

**Zeitschrift:** Helvetia : magazine of the Swiss Society of New Zealand  
**Herausgeber:** Swiss Society of New Zealand  
**Band:** 6 (1940-1941)  
**Heft:** 7

**Artikel:** "Paper bullets" afford relief for the Swiss fuel situation  
**Autor:** [s.n.]  
**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-943026>

### **Nutzungsbedingungen**

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. [Mehr erfahren](#)

### **Conditions d'utilisation**

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. [En savoir plus](#)

### **Terms of use**

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. [Find out more](#)

**Download PDF:** 04.01.2026

**ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>**

In March a move for the change of the present alcohol regime in Switzerland has been turned down by the Swiss people by a majority of 150,000, and this result is hailed as most satisfactory for the economical use of the fruit crops and for the condition of health of the Swiss people.

Further, the Swiss Federal Parliament had to consider legal questions regarding maritime law and the use of the Swiss flag by her chartered ships. Thus, the bearded jokes about the Swiss Navy for the time being have become obsolete.

A Parliamentary Commission decided to recommend to the Parliament the creation of two new Federal Departments, which in consequence would necessitate the election of two additional Federal Councillors, raising the present number from 7 to 9. This increase should make it possible to have the Socialist Party represented in the governing body of the Swiss Confederation and afford French Switzerland a more equitable representation in two pending issues which necessarily must be solved in the near future. The Parliament, which was in session from March 24 to 30, also dealt with different new legislation and a move for a reform of parliamentary proceedings. The radio announcer was full of praise for the amount of work accomplished by Parliament during this short session. But further than this, he also praised the spirit of calmness and steadiness which prevailed in the two chambers.

The musical and rhetorical entertainment was very much enjoyed, and without prejudice to other contributions, the songs of the Val d'Anniviers and the Basel-Land recitals probably were the climaxes of the whole programme. Unfortunately the English report could not be well followed and the spoken correspondence was so much disturbed by static, that it could not be very well understood, at least not at Wellington.

+++++

#### 'PAPER BULLETS' AFFORD RELIEF FOR THE SWISS FUEL SITUATION.

Profiting from experience gained in the World War, Switzerland has developed new ways of conserving its fuel supplies in the face of growing demands. Perhaps one of the most ingenious substitutes now being used is the so-called "paper bullets."

In the Fall of 1914 a citizen of Geneva invented the so-called "paper bullets", a cheap and nevertheless satisfactory substitute for wood or coal. As the name suggests these "bullets" were nothing but soaked paper shaped into balls and then dried in the sun. To insure good results the drying process had naturally to be thorough.

So satisfactory were the "paper bullets" from 1914-1918 that there was 100 per cent co-operation on the part of Swiss families in supplying paper, containers for soaking, and drying apparatus. As many as 800 "paper bullets" could be turned out by one workshop per day. Local relief committees donated or sold them to needy families for a mere trifle. They were indeed the most wonderful "bullets" invented in the last World War.

#### Taken Lead.

In the present emergency the city of Geneva has again taken the lead in reviving "paper bullets" as a fuel substitute. Street vendors there and elsewhere in Switzerland are demonstrating and selling in large quantities a gadget which swiftly compresses the soaked paper into small balls, ready for the drying process.

Switzerland is poor in raw materials. But in wartime when fuel especially is scarce, many an abandoned old coal mine is being examined anew. These mines date back to early days when there were no commercial highways to other lands and no railroads.

In 1919 native coal production amounted to approximately 150,000 tons. This is indeed a negligible quantity, considering that the country needs over 3,000,000 tons of this fuel.

"Brown coal" used to be mined in various parts of Switzerland. At Boltigen in the Simmen Valley such a mine was operated from 1760-1911. The Gas Works at Bern used Boltigen coal for a considerable period.

Limited quantities of the highly treasured anthracite are found in various parts of the canton of Valais. Approximately 12 mines were operated in that section of Switzerland from 1917-1920. However, the mining proved expensive. There were also experimental but unsuccessful drillings for coal in Northern Switzerland. Equally disappointing was a quest for oil.

#### Peat Available.

Peat, however, is available in considerable quantities. Peat moors in Switzerland cover an area of more than 12,000 acres. They are mainly found in the midlands, in the Jura and in certain Alpine regions. During the present emergency, Riet, in the St. Gall Rhine Valley, has become a busy spot for the digging out of peat.

Since Switzerland has about 2,500,000 acres of fertile soil covered by forests, she is less dependent on the foreign market for timber. Nevertheless, in 1938, her imports of firewood amounted to 1,680,730 Swiss francs, and in 1939 to 2,152,450 Swiss francs. In rotation the chief sources of supply were France, Italy and Germany.

+++++

#### SWISS WEDDING CUSTOMS

In days gone by wedding customs were a very important feature in Swiss peasant life. However, times have changed, and progress everywhere has done away with some of these ancient traditions. Nevertheless, in sequestered regions and especially in alpine districts, off the beaten path, some of these customs are still in vogue to a certain extent.

Thus, in some places of the Valais and the Alpine realm north of the Rhone Valley, the cheese which is made on the day a child is born to a couple is carefully marked with the infant's name and the date of its birth. Bacon, too, is salted on that day and later consumed on festive occasions. To serve a guest later with this cheese and bacon is to show him special honors.

Such historic cheeses and old bacon are also served, as a special treat, to guests at christenings, engagements and weddings. Some of this cheese and bacon is carefully reserved until the person in whose honor it was originally prepared, and at his or her funeral, even if this should be 80 years later, the funeral guests receive another portion of it.

Customs connected with weddings in the Grisons Oberland are most original and varied. Thus, for instance, there is the "Fratga," in which instance the young men of the village obstruct the bridal procession with a rope stretched across the street; or, if they are more romantically inclined, with a chain of roses or other flowers. The obstruction is removed as soon as the bridegroom gives them enough money for a drink of native wine.

Another curious wedding custom in some parts of the Grisons Oberland requires the bridegroom to wait on the bride at table while the first course of the wedding dinner is being served. The significance of this custom is to emphasize to a young husband that he cannot be lord and master of a happy home without giving due consideration to his wife.

Here and there in the Grisons Oberland another custom features school boys, wearing cow bells of varied size around their necks, parading before the house where the wedding feast is held, and later marching several times up and down the village streets. The music of their bells adds a joyous note to the festive atmosphere.

In the Grisons, too, preparations for a wedding include a profuse floral adornment of the house. Like everywhere, even in the U.S.A., the trousseau, which includes enough homespun linen to last for a lifetime, is duly inspected and admired by friends. Often the wedding guests delight in leading the bride and bridegroom under the "matrimonial yoke", a yoke adorned with a garland of flowers. The bridal pair have to entertain the guests with a "song-dance" and a "Festival dance" is performed by the guests.

+++++