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IT HAPPENED IN THE CANTONS OF FRIBOURG AND NEUCHÂTEL

FRIBOURG

In 1818, a Fribourgeois from the Gruyère signed an agreement with King John VI of Portugal, according to which the town of Nova Friburga was founded in Brazil. The present Titular Bishop Mgr. José Thurler from Sao Paulo was born there. In September, he paid a visit to Fribourg and was welcomed by the Council of State.

In November, the Conservative Gustave Rolin from Estavayer-le-Lac was elected President of the Fribourg Parliament for the new term of office. The President of the Council of State for 1966 is the Radical Councillor Emil Zehnder. The retiring President of the Grand Council, Albert Von Lanthen, was elected President of the Cantonal Tribunal. Councillor of States Paul Torche has announced his retirement from the Government by the end of March.

The budget for 1966 estimates a deficit of 3.91 million francs (revenue expected nearly 127 mio). Five million francs have been granted for work in financially weak Communes, and a second credit will cover buildings for civil defence. Since 1958, 777 flats at specially low rents have been built. Credits have been granted for a further 1,000 to be erected during the next five years.

Twenty million francs will be spent on road construction and ten million on ground amelioration. Secondary-school buildings alone will cost nine million francs.

Fribourg University had 2,676 students during the summer term, nearly 7½% more than in the previous year. All Swiss Cantons and 71 countries from all five continents were represented. The students are clamouring for more digs and a students' home. On 10th January, the "Mensa" was officially opened. It is a self-service restaurant which can produce 700-800 meals an hour. It has 332 seats, and there are 70-80 seats in the cafeteria.

There was some polemic in the summer when it was announced that the classes for German teachers at the training college should be reduced. Incidentally, as last Canton in the Confederation, Fribourg has now also dropped the custom of paying primary teachers partly in kind.

In October, the Third Comptoir was held in Fribourg, a fair where the development of Fribourg industry was shown. A book "Fribourg, une Economie en Expansion" (Charles Chammartin, Gaston Gaudard and Bernard Schneider) was published at the same time by the European Research Centre in Lausanne. There are still 1,320 people employed in industrial work in their own homes. Unemployment has practically disappeared, and for the first time since 1930, no benefits were paid out in 1964.

The Fribourg State wines reached a satisfactory standard, both in quality and amount, although 50% of the vines had been destroyed by hail. There was a demonstration by Fribourg farmers at Vuisternens devant Romont in the autumn. They complained about the progressive deterioration in the Canton's agriculture. They protested against low produce prices and high taxes and drew the Federal Council's attention to the present serious state. In November, the Fribourg fishermen asked in a resolution that no more gravel pits should be allowed on river banks and lakes, as they considerably increased water pollution which endangers not only fish but also human health. Several thousand fish perished in the artificial Schiffenensee,

because the water has not been kept at the promised level by the electricity works.

After four bad fires in various parts of the Canton in spring and summer, including the Murten Orphanage, three more took place during October (Schmitten, Villarepos and Matran), not counting the one started by a man at Tentlingen after he had killed his brother and before he committed suicide.

The General Council (Legislative) of Fribourg town was called to an extraordinary meeting in January in order to regularise a proposal that three of the nine Commune Councillors (Executive) should be in office full-time. This is a much-needed provisional settlement until a new Cantonal Commune Law will make permanent arrangements. Fribourg has introduced a new tax to be paid by visitors, students, etc., spending one or more nights in the town.

The new Fribourg telephone manager is Georges Felder from Escholz matt. Jean Piccand, organist at the Cathedral St. Nicolas, is the new director of the Conservatoire in succession to Aloys Fornerod.

President Grégoire Kayibanda of Rwanda honoured the Gruyère village of Albeuve with his visit in November. Representatives of the "Raiffaisen-Kassen" explained the Swiss savings system to the President.

Murten now has a "blue zone" for limited free parking like many other towns in Switzerland. There is a new harbour for small boats, and a waste water plant is being constructed, together with six other Communes (cost of about 11 million francs).

On the banks of the Broye canal, near Sugiez, an interesting archaeological find has been made during the "Jura Waters Correction" work. Six pillars have come to light believed to have supported a bridge in Roman times. The pillars are constructed from 125 oak trunks. Subterranean cheese stores were opened in December near the Commune of Ursy (Romont). They can hold 16,000 cheeses and belong to Mifroma A.G., a subsidiary of "Migros".

NEUCHÂTEL

At the end of December, the population of the Canton of Neuchâtel reached the 160,000 mark for the first time, over 2,000 more than in the previous year. Of the 160,973, the district of Neuchâtel has 47,643, La Chaux-de-Fonds 43,669, Boudry 25,741, Le Locle 19,469, Val-de-Travers 14,592 and Val-de-Ruz 9,859 inhabitants. Only the Val-de-Travers district showed a slight decrease of 55. Tourist trade has also shown a marked increase, and several new hotels have been opened. Within ten years, the number of nights spent in the Canton by French tourists has gone up from 25,000 to 70,000.

On 5th December, the electorate (26%) accepted the proposals for additional payments to the Old Age and Dependents' Insurance (AHV) by an overwhelming majority. The budget for 1966 estimates a deficit of 3½ million francs. The previous year, too, a deficit had been foreseen and a surplus of 5 mio was realised.

"The Romands Politicians out to catch Women" was the heading of an article in the "Tagesanzeiger" (Zurich) last April. The Neuchâtel Social Democrats had put up a woman candidate for the elections to the Council of States in the person of Councillor Raymonde Schweizer from La

Chaux-de-Fonds. With it they also hoped to induce women to go to the poll. In two elections in April and May (the first time some irregularities in the counting had been discovered, and the elections for the Cantonal Government had to be held again) gave the Socialists 42 seats (increase of 2), the Radicals 31 (loss of 3), the Liberals 22 (loss of 2), the National Progressives 10 (loss of 1) and the Communists 10 seats (increase of 4, 3 of which in La Chaux-de-Fonds). Among the M.P.'s are eight women, 4 Socialists, 3 Liberals and one Communist. When the Parliament assembled, the election of the two Councillors of States took place. The two former representatives were re-elected, the Radical J.-L. Barrelet and the Liberal Blaise Clerc, each with 63 votes. Madame Schweizer, though not successful, nevertheless received the remarkable number of 52 votes. The new Government now has two Socialists, two Radicals and a Liberal member.

Incidentally, the former title of Commune President for all Neuchâtel Communes has now been replaced by that of Mayor.

The new director of the cantonal grammar school is Herbert Suter. In November, a Society for Sociology and Political Science was founded.

Also in November, a credit for 47 million francs for construction and improvement of cantonal roads was asked for the fifth stage in the road construction programme. The Zihl bridge on the boundaries of Berne and Neuchâtel is to be replaced. Some 20 mio francs will be required for main water supplies. Flats at reduced rents are to be built in several Communes with the help of the Canton.

The part known as "L'entre-deux-lacs" in the Eastern part of the Canton is getting more and more industrialised. An oil refinery (at Cressier) and a cement works are being built. The refinery is one of four being built in Switzerland with two pipelines from the Mediterranean.

The blue char, "Bondelle", the excellent fish for which the Lake of Neuchâtel used to be famous, is slowly disappearing from the lake, and measures have been taken to increase the species again. The white wine harvest for 1965 was lower by nearly 15,000 hl. than that in the previous year. The *Fête des Vendanges* in October was a great success just the same, with 80,000 visitors applauding the picturesque procession.

Of the 36,488 inhabitants of the town of **Neuchâtel**, 5,491 are foreigners. The President for the new term of office of the General Council, is the Liberal Jean Charbonnier. The Council accepted a proposal to build flats at reduced rents for people in need. The plan to erect a "Palais des Manifestations" has been dropped as the project would have cost at least 15 million francs. New avenues are being explored. The high cost for exhibition halls induced some Neuchâtel artists to hire a boat for a floating exhibition of their works. One of the most modern buildings in Switzerland was opened in Neuchâtel in November; it belongs to the important firm of dealers in pharmaceutical products, Galenica s.a. The town now has an automatic Telex centre. A foundation has been started with the aim of procuring workshops, machines and tools for invalids. The new head of Neuchâtel University is Prof. Claude Favarger.

The small Commune of **Le Cerneux-Péquignot** celebrated the 150th anniversary of belonging to the Confederation.

La **Chaux-de-Fonds** now has 42,442 inhabitants, 521 more than a year ago. Of the 7,614 resident foreigners, 4,809 are Italians, 1,115 Spaniards and 979 Frenchmen.

1965 was a year of important jubilees. The watchmakers' college celebrated its centenary. Over 4,000 watch engineers and technicians have so far been trained at the college. For the special occasion, the watch manufacturers of the town presented a laboratory for electric and electronic manipulations. The celebrations took place at the same time as the French Weeks. Also 100 years old was the *Club Jurassien Neuchâtelois*; as befitted a nature lovers' organisation, the meeting took place in Switzerland's oldest nature reserve on Creux du Van. The *Ecole Supérieure de Commerce* celebrated its 75th anniversary in October. A month later, the Salvation Army could look back on the same span of time.

A school centre is being built in La Chaux-de-Fonds, the *Maison Populaire* will be renovated, and a cantonal centre for invalids is to be built there. The first collective electronic installation in Western Switzerland is in operation in the watchmaking centre of the Canton of Neuchâtel, and in October, a new large factory of the Portescap A.G. was opened. This important undertaking employs 1,200 workers in La Chaux-de-Fonds alone. Also in October, the administration building of the town, dating back to 1890, was gutted by fire.

Air traffic in the Neuchâtel mountains is on the increase. The airport at **Les Eplatures** is ideally situated at an altitude of 1,000 m. and for 350 days of the year completely free from fog. It also boasts excellent snow-clearing equipment. The *Club Jurassien de Fleurier* celebrated its centenary in summer. For the first time, a Socialist woman is in the Commune Council of this Val-de-Travers Commune.

Two jubilees took place at **Le Locle**: the 150th anniversary of the children's home "Les Billodes", founded by Marie-Anne Calame, and the 75th anniversary of the opening of the railway line Le Locle — Les Brenets. In November, a Celtic bridge-head was discovered near **St. Blaise**.

(News by courtesy of the Agence
Télégraphique Suisse.)

A FAIRYTALE CASTLE IN THE MOUNTAIN WILDERNESS

Located in the wildly romantic Bergell district of the Grisons, the fairytale-like castle known as Palazzo Castelmur is a little-known point of interest in the vicinity of the ancient Roman Septimer-Julier Highways. A powerful torrent, the Mera, separates the Mediterranean-looking structure, with its towers and gables, from the busy Maloja Road, the main traffic artery connecting the Engadine with Lake Como. Castelmur was originally the name of a medieval fortress which was erected upon old Roman foundations on a rocky outcropping between the present villages of Stampa and Promontogno in the Bergell; in the twelfth century the name was taken by a prominent family. It was Baron Jean de Castelmur, who received his title from Napoleon III, who built the present castle in the mid-nineteenth century and furnished it in that epoch's glittering style. Some years ago his heirs, living abroad, ceded the palazzo to the Bergell District, and it was restored under the expert guidance of Dr. H. Erb, Curator of the Rhaetian Museum in Chur. The palazzo, with its precious furnishings, its collection of old weapons and its archives of ancient documents, is open to the public from May to October.

[S.N.T.O.]