

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: - (1970)

Heft: 1584

Rubrik: Swiss Church = Swiss Catholic Mission

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The Swiss girls of Liverpool had all the same a very enjoyable Christmas Dinner, thanks to the efforts of Mrs. Macquerie and Mme. Davidson. On the 16th, the "old folks luncheon" took place at the Foyer Suisse and was presided by Monsieur Paravicini. Pastor Pradervand, minister of the French-speaking Swiss Church, Madame Elmer, president of the Foyer and Monsieur H. Joss, secretary of the Foyer naturally contributed to the organisation and success of the luncheon.

Now for some of the news that came from home.

Some details of the Swiss Mercantile Fleet were given by the Federal Council: 15 ships with a tonnage of 115,000 had been chartered for the duration of the war. The belligerent powers had given an undertaking not to interfere with this seaborne traffic. The Swiss Cross and the name Switzerland would be painted on the sides of the ships and would, of course, carry goods solely for the provisioning of the country. Two London ship brokers were to act as managers for the Swiss Government and most of the unloading was to be effected at Marseilles.

Swiss anti-aircraft batteries were slackening in their vigilance and the Germans were appearing to take advantage of the situation, one aircraft having penetrated as far as Zug and dropped leaflets intended for French civilians. The people of Basle had spent an exciting December Saturday-afternoon watching German anti-aircraft guns chasing French bombers away. Five members of the "Volksbund" were sentenced to a year's imprisonment by the Federal Penal Court for conspiring against the State. This was another of the scurrilous circles directed by the notorious Leonhardt from somewhere across the border. A Federal vote called through an initiative rejected a Government bill aiming at reorganising the employment of the 54,000 employees of the Confederation. The governmental scheme included a compensation of the accrued deficit (amounting to a billion francs) of the federal pension fund by increased contributions by employees. This was rejected by the people. The offices of the "Neue Basler Zeitung" were occupied and searched by local police authorities. It had been alleged that the paper was selling 80,000 copies a day over the German border, while sales in Switzerland hardly exceeded 1,200. The publication was thought to be animated by a certain Hans Jenni from Zurich, member of the "Bundtreuer Eidgenossen", pro-German Society. The "Weltwoche" issue of 24th November had been confiscated by the military command. A proposal to abolish vivisection in the canton Baselstadt had found 7,415 supporters whilst no less than 23,639 had voted against it. In view of the heavy sacrifices borne by mobilised citizens, the military exemption tax was to be doubled in

1940. Three slightly-wounded German airmen were arrested, and subsequently interned, near the Franco-Swiss border south of Le Locle. Their plane had been attacked and damaged during a reconnaissance flight over the south of France and crashed between Pontarlier and Besançon: the three pilots parachuted without being noticed. After having burnt their parachutes and uniforms they had set out in their overalls for the 70 km. distant Swiss frontier, which, thanks to their excellent maps, they had reached after three days and nights. When questioned during their peregrinations, they had feigned successfully to be English pilots.

The presidency of the Confederation was to change with the new year: Federal Councillor Pilet-Golaz was to become President of the Confederation for 1940, Federal Councillor Oprecht, Vice-President. The marked decrease in the use of private cars mainly due to high taxation was having far reaching consequences. About 50,000 workers were losing their livelihood and had to be supported by the respective communes. The Confederation was foregoing about 25 million francs in import duties on petrol and cars and about half this amount was lost by the cantons in licenses and car taxes. The automobile trade was to approach the authorities with certain proposals to alleviate this serious crisis. A gradual reduction of the car tax was suggested, and this would benefit especially heavy cars.

TO ALL BERNESE OBERLANDERS

One of our subscribers, Mr. B. Fearnley, F.I.I.P., F.R.P.S., of 224 Linthorpe Road, Middlesbrough, Teesside, is writing a book on the Bernese Oberland. He has asked us whether any of our Bernese readers would possibly be able to tell him some of their stories. Perhaps they will be kind enough to get in touch with Mr. Fearnley direct.

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CHAPLAIN: Paul Bossard, St. Ann's Church, Abbey Orchard Street, S.W.1. Tel.: 01-222 2895.