its colonies, and who for many years was director of the zoological and botanical gardens at Rotterdam, has died in Berne at the age of 77.

The cantonal educational establishment at Hinwil was the scene of a serious fire, when part of the agricultural annexe became a prey to the flames; the damage is estimated at between Frs. 120,000 and 140,000.

Following a sudden application of the brakes to avoid a head-on collision, a pillion rider, Mlle. Marie Chevallier, from Lausanne, was thrown off her seat and suffered fatal injuries.

Eighteen workmen had a miraculous escape when the motor coach in which they were being taken to the iron and steel works at Dornach jumped the road and fell down a steep incline into the swamps at Secwen (Solothurn); after turning a complete somersault it became embedded in the marsh. All the workers were able to crawl out before the position became hopeless, though most of them suffered from fractures and contusions. The accident is supposed to be due to negligence on the part of the driver.

## EXTRACTS FROM SWISS PAPERS.

**Anderthalb Millionen Kirschbäume.** — Nach dem Schweizerischen Bauernsekretariat gibt es im Schweizerland rund anderthalb Millionen tragfähige Kirschbäume. Sie reifen zusammen im Durchschnitt 20-30 Millionen Kilo Kirschen aus. Es trifft somit auf den Kopf der Bevölkerung rund 7 Kilo Kirschen im Jahr. Es ist dies ein Durchschnittsertrag, der weit zurück bleibt hinter dem Heisshung der unseres Jungvolks nach der frischen, saftigen, mündenden Frucht des Kirschbaumes. Bei rationeller Versorgung des einheimischen Marktes könnte also zweifelsohne der weitaus grösste Teil der schweizerischen Kirschen-ernte ohne Zuhilfenahme des Brennfasses verbraucht werden. Die Kirsche verdient auch die bessere Ausnützung voll und ganz; denn es gibt kaum etwas Gesünderes als diese erste Baumfrucht des Jahres. Die Kirsche gehört ferner auch zu unsern nahrhaftesten Früchten: ihr Fleisch enthält weniger Wasser als die Milch und dem Gewicht nach fast ebenso viele Nährstoffe. Sie zeichnet sich überdies durch ihre leichte Verdaulichkeit aus. Gehört sie also vor allem auf den Tisch, sobald die Sonne sie am Baume ausgereift hat, so kann man sie aber nicht minder gut auch in der Küche auf die mannigfaltigste Weise verwenden: als Kompott, als rote Grütze, sterilisiert, ferner als Kirschen-saft und als köstliche Konfitüre. Das Dörren von Kirschen, wie es bei unsern Grossvätern in Ehren stand, ist heute vom finanziellen Standpunkte aus nicht mehr lohnend. Vom volksgesundheitlichen Standpunkt aus aber entschieden abzulehnen ist die Verwertung gesunder und guter Kirschen zum Brennen.

Nat. Zeitung.

## NOTES AND GLEANINGS.

There is in this week's gleanings a multitude of articles dealing with financial and railway matters. One of the most instructive has appeared in the Trade Supplement of the *Times* (June 18th) under the title "Foreign Investments," and is contributed by our friend Dr. P. de Wolfi, who gives chapter and verse for the prosperous year Swiss banking has enjoyed: the total deposits of the eight principal banks in Switzerland to the end of last year show an increase of about 450 million francs, as compared with the preceding period.

### Swiss Railways.

Interesting reading is offered by the annual trade report of the British Minister in Berne (issued by H.M. Stationery Office, price 1s. 6d.) Among the items dealt with, considerable space is devoted to the working and results of the Swiss Federal Railways system. I reprint the remarks, which bear out the serious effect which private motor transport has had on the gross takings:—

The growing competition of road transport has at last moved the Federal Railways to take measures to cope with it, although it is feared that these measures are not likely to enable the railways to recover more than a small part of the ground lost during the last two or three years. The loss of freight traffic alone was placed, unofficially, at the end of 1925, at about 10 per cent., or nearly one-fifth of the total railway earnings; the loss on passenger traffic, although not quite so great, is equally alarming.

In these circumstances the Federal Railways decided to use motor transport themselves, and for this purpose they floated, in July, 1926, a joint-stock company, styled Suisse Express, S.A. (*Sespa*), with a share capital of frs. 1 million. The nominal object of this company is to support all movements tending to improve passenger and goods transport in Switzerland, but it is mainly intended to recover lost traffic for the railways by acting as a feeder to the latter, and to pay its way by the direct carriage of goods where the railways cannot compete. The joint-stock company was adopted in preference to any other form of undertaking as a means of overcoming the difficulties often associated with a State enterprise, such as lack of initiative, too large a staff, excessive remuneration of the latter, etc., and also to enable the railways to transfer some of their unprofitable investments to the more remunerative lorry.

The Federal Railways retained control by their holdings and representation on the board, the remaining shareholders being the auxiliary railways, transportation companies, etc. The *Sespa* was due to start its operations on February 1st, 1927; it will work partly in conjunction with existing private firms of carriers. It is credited with the intention of reducing present

## ANNIVERSARIES OF SWISS EVENTS.

- July 4th, 1830.—Constitutional Acts of the Ticino.
- July 5th, 1887.—Thirty-seven houses fall into the sea at Zug.
- July 8th, 1778.—Great inundations at Kussnacht.
- July 9th, 1386.—Battle of Sempach. Swiss gained a decisive victory, and then prepared an asylum for Republican ideas in the midst of monarchical and feudal Europe.

carrier rates by 20 per cent., the resulting decrease in receipts to be borne by the *Sespa* and private firms of carriers in the proportion of 60 and 40 per cent. respectively.

A symptomatic development in the attitude of the Federal Railways towards road transport is shown by the fact that in the summer of 1926 they proposed to institute a service of lorries and cars instead of building the branch line planned along the thinly populated Surb Valley (cantons of Zurich and Aargau), as they were convinced that under present circumstances such a line would never pay. The proposals of the Federal Railways, which also provided for a substantial contribution for road upkeep, were, however, opposed by the inhabitants of that valley, who, with the support of local municipal and cantonal authorities, insist on their railway, although motor transport would offer better service. A final decision is still pending. The success of the motor vehicle against the railway is the more remarkable in a country in which many roads are closed for several weeks of the year and others rendered difficult by snow, and in which no private motor bus company has any chance of getting a permit to run a passenger service in competition with the railways or the post office.

As a set-off the following from the *Electrical Review* (June 17th) supplies illuminating data as to the great advantages derived by the adoption of electricity as driving power:—

The first of a new type of electric locomotive for the Swiss Federal Railways has recently been completed at the works of the Brown-Boveri Co., at Munchenstein. It is one of sixteen which are being built by the firm in conjunction with the Winterthur Locomotive and Engineering Works. The engine, which is known as the 2-D-1 type, comprises a four-wheel bogie at the front, eight centrally-located wheels, each pair being independently driven by electric motors of a total capacity of 3,100 h.p., and a single pair of wheels at the rear. On its trials on the line between Berne and Munsingen a maximum speed of over 73 m.p.h. is stated to have been attained.

Some interesting figures have been issued by the directors of the Rathschen railway, whose system is about 173 miles in length, and which has been electrified since 1922. It is stated that the adoption of electric traction has enabled a reduction of 52 per cent. to be made in the engineering staff at the workshops for the maintenance of the electric locomotives, while there has been a reduction of 48 per cent. in the track maintenance department and of 43.5 per cent. in the service personnel. As compared with steam traction it is estimated that 20,000 tons of coal are being saved each year, and that despite a considerable increase in the price of coal, electric traction is still proving more economical than steam.

### The Playground of Europe.

There is scarcely an English paper which does not at regular intervals extol the attractions of Switzerland as a holiday resort, but the following from the *Nation and Athenaeum* (June 8th) is somewhat off the beaten track, which is my excuse for reproducing it in full:—

Is it not absurd, I sometimes ask myself, to recommend anyone to go anywhere? For it all depends on what you're "after," what it is you really want when you go abroad. The best one can do in describing any country is to state as definitely as possible both what it provides and what it does not provide. Then at least there can be no deception. Then the intending traveller can look into his heart, and, having ascertained what he is after, can choose his destination accordingly.

Are you interested, for instance, in classical architecture and old gardens? Then obviously