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IT HAPPENED IN NORTH-WESTERN SWITZERLAND

CANTON BASLE

The 9th February, 1969, is the provisional date on which the two Half-Cantons of Baselstadt and Baselland are to decide on whether to accept the new constitution which would re-unite them. The Constitutional Council will have its final vote on the practically ready Constitution in September. The supra-Party committee for the re-unification has been reconstituted.

On the other hand, there is a strong popular movement for an independent Baselbiet, and especially on its 136th Birthday (17th March), there were dozens of bonfires from the Boelchenfluh, and the movement issued a declaration confirming the wish to remain independent.

On 19th June, the building for the College of Technology for both Basles was begun at MuttENZ (BL). Both Parliaments had accepted the project (54m.) a year ago. The new college will have a main building with 140 rooms and an **aula** with 700 seats.

BASELSTADT

In the "Nebelspalter", a statement appeared recently that in Basle, one did not pay, but one "financed" things. The difference is apparently that the later is done by others! The taxes which the citizens have contributed so handsomely towards the good balance of the annual accounts — 4.1m. francs surplus, with revenue standing at 480m. — must have been **paid**, and whether such sums as a credit of nearly 2m. francs which the Grand Council allowed the Music Academy, come under **financing** or **paying**, is a moot point. The deficit of the Basle communications services (4.7m.) probably comes under the former heading! The budget estimates a deficit of 82.2m. with revenue expected to bring in 605m. francs. The new financial planner, Dr. rer. pol. Vincent C. Frank, will have a stiff task to reduce the loss.

In the present Basle Parliament, there are no fewer than 14 medical practitioners, men and women. The same number of women M.P.s are in it, too. Of the 130 members (62 were new when the Grand Council opened the first session in May. The new President is Councillor P. Mueller. The President of the Cantonal Government is Dr. Lukas Burckhardt, in charge of finances. A very extraordinary last meeting had taken place before the old Council dissolved early in May, when a Candle-light Dinner and Dance ended the 30th legislative period. Councillor Adolf Neth, in the costume and role of Munatius Plancus, addressed the members and their ladies with a special prologue.

The Basle University Women's Clinic celebrated its centenary, and at the Women's Hospital, the fifth-largest in Europe, a new two-storey superstructure could be inaugurated in May. On the other hand, the building and re-building of the **Buergerspital** has been called the "misplanning of the century", and early in July, a stop in present building operations was ordered until further investigations had been made. The psycho-somatic station at the psychiatric clinic of Baselstadt, the "Friedmatt", was opened early in the year. A new home for the aged was opened last year at Riehen, and already another one has been planned and credits granted by Parliament. There is still disagreement between doctors and **Krankenkassen**. Sandoz have given a further half-million to the Sandoz Foundation for the Promotion of Medical/Biological Research.

The Basle university law is being reformed on the principle that it must remain autonomous. Dr Samuel Schweizer, President of the Union Bank of Switzerland, was made an honorary doctor of philosophy.

The Basle Chamber of Commerce, in its recently published annual report, commented favourably on the development of Basle Airport and Swissair, but considered Rhine navigation their **Sorgenkind**. It is hoped that the present crisis will be overcome, seeing that in times of emergency, an outlet to the Sea is of paramount importance. There is still talk about an underground railway. Traffic problems of a different nature will be dealt with in a children's traffic ground for which over 780,000 francs was granted.

Basle has the most modern taxi centre in Europe, operated by a "Storno" radio installation. The new Johanniter Bridge is in use, and one of the railway bridges has been removed to make way for the national road extension. There were great festivities when the new bridge was inaugurated.

The firm of Ciba A.G., opened a self-service staff restaurant which is capable of producing 4000 midday meals, one every 90 seconds. During the Israeli Week in spring, two Tel Aviv police women helped regulating Basle traffic. In 1967, the turnover of the Basle Stock Exchange reached a new record of 6.97 milliard francs (5.64m.). The "Nationalzeitung" celebrated its 125th anniversary early in the year.

The new curator of the "Kunsthalle" has been elected in the person of Mr Peter F. Althaus, Lucerne, Basle would like to have the Swiss Radio Orchestra for whose domicile there is quite a tug-of-war. In the new season '68/69, there will be 25 premieres in the two Basle theatres, eight at the "Stadtheater", seventeen at the "Komoedie". When a successful concert was given during the Stravinsky Festival (Basle Cathedral), the aged composer sent a telegram thanking Paul Sacher, the conductor, for "one of the

most valuable and happiest honours" which had been accorded his works (rarely heard church compositions).

An American woman has written a book "Die Voegel", the Birds of Basle. The author describes the Basle citizens as birds in a scurrilous fairy story. Has she perhaps heard that the flamingo colony at the Basle Zoo is world-famous and has recently been called sensational by a South African zoo director? In 1967, 175 birds of 37 varieties were hatched in the Basle Zoo. During the heavy snowfalls in January, elephants were used to pull the snowploughs. Twelve years ago, a modern and hygienic lion house was opened, and the two lions have produced a fine family; last spring, the lioness Jane gave birth to the 32nd and 33rd cubs. Young Basle lions are sought after in other zoos, and they have been sold even to Africa.

BASELLAND

Baselland needs more money. The **Landrat** has therefore decided to revise the tax laws, which should bring in an extra 9 million francs. The estimated deficit for 1968 is 7m., with revenue expected to bring in 222.7m.

Baselland is in an exposed position regarding national roads connecting other Cantons; the area consists of Rhine Valley plain, of Midland terrain and Jura gradients. This makes road construction expensive, and already over 250m. francs has been used on national road building; every kilometre costs Canton and Confederation something like 17m. francs.

The Cantonal Bank made a net profit of over 6m. in 1967. Liestal has a new electronic centre (3m.); the computer can be used in plebiscites, for accounts and budget, traffic counts and above all for tax purposes.

Dr. L. Lejeune is the new President of the Cantonal Government. The 44-hour week has been decided for the Cantonal Civil Service as from next January. The new nurses' home "Goldbrunnen" and the hospital for the chronically sick were opened in Liestal in spring.

The encouraging fact that Baselland is the fifth Canton in which full suffrage has been granted to women, has already been mentioned (next to Baselstadt, Vaud, Geneva and Neuchatel).

In March, a nursing home for the aged was opened at Muenchenstein, and in June, a Village Festival was organised in aid of a new one; 20,000 people visited the event. The first Baselland ice rink has been begun at Sissach — it will be the 58th artificial ice rink in Switzerland which is the most densely "be-ice-rinked" country. Technically, of course, the Basle ice rink in the St. Margarethen Park is also on Baselland territory, but financed and used by Basle residents.

—The Swiss Observer