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# The Swiss Observer

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## RANDOM JOTTINGS IN SWITZERLAND.

It is not in England alone that the question of *Unemployment* troubles both politicians and private citizens. Our own country, too, is subject to that disease. According to the official statement there were in Switzerland at the end of November, 10,326 males and 3,188 females unemployed and 23,443 partly employed, but it is generally believed that the actual number of unemployed people is considerably higher than that officially stated. The textile industries seem to be particularly affected. The "Volksrecht" asserts that in this industry one third of the working population is out of work and that the Federation of Textile Workers who distributed in a relatively short time over 150,000 francs for the benefit of the unemployed, can no longer meet the demand on its resources. The "Neue Schweizer Zeitung" argues, therefore, that unemployment must soon develop into a question of vital interest for Switzerland. It advises that every avenue should be explored with a view to making public opinion fully and intelligently aware of the real situation, as the best means of checking indifference or forestalling a sudden outburst of panic.

It is really deplorable that the first item we must deal with in the New Year must be such a plague as Switzerland has never hitherto experienced to such an extent, and it is very disquieting to state that retailers are not better off than manufacturers or workmen. The incipient industrial crisis overshadows Europe as a rather disagreeable legacy of the year 1920, now past and gone. Let us not, however, be too exigent. 1920 with all its faults has given the world one great thing, or rather the beginning of a great thing: the *League of Nations'* Assembly in Geneva. The commentaries of the Swiss Press on those five weeks of debating differed widely. It was striking at any rate that those papers which poured ridicule on the Assembly because it worked too slowly and reluctantly for them and even emphasised their strictures by such headlines as: "The Comedy of Geneva," were practically the same who had but haughty scorn for those stupid idealists who dared to speak of such a thing as a League of Nations before Wilson's appearance. This remark alters in nothing our wish that the Assembly may work with increased efficiency when it meets again next autumn in the fine city of Rousseau. Let us hope that then at least effective steps may be taken not only in the matter of an *International Court*, but also in that terrible and most vital question of *Disarmament*.

Speaking of militarism and disarmament gives me an

ALL COMMUNICATIONS TO BE ADDRESSED TO—

THE EDITOR, *THE SWISS OBSERVER*,

21, GARLICK HILL, E.C. 4.

opportunity to make known to those who may not yet have heard of it, the death of Colonel Commander of Corps *Peter Isler*, until very recently Chief of the Swiss Infantry. Colonel Isler was one of those officers, in certain respects regarded as old-fashioned, who maintained an iron severity in service, but who—and therein lies their glory—exercised this severity not merely towards their subordinates but also towards themselves. Looking at his ascetic face, which expressed in an extraordinary manner that a deep sense of duty was the keynote of his character, one was strongly reminded of the figure of Dufour. Isler was the prototype of the eminently just and equitable instructor, if not beloved, at any rate deeply respected by his subordinates. He died in his 74th year, after having spent his whole life for the benefit of his country.

If all officers had behaved like him during the period of active service, never would the *Initiative for the Abolition of the Military Courts*, launched by the social-democratic party, have been such a success. It obtained as many as 119,000 signatures and was delivered to the Federal Council as far back as August, 1916. But only now, i.e., on January 30th, is it to be submitted to the verdict of the Swiss people. It is probable that many former soldiers, recollecting all that they experienced of bitterness while standing to arms at the frontier, will vote for the Initiative, which demands that a new article of the constitution shall abolish all military courts, soldiers being in the future judged by the criminal courts of the respective cantons where the offences are committed. All the minor postulates of the Initiative (Limit of Arrest, Right of Complaint, etc.) having been since adopted by the committee which dealt with the revised code of Military Law, the question to be decided by the voting is practically this: Is it progress if we sacrifice the unity of the Military Law, merely to expose the soldiers to the 25 different criminal codes actually existing in Switzerland? This one consideration shows the judicial weakness of the Initiative still more clearly: What about the matter should our troops be stationed in a foreign country? Which canton's law should *then* be applied?

Together with this a second Initiative is to be decided: *The Initiative of Foreign Treaties*. It demands that treaties running longer than 15 years should be subject to the facultative referendum. Although there was much noise in its time about that Initiative, launched, if I am right, by people of the French-speaking cantons, the discussion has not yet developed much in the press, and the vote may be taken without any remarkable agitation. One remembers that the disgust provoked by the Gotthard Con-

vention was one of the strongest motives of the promoters. Many of those who thought it the proper thing to subject to the referendum as many matters as possible are, however, now supposed to have considerably changed their mind since the experience made with the referendum when our people voted their adhesion to the League of Nations. The Federal Council has been equally vacillating in regard to this question. In 1914 it recommended the rejection of the Initiative, whereas in 1919 it recommended its adoption. This merely shows that in many circles definite opinions about the usefulness of that innovation are not yet formed—or if they are formed, may possibly still be changed. The postulate is no doubt in line with current democratic tendencies, but as the authorities may always, to avoid the referendum, draft treaties running for a somewhat shorter period than 15 years, it is at least very doubtful if the creation of such an article is really worth the inconvenience it may, on the other hand, sometimes cause.

P. L.

## NOTES & GLEANINGS.

The Federal Council has decided to revive the fine old tradition of the "*Diner Fédéral*" (29th inst.), when the joint heads of the Confederation meet in merry company with their ministers abroad and the heads of foreign missions to Switzerland. In his "*Recollections of an old Diplomatist*" Sir Horace Rumbold the Elder, who was British Minister at Berne in the seventies, has a fine page on that "only occasion of social intercourse with Federal Councillors, a huge and sumptuous entertainment, during which the Councillors did themselves and their guests right well in the matter of food and drink till into the small hours. These hard-headed Switzers, although habitually abstemious enough, are formidable toppers on occasions." It was on one such occasion that Sir Horace encountered "the most perfect presentment of a Teutonic Bacchus or Gambrinus" he ever came across. It was "old Schiessle, the Secretary of the Federal Council (Kanzler), a tub of a man with a perpetual Alpenglühn on his fat jovial face, and withal a Rablaisian wit and humour."

The scarcity of snow and water in Switzerland and the consequent *failure of the winter sports' season* are discussed in many English papers. If we are to believe certain headlines, Switzerland has gone dry without so much as a referendum having been taken on the question. As a consequence *The Daily Express* (1-1) prophesies "dull days in Switzerland." A day later *The Observer* tells us that the "Falls of Schaffhausen vanish." On the 7th *The Daily Express* had an article on the "dried-up Rhine" and how it favours smuggling between Alsace and Baden.

According to an "Englishwoman" of *The Glasgow Herald* (1-1) it would appear that even part of the people had dried up and vanished. Only the Romands and Ticinesi are left, Lacôte, Fendant and Nostrano probably having saved them. As to the "*Schwizze Dütsch* (sic!) they are nowhere now" . . . "everybody who is anybody (in Switzerland) speaks French, though with that thickening of accent which betrays German origin . . ." but Britishers, she tells us, "do not enter closely into fine distinctions."—Evidently not!

On the "winter season" itself *The Westminster Gazette* of 29-12 writes as follows:

"At the time of writing, ice conditions, except in a few of the very highest resorts, cannot be good: the weather has been far too mild, and in no places, I think, can the snow as yet be really good. There cannot be the deep, powdery snow which is needed for ski-ing. . . .

"Never before, I think, have so many preparations been made or so much been done to attract winter sports visitors to Switzerland, for never before have Swiss hotel keepers and railways depended so much upon the British, who are the only people, except the Dutch and the Americans, whose money is not too much below par for them to be able to spend it upon holiday-making in Switzerland. Before the war more than half the visitors to the Engadine were Germans, but this year they will hardly be visible, neither will the Austrians, nor the Italians, nor the French. . . .

"According to some reports, all the sleeping cars in the special winter sports trains to be run are booked from the present till towards the end of January: and at Messrs. Thomas Cook's offices here I learn that there are really a great many English people coming to Switzerland this season. Nevertheless the hotel-keepers in at all events some places have not as many guests as they would like. Witness the following paragraph in a Berne newspaper: "An erroneous idea, perhaps not wholly unconnected with malice, is being set afloat that all the Wengen, Mürren and Grindlewald hotels are crammed with English visitors, and that consequently there is no room in them for any Swiss. This is not the case. We cannot too often repeat that Switzerland belongs to the Swiss, and that our large winter sports' hotels are quite capable of making Swiss visitors feel at home, as well as their foreign patrons, who—may we be allowed to say?—are often exceedingly nice people." In plain English, a great many hotels in Swiss winter resorts are not yet nearly full."

To pass their time away, Swiss and English sportsmen at St. Cergues (according to *The Pall Mall Gazette* (10-1) arranged a *rifle match*, the Swiss beating the English team with a score of 288 points against 278.

*The Daily Chronicle* (6-1) mentions the return to Paris of *Maxine Leuret*, who completed his 35,000 miles tour round the world on a bicycle in exactly seven years.

*The Daily Express* (31-12) celebrates the sacrifice to science of *Dr. Behrens*, who died a cruel death at Bienne from the consequences of X-rays.

The necessity of at last adopting a really constructive policy is obliging the *Swiss Socialists* to take a definite attitude with respect to Bolshevism. According to *Universe and Catholic Weekly* (31-12) the Christian Social Workers' Union of Switzerland at a recent congress decided to repudiate both the "socialisation of the means of production as extolled by Socialism, or by Communism," and "Capitalism, whose directing motto is 'negation of moral principles and exclusive pursuit of profit and pleasure.'"

A vote within the Socialist party as a whole resulted in 350 to 213 against joining the 3rd Internationale. As some time ago they voted against the 2nd Internationale, too, they find themselves in the curious position of a "two and a half Internationale," as *The Westminster Gazette* (10-1) terms it. The same correspondent adds the following interesting comment: