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HOME NEWS

There is every indication that negotiations, in order to settle the Free Zones dispute, will be continued with France. Minister Dumant had an interview last Saturday (October 17th) with M. Poincaré, who is disinclined to refer the matter to an international tribunal. The Federal Council insists, however, that the decree abolishing the Free Zones on November 10th should be withdrawn before new deliberations are initiated.

The 75th anniversary of the adoption of the Swiss Constitution (1848) was celebrated last Sunday at Sempach, National Councillor Dr. Meyer (Zurich) delivering the official address.

The traffic returns of the Federal Railways continue to show most satisfactory figures. The month of September records a surplus of about 13 million francs, not so much due to an increase in the takings, as to a reduction in the working expenses. The total surplus for the first nine months of the present year amounts now to over 81 million francs.

The Ticinese residing abroad are liable to pay income tax to their registered commune of origin—this decision has been confirmed by the Federal Tribunal in Lausanne, which states that a provision, contained in the cantonal institution to this effect, is not contrary to Federal Law.

The election of Dr. Zimmermann, who recently became a member of the Grosse Rat of the canton of Thurgau, has been declared void by the Federal Tribunal, on the ground that as salaried director of the cantonal invalid and old-age institution he was debarred, according to the cantonal constitution, from taking his seat in the Grosse Rat.

According to figures, published officially, the membership of Swiss trade unions shows a marked retrograde movement since 1919, amounting at the end of 1922 to 154,700 members only. The reduction is most marked in the banking (41%) and textile (25%) industries, and least pronounced in the printing trade (3%) and state and municipal workers (0.8%).

A party of 200 Swiss are emigrating to Brazil, where they propose to form a colony; accompanying them are a teacher, a doctor, a clergyman, and several artisans.

The Nouvelle Société Helvétique has presented a petition to the Federal Council, demanding that Article 12 of the Constitution (prohibiting the accepting and wearing of foreign decorations) should be roused from its existing dormant condition and more clearly defined. In an article in the *Journal de Genève* Léopold Gautier explains that this step is not directed against decorations granted to Swiss savants or artists or citizens, distinguishing themselves in humanitarian movements, but against the singling out of highly-placed persons, who in the political sphere may use their influence in the interests of foreign Governments. He points out that, whilst so many decorations have been offered since the war by Germany, many Swiss have been so favoured by Italy and France, and that the bestowing of the French red ribbon on some romand journalists during the Free Zones controversy has pained public opinion throughout the whole of Switzerland, this matter being viewed in Geneva itself with sincere regret.

Several Bernese firms have suffered heavy damage through a fire which broke out on Wednesday night, October 17th, in a warehouse in the Kônizstrasse. The building was used for storing furniture, office fittings, books, etc. Over three hundred thousand new volumes, in addition to charts and maps belonging to the Bernese publisher Francke, are said to have been consumed by the flames, which destroyed entire editions of works by well-known Swiss authors, such as R. von Tavel, Jegerlehner, von Greyerz, Gfeller, "Röselgarten," and others.

NOTES AND GLEANINGS.

By "KYBURG."

The Savoy Free Zones.

The problem of the Savoy Free Zones has again become acute. The *Manchester Guardian* (15 Oct.) writes:—

A stiff breeze is blowing between the Governments of France and Switzerland over a matter which may be obscure in law, but is plain enough in common sense. Geneva, though a Swiss town, is almost surrounded by, and is economically dependent upon, French territory. This territory is divided into two zones, between which and Geneva free trade has been guaranteed by treaties, one over a hundred and one over fifty years old. The Treaty of Versailles declared these guarantees to be out of date, but left their remodelling to agreement between France and Switzerland. An agreement was, in fact, reached in July, 1921, only to be rejected by popular referendum in Switzerland. Subsequent negotiations produced no result. M. Poincaré has now published an official decree, abolishing the two "free zones" as from November 10th next. The Swiss are indignant and say that, since the Treaty of Versailles left the matter over for agreement between the two States, single-handed action by France is a breach of the treaty. The French reply that, when the 1921 agreement was made, ratification of it in Switzerland by a referendum was not necessary, and that France cannot consider subsequent changes in Swiss domestic legislation which made it necessary. The juridical point is eminently suitable for arbitration, and the Swiss Government has decided to send a Note to M. Poincaré, suggesting reference to the International Court of Justice. One can imagine no reasonable grounds for refusing the suggestion. Whatever the legal rights and wrongs of the dispute may be, the economic arguments are clearly in favour of Switzerland. The Congress of Vienna did not in 1915 guarantee an economic hinterland to Geneva out of sentiment. The Savoyards, who in 1859 voted for union with France, coupled it with the condition that they should still be allowed to trade freely with Geneva. The treaties guaranteeing the "free zones" did not, in fact, establish any new practice, but merely confirmed a practice dictated by economic necessity since the eighteenth century. The necessity is as great now as it ever has been, and France's determination to make her economic coincide with her political frontier is only another instance of the modern passion, nowhere more evident than in the Treaty of Versailles itself, for subordinating economic needs to national ambitions.

But the nicest little touch I find in *The Times* of Oct. 15th, the Geneva correspondent of which lets himself go as follows:—

Swiss opinion in regard to the Free Zones question is somewhat calmer to-day, as a result of the articles in the French Press and of the explanatory communiqué which the French Government issued on Saturday. From these documents it may be gathered that the decree suppressing the Free Zones in Savoy, as well as the French Note to the Swiss Government, should be regarded as a sort of warning to the Federal Council and were intended to hasten the new proposal which is awaited from Switzerland. France does not consider that the negotiations have come to an end, so that there is no reason for the present to propose that the question should be referred to the International Court of Justice.

This statement will certainly help to make the situation easier, and negotiations are likely to be resumed before long. It may nevertheless be wondered whether it was necessary that France should have recourse to such steps which resulted in the recent feeling of resentment among the Swiss population, which has always been friendly to France.

Official circles in Bern and the Swiss Press have been very much hurt by an article, published in *L'Homme Libre*, in which it is stated that during the war Switzerland opposed the establishment of a French military hospital at Evian, on the Lake of Geneva, although the Military Zones had already been suppressed. It must be recalled that, according to the treaty of 1815, Switzerland was entitled to occupy the Military Zones—that is, certain parts of Savoy—in time of war. In 1914, as Switzerland's neutrality was not menaced on this side, the Swiss Government did not exercise that right, and did not send troops to Savoy. Moreover, the Military Zones were not suppressed until the end of the war, and Switzerland never opposed the sending of French wounded to Savoy, where several French and Allied hospitals were established.

The incident raised by the French decree will lead to no trouble, and it is hoped that further negotiations will end in an agreement.

Well, well! Either M. Poincaré means to negotiate, in which case there did not seem to be any need for his decree, which is to operate as from November 10th, or he wishes to confront Switzerland with a *fait accompli* in the true Prussian diplomatic style, in which case, the sooner our Government invokes the aid of the International Court of Justice, the better. I have yet to learn that our Government will consent to being bullied, even although France, of course, is mightier than Switzerland.

Swiss Industrial Problems.

Swiss Industrial Problems are not easy either. We all, or most of us, know how difficult it is for our manufacturers to compete against works situated in low-currency countries. The problem of inflation was seriously discussed last year, when, just in the nick of time, trade, both home and export, revived somewhat, and it was seen that the



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winter tourist season was good. Other means to make it possible for our works to compete have to be found, however, and in the following article from *The Times* (Oct. 13th) my readers will find some of these means mentioned. They will also see how the very same problems which play such an important rôle in England, do so at home as well. From many points of view Swiss and British manufacturing and trading conditions are very similar, more so than most people imagine.

The slight improvement which characterized Swiss commercial affairs during the past few months has not been maintained. The number of unemployed has not decreased since the end of July and remains at 23,000. While there has been a diminution in the number of persons unemployed in the textile, foodstuffs, watch-making and paper trades, and also among unskilled persons, it has been just balanced by the increased activity of the hotel, building, transport, and chemical industries. At the same time, there has been an addition of 1,000 to the ranks of those only partially employed.

Difficulties are still being experienced in obtaining supplies of coal and coke for factory and household use. Certain deliveries of briquettes and coal from the Ruhr have been resumed, but at prices which have been enhanced by double export duties. Moreover, there is no little anxiety concerning future supplies. In these circumstances industrialists are growing firmer in their protests against the numerous permits that are being granted for the export of electric power.

Serious complaints are being made about the high cost of labour. A Zurich engineering firm, in announcing the receipt of some important foreign orders, states that it has been obliged to accept them at prices which do not admit of the payment of current rates of wages. At the same time there is a movement towards the adoption of a longer working day. A resolution was recently passed by an influential body, calling for the revision of the Factory Act, with a view to strengthening the capacity of Swiss industries that are struggling against foreign competition, and as a means of reducing the cost of production, and thus the expenses of living. The revision was not intended as an attack on the general principle of the eight-hour day, which would remain in operation wherever it was justified and economically possible.

A number of industries are finding it expedient to demand Customs protection: recently, the wheelwrights and blacksmiths: now the sugar-mills. Foreign competition is undoubtedly gaining ground at several points. It is reported that a "Swiss" artificial silk factory, which was recently established in the United States, is starting a "Swiss-American" branch in Germany and also acquiring a property at Feldbach, near Steckborn, in Switzerland, where 1,000 workpeople will soon be employed.

Swiss Water Power.

While on the question of Commerce and Industry, I think the following article, taken from the *Manchester Guardian Commercial* (11th Oct.), will further show a similarity of problems:—

Switzerland is practically the only industrial country in the world that has no coal deposits of her own; some anthracite mines in the Valais are no longer exploited because of the poor quality of the coal and the geological difficulties of mining. On the other hand, there are few countries that have such advantageous natural conditions for the transformation of water-power into electric current. Not only are there very considerable differences of level, but there are also important reserves of water in the lakes and glaciers, giving to the rational use of water-power a sound economic basis for exploitation all the year round.

The necessity of constructing as many new power stations as possible was felt generally all over the country, and the number completed since the end of

the war is very great. The new stations created since 1918 have at least a possibility of selling the current produced, though difficulties have arisen, especially owing to the stoppage of several electro-metallurgical and electro-chemical industries which had been over-developed during the war. Hitherto, however, the main difficulty existed in the fact that the excess of electrical current in some parts of the country could not be transported to another part where energy was still needed.

Since the beginning of 1922 this difficulty has practically ceased to exist, as we now have a system of transportation of current running from east to west and from north to south of the country, even passing the Alpine wall twice. The lesson of the dry summer of 1921 was very effective; all Swiss power stations of any importance are now able to help each other by the supply of current or by the purchase of a temporary excess. But the stations begun in 1921 are now approaching completion, and the country is approaching over-production where there appears to be no apparent possibility of selling all the current produced at home.

During 1923 and 1924 no less than ten big stations will be finished. These will add a further 1.3 milliard kilowatt hours to the present production of something over 2.6 milliards. At the end of 1925 the country will have a home production of more than four milliard kilowatt hours. Where can this current be sold? No doubt, the countries surrounding Switzerland might purchase large quantities.

Unfortunately, the domestic users of Swiss current are very hostile to any export license for current (the exportation of current without license is prohibited). With the slogan "Swiss natural powers for Swiss industry only," they oppose the exportation of current other than the surplus production during certain seasons. Naturally, all power stations that use energy from water having its origin in glaciers and snowfields, in summer often have twice the output they have in winter. This "top-energy" is, of course, cheaper, and obviously it is not possible to use it within the country, as there are only a few trades that are able to use electric energy in certain seasons only.

It is not very long since in English industrial circles the cry was raised: "Cheaper coal for home use first," and bitter complaints were made that English coal was being sold abroad at lower rates than it could be bought for at home. I suppose it would require far-flung nationalisation of industries in order to co-ordinate production to the best advantage. It will come, of course, but perhaps not in our century! It is certainly more than absurd to transport coal for hundreds of miles by rail when it could so easily be converted into electric energy at the pithead itself and then conducted ever so much more easily to all parts of the country. Future generations, when they read of our "feats" of distribution of coal, etc., will pity and wonder how an otherwise fairly enlightened community could not be got away from manifestly unsound economical ideas. They will wonder still more that we yet had the perspicacity—due to a pure fluke, no doubt—to let people use the roads without making them buy a ticket each day!

A Swiss Co-operator.

Co-operative Societies are, of course, more to the fore in the Midlands and the North, and many good people residing down here in the South have perhaps never heard of any others, except the small local firms which trade on a more or less co-operative basis. In the North, however, these Societies are not only very strong, but they are economically and even politically great factors in the communities. It pleases me, although not an active co-operator—except for *The Swiss Observer*!—to find that in this sphere of human endeavour a compatriot of ours is also finding appreciation of his work in this country. I read in the *Co-operative News* (Manchester), 13th Oct.:—

Many co-operators who went to the Congress of the International Co-operative Alliance at Basle in 1921 will remember the pleasant personality of Herr Bernhard Jaeggi, a man of modest mien, but a veritable 'tour de force' in the Swiss Co-operative Movement, to whose alert brain and sympathetic heart the foreign delegates owed so much.

Herr Jaeggi is a co-operator of co-operators. We wish the world—Great Britain included—had a few more of his kind. He reminds me of our own Mitchell, of the C.W.S.: if he did two or three delegations on a single journey, he would take expenses for one only. He has, for nearly half a century, served the Swiss movement from the humblest to the highest office, for which he was entitled to some remuneration.

He determined, from the very first, to set aside all the fees he got, however small, for the benefit of his fellow-co-operators. Many years of activity have seen this fund grow; and he had the satisfaction, the other day, of handing some 50,000 francs (say, £2,000) as a foundation fund for the establishment of a Co-operative College, with lectures on education, administration, and domestic economy, and practical work in homes, offices, institutions, etc. The general object will be to equip intending co-operative workers with a systematic course of education in the theory and the practice of co-operation in all its varied forms. The headquarters of the fund will be Freidorf, the very pleasant co-operative colony situated a mile or two outside Basle.

"Sic Transit!"

"Sic transit!" is the title of the following short paragraph which appeared in the *Jewish World* on the 11th inst.:—

It is announced that a Committee of Jews has been established at Zurich for the purpose of starting a fund for the relief of the Jews of Germany and of Jewish institutions there which are in danger of being closed for lack of financial support. Rabbi Dr. Littman and Mr. W. Simon are the chief organisers of the movement. "Sic transit!" in very sooth! Who would have believed, say, ten years ago, that proud and affluent German Jewry would need help from Swiss Jews, or, indeed, from any external source? Such an idea would have been spurned as an impossible romance, just as would the notion of pogroms in Hungary. Such, however, is the Jewish world-position! The helpers

of to-day become the helpless of to-morrow, and so the weary round proceeds, now more slowly, now faster, but unceasingly. And so it will continue so long as the Jewish People as a whole, show themselves so inept, so disorganised, and so possessed of a merely local outlook on all that concerns them.

I cannot fathom what the writer means by his last sentence. Perhaps because I am not a Jew. But I will give my readers an idea which I have harboured for some time and which they might, perhaps, digest as well: Have you noticed that those countries which were known to be, on the whole, antisemitic, like Russia under the Tsars, Germany and Austria under the Hohenzollerns and Hapsburgs, are now, so to speak, utterly in the hands of the Jews? Funny, is it not? As I say, this idea occurred to me some time ago, and I have not yet found an explanation which seems satisfactory. Perhaps one of my readers can enlighten me.

Good News?

The Times (15th Oct.):—

An international conference on Customs Formalities, summoned by the League of Nations, meets at Geneva under the presidency of Lord Buxton, former Governor-General of South Africa. The Conference will examine the possibility of simplifying Customs formalities.

Owing to the revival of smuggling attempts, I was told at Dover the other day, Customs are much more severe. The officials are, of course, doing their duty, but, equally of course, the whole thing is absolutely disgraceful in the 20th century. In some countries, where they are unwilling to pay direct taxes, believing that with indirect taxation "the other fellow will have to pay more," they have even still got the Octroi. In France, for instance, when I think of the unholy mess our beloved ancestors have brought Europe to, I really sometimes wonder whether it will finally again be a question of "ex Oriente lux?" Don't run away with the conclusion that I am, of necessity thinking of the Bolsheviks. There are a few other "Orientals" as well!

Spahlinger Treatment.

Daily Express (17th Oct.):—

Baron Henri de Rothschild, who is a qualified medical man, has recently spent some time in Geneva investigating the Spahlinger treatment. So convinced is he of its efficacy that he is now engaged in helping to make financial arrangements which will ensure that the remedies are produced in adequate quantities for general use in Great Britain.

The baron and Spahlinger met again at the Ritz Hotel on Oct. 16th, when the initial steps for a Spahlinger campaign were taken. Among those present were Sir Stanley Birkin, but for whose munificent gift of £20,000, in the early part of this year, Spahlinger's work would have been stopped entirely. General Sir Frederick Maurice, Colonel Collins—representing New Zealand—and several famous English doctors who have satisfied themselves of the results of the Spahlinger treatment.

A pamphlet is shortly to be issued, giving a history of Spahlinger's research work since 1910, and containing particulars of papers read before medical societies, and a mass of medical evidence with full clinical details of the effect of the remedies. This will be circulated to all members of the medical profession in Great Britain, and afterwards a public appeal will be made for the funds necessary to provide the serum and vaccines in large quantities.

The project is not in any way commercial, but it is hoped that it will develop into a great philanthropic scheme of far-reaching benefit to humanity.

"I was most interested in what I saw at Geneva," said Baron Henri de Rothschild to a representative of the *Daily Express*. "and I think it is most important that we should find as much money as possible, not only to go on with the work, but to make that work much more extensive. The serum and the vaccines take a long time to make. It would be a very great pity if, in eighteen months, Spahlinger, owing to lack of money, could only cure 100 people when there are so many millions of tuberculous persons in the world."

Goitre Village.

Daily Express (15th Oct.):—

The introduction of iodine into children's diet as an effective means of combating goitre is the subject of an experiment now being conducted in the kitchens of the American relief administration in Austria. The best method employed, according to a recent issue of the administration's Bulletin, has been the substitution of iodine salt for table salt.

This method was previously used with success in Switzerland, where goitre is most prevalent, by Prof. Wagner-Jauregg. Experiments in the schools were supplemented by systematic internal use of iodine.

The teachers in some schools, gave iodine tablets daily to the children. This experiment in Switzerland was successful only with children, which is the disadvantage of the method.

The Swiss physician, Dr. Bayard, on the other hand, instead of ordinary cooking salt, gave a salt supplemented with iodine to the population of an entire village for a period of six months, with the consequence that the village was practically freed from goitre. This method has since been employed on a large scale.

Swiss Railway Electrification—A Correction.

Anent our extract from *The Times* in our issue No. 124 we are informed that in one respect that paragraph is incomplete. The well-known Ateliers de Construction Oerlikon, near Zurich, were also responsible as main contractors for the supply of locomotives to the Swiss Federal Railways on the Gotthard Line; all the goods locomotives were supplied by the Oerlikon Co.

The Publisher will be pleased to forward free specimen copies of "The Swiss Observer" to likely subscribers whose addresses may be supplied by readers.

FINANCIAL AND COMMERCIAL NEWS FROM SWITZERLAND.

The working of the Swiss Locomotive and Engineering Works in Winterthur for the year 1922-23 shows a net profit of Frs. 1,359,362, which is approximately the equivalent of that achieved in the preceding year. A dividend of 7 per cent. is being paid on the share capital of Frs. 12,000,000.

In the course of their report the directors remark that, although orders have been scarce and general conditions unfavourable, it is satisfactory to be able to state that working expenses have been correspondingly reduced, and it is to this fact that they attribute the possibility of again paying the same dividend. In the locomotive construction branch it was necessary during the year greatly to curtail working hours, though since the beginning of 1923 work has again been normal, thanks to various orders for a total of 12 steam mountain railway locomotives, to which were later added a further two similar engines for an overseas country. They mention especially an order from the French Colonial Office for locomotives for a mountain railway in Indo-China and also an order for the line from Beyrouth to Damascus. This is a satisfactory proof of the excellence of the Swiss type of mountain locomotive. Towards the end of the year under review the Company were also favoured with an order from the Federal Railways. These orders and others provide the prospect of sufficient employment for the current business year.

The Swiss Hotel Trust Company in Zurich, which works with a Federal subsidy of Frs. 5,000,000, has issued figures illustrating its activities during the year ended 30th of September.

It is clear from this what valuable work this institution is doing in reconstructing the disordered finances of the Swiss hotel-keeping industry. The net result of the year's reconstruction work is that the total debt on the hotel undertakings has been reduced by 31.92 per cent.—or Frs. 1.841 per hotel bed.

The Canton of Berne has issued a new loan of Frs. 25,000,000. The rate of interest is 4½% and the price of issue 96½. The loan is repayable on the 31st of October, 1938.

STOCK EXCHANGE PRICES.

BONDS.		Oct. 16	Oct. 23
Swiss Confederation 3% 1903	...	75.15%	75.80%
Swiss Confed. 9th Mob. Loan 5%	...	100.40%	106.50%
Federal Railways A—K 3½%	...	79.12%	79.25%
Canton Basle-Stadt 5½% 1921	...	102.70%	102.75%
Canton Fribourg 3% 1892	...	71.75%	71.50%
SHARES.		Nov. 16	Oct. 23
		Frs.	Frs.
Swiss Bank Corporation	...	500	641
Crédit Suisse	...	500	674
Union de Banques Suisses	...	500	535
Fabrique Chimique ci-dev. Sandoz	1000	3075	3040
Société pour l'Industrie Chimique	1000	2142	2107
C. F. Bally S.A.	...	1000	1023
Fabrique de Machines Oerlikon	...	500	675
Entreprises Sulzer	...	1000	615
S.A. Brown Boveri (new)	...	500	285
Nestlé & Anglo-Swiss Cond. Mk. Co.	...	200	170
Choc. Suisses Peter-Cailler-Kohler	...	100	109
Comp. de Navig'n sur le Lac Léman	...	500	480

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