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HOME NEWS

The tension in the Free Zones controversy has been somewhat relieved by the categorical reply of the French Government, refusing to withdraw the decree which arbitrarily abolishes the free zones; M. Poincaré, however, assures the Federal Council that this action does not in the least prejudice future deliberations, and is merely meant to put an end to a difficult situation imposed on the populace of the zones (this difficult situation has, of course, been in existence ever since the years 1815 and 1816). Although the dispute seems to have been dealt with and brought to an end in M. Poincaré's own fashion, the Swiss Government is invited to submit new proposals; and if further efforts at finding a mutually acceptable solution prove abortive, the French Premier will not refuse to refer the question to a tribunal. The Federal Council has lost no time, and the following note, in the nature of a protest, was handed last Monday to the French Government by our Minister in Paris:

J'ai l'honneur de vous accuser réception de votre note du 7 de ce mois relative à la question des zones franches et de transmettre à Votre Excellence la réponse de mon gouvernement.

Par sa note du 30 octobre dernier, le Conseil fédéral avait posé ces deux questions, dont il devait faire dépendre la reprise des négociations:

1. Le gouvernement français est-il disposé à suspendre l'application de la loi française du 16 février 1923 pendant la durée de nouvelles négociations?

2. Est-il disposé à examiner des propositions suisses qui ne comporteraient pas l'établissement du cordon douanier français à la frontière politique?

La réponse à la première question a été négative. Le transfert annoncé est aujourd'hui un fait accompli. Si même ce fait ne constitue pas, dans l'intention du gouvernement français, un moyen de pression, il n'en crée pas moins une situation qui, d'une part, est contraire à ce que la Suisse estime être son droit et, d'autre part, est incompatible avec l'existence d'une zone franche, but essentiel que le Conseil fédéral poursuivait dans la négociation.

Ces deux considérations sont déterminantes. Le Conseil fédéral avait protesté par avance contre toute tendance de modifier la structure douanière des zones conventionnelles, aussi longtemps que, par négociation directe ou par une procédure arbitrale, l'accord prévu à l'article 435 du traité de Versailles n'aurait été réalisé. Le gouvernement de la République a cru pouvoir passer outre à cette protestation.

Le Conseil fédéral a le devoir de renouveler, au nom du peuple suisse tout entier, sa protestation solennelle. Il doit proclamer en même temps que lorsque la question se trouvera portée devant des arbitres, ceux-ci n'auront à la juger que d'après les normes du droit, la décision du gouvernement français devant être considérée comme un fait juridique inopérant.

La réponse à la deuxième question n'est pas, dans la forme du moins, absolument négative, mais elle fait apparaître clairement un fois de plus, que les deux parties demeurent irréductiblement divisées sur le sens et la portée qu'il convient d'attribuer à l'article 435 du traité de Versailles.

Une telle constatation ne saurait provoquer aucune surprise, après que les controverses de près de cinq années n'ont pu éliminer cette divergence d'interprétations source même de toutes les difficultés. Les traités de 1815 et de 1816 ont conféré à une petite portion de territoire étranger confinant au territoire suisse, la nature et les caractères d'une zone franche. Les produits qui entrent de Suisse dans cette zone ne peuvent être frappés par des droits de douane. C'est dans cette "franchise" que consiste le régime des zones du Pays de Gex et de la Haute-Savoie. Dès que la France porte son cordon douanier et effectue des opérations douanières à la frontière politique, le régime des zones franches est altéré dans son essence, c'est-à-dire qu'il cesse d'exister comme tel.

Le Conseil fédéral est prêt à innover pour adapter ce régime aux circonstances actuelles. Il répète qu'il est disposé à substituer au droit que la Suisse tire des traités anciens, un droit nouveau, fondé sur l'engagement que prendrait la France de créer une nouvelle zone franche ou d'accès sur son territoire. Il envisage aussi la possibilité d'accorder aux populations de cette zone une réciprocité équitable, aux conditions et dans les limites qui auraient fait l'objet de négociations. Il ne saurait cependant se prêter à son gré à la substitution au régime des zones d'un autre régime, pouvant sans doute présenter certains avantages, mais dont l'inconvénient essentiel serait d'entraver les échanges de Genève, notamment avec les régions limitrophes, puisqu'il interposerait entre celles-ci et celle-là une ligne serrée d'agents douaniers.

Le gouvernement suisse est ainsi plus que jamais persuadé que seul un arbitrage pourra assurer une solution de la question des zones. Aussi a-t-il appris avec une grande satisfaction que le gouvernement français, non seulement ne refuse pas cette procédure, mais qu'il la considère comme allant de soi. Le gouvernement français ajoute, il est vrai, que le recours à cette procédure ne devrait être envisagé que pour le cas où la suite des négociations démontrerait l'impossibilité d'arriver à un accord par négociation directe.

Cette impossibilité est malheureusement déjà démontrée. Ce n'est certes pas l'esprit de conciliation

qui fait défaut chez les parties; l'opposition, en effet, réside dans les choses elles-mêmes. Les parties acceptent loyalement la sentence quelle qu'elle puisse être. Par dessus tout, le Conseil fédéral, interprète fidèle du peuple suisse, attache du prix à ce que le différend surgi entre la République française et la Confédération suisse soit résolu dans les formes et par les moyens du droit. Il estime que l'exemple qu'offriraient ainsi au monde deux Etats amis, membres de la Société des Nations, égaux en droit, mais inégaux quant à leurs forces matérielles, ne serait pas un exemple perdu.

Le Conseil fédéral ne doute pas que le gouvernement français veuille entrer sans réserve dans la voie de l'arbitrage. Il donne sa préférence, comme il l'a déjà fait savoir précédemment à l'instance judiciaire de la Haye. Les origines de la Cour permanente de justice internationale, ses fonctions naturelles et le prestige dont elle jouit légitimement une telle préférence. Il resterait convenu que la tâche des juges ou des arbitres se limiterait à définir le sens et la portée de l'article 435 du traité de Versailles, en relation avec les traités de Paris et de Turin.

Dès que le gouvernement français aura donné son adhésion à la procédure judiciaire ou arbitrale ainsi envisagée, le Conseil fédéral s'empresse de se mettre en rapports avec lui, pour fixer d'un commun accord le texte du compromis.

In the elections for the Geneva Grand Conseil, last Sunday, the parties of the Left slightly increased the number of their seats, holding, out of a total of one hundred, 52 mandates (Socialists 29, Radicals 23). A new party, entirely independent, whose main object is the sanitation of Geneva finance, has sprung up under the name of "Union de défense économique" and has secured no less than 24 seats at the expense of the Democrats.

By an overwhelming majority the electors of the canton Ticino sanctioned the official proposal for granting a tax-free rebate of Frs. 2,000 to those in receipt of fixed wages or salaries.

A statement appears in the Swiss press to the effect that Mr. Lloyd George will be giving a number of lectures in Switzerland at the beginning of next year.

Next year's "Tir Fédéral" (Schweiz. Schützenfest), which takes place at Aarau, has been fixed to commence on July 18th; August 1st has been earmarked as a special day for the Swiss arriving from abroad.

The first snow this season fell on Thursday, Nov. 8th, near Berne, Basle and Zurich, temporarily dislocating the telephone and telegraphic service in certain districts.

In consequence of an unusual influx of German nationals, resulting from present conditions in that country, the Swiss authorities have deemed it necessary to subject the granting of visas to certain restricting formalities.

At the Conradi trial in Lausanne the details and motives of the murder seem to be of secondary importance, the pleadings dealing chiefly with the history and deeds of Bolshevik Russia. Dr. Georges Lodigensky, chief of the old Russian Red Cross, in whose employ Polounine (accused of helping and encouraging Conradi) was at the time of his arrest, gave a heart-rending account of the conditions prevailing and the atrocities committed during the struggle for hegemony between the Red and White armies. Another witness, M. Croisier, the editor of the *Feuille d'avis de Montreux*, was severely heckled by prosecuting counsel and threatened with proceedings under the Federal penal code for having stated in the witness box, *inter alia*, that he approved of the murder and that, if he had been approached by Conradi for financial support in order to commit the crime, he would have acceded to his request the same as he would offer his help to anybody else bent on imitating Conradi's act. Conradi's mother and relatives, as well as other witnesses resident in Russia, testify to the agonies and tortures to which they and other foreigners had been exposed without the slightest provocation. A confrontation between two opposing Generals, Vladimir Crayter and Dostovaloff, led to a dramatic scene, in which each accused the other of having appropriated for his own use certain sums entrusted to him. The tragic and unrefuted testimony of the many witnesses could not but rouse the spirit of those present and the people of Lausanne, and the hostile feeling displayed has made it necessary to grant special police protection to certain witnesses and prosecuting counsel, the latter, of course, being of Swiss nationality. The verdict will probably be delivered this week, as the public prosecutor concluded his speech last Wednesday; it may be expected that the jury will not ignore altogether extenuating circumstances, especially the violent provocation under the influence of which the crime was enacted.

THOUGHTS ON THE 11th NOV., 1923.

By "KYBURG."

Up on the lonely North Downs, where a kind Fate has allowed me to pitch my tent, the dawn of this 11th of November was of a sublime clarity and loveliness. Hills were already bathed in glorious sunshine, when the valleys could be seen but dimly, and looking down towards the far-away dwellings along the Eastbourne Road, I pictured them and their inmates, slowly awakening to the kiss of the sun, remembering when they saw the glorious morning; that it was Sunday, that the day was their own, to do with as they pleased, and feeling glad that it promised to be a day worth living in. I also pictured how many a man, many a woman would all of a sudden feel a lump in the throat when, fully awake now, they remembered, too, that this gloriously wonderful morning heralded Armistice Day.

Out in the garden, a little later, I remembered how—it seems but yesterday, although it is five years ago—I used to listen to the heavy firing from the battlefields on the Somme and in Flanders. I heard again in my memory the faint thudding, felt again the distant vibrations which, during the German push in the spring of 1918, caused our windows to rattle, and I felt again the nausea which I used to feel on those lovely spring mornings, five years ago!

And while I was listening—so terribly acute was my memory—the strains of a hymn, played by some band far away down in the valley, reached my ear and brought my mind back to Armistice Day, 1923.

Although my readers will see these lines nearly a week later, I fancy they will not mind 'Kyburg' giving them some of his thoughts on this day. Anyhow, I confess quite frankly, I could not write to-day on all sorts of different topics, as is my wont on other days. We *Swiss* are as deeply concerned in Armistice Day as any other nation; the consequences of the war and its results weigh as heavily on us as on some of the late belligerents; and, last, but not least, we *Swiss* are members of the great Brotherhood of Nations, whether we wish it, or like it, or whether we do not.

"To make the world safe for Democracy," to prove that "Right is stronger than Might," to "uphold the Sanctity of Treaties," and to "make War to End War"—those were some of the ideas and ideals which were inculcated into the young soldiers, which fired their patriotic ardour, which caused them to offer their life on the altar of Civilisation as understood by them, which made them abandon their families to the uncertain and precarious help of those who might come back and of those who could not fight.

Upon Four Years War have followed Five Years Peace, and on the 11th of November we ask ourselves whether the sacrifices have given mankind the results desired and fought for, or whether, at least, we are a little bit nearer towards their realisation.

If we want to blind ourselves to the ghastly truth and find a self-satisfying answer, we can do so, of course. We have only to read the "striking article" of Lovat Fraser in the *Sunday Pictorial*, where he argues that "we have kept faith," because the war graves in France are properly kept, because we begin to see that "the Great War did breed delusions," and because "our dead did not lay down their lives in order that Germany might be favoured by us in later years at the expense of France."

On the other hand, if we are cursed with a conscience and open eyes, such arguments will obviously not do.

Democracy has never been in greater peril than now. We have seen Italy and Spain abandoning democratic Government. We have seen other nations acquiescing, more or less openly, in Government by a Directorate, composed of One or more persons.

Might rules the European Continent. Although impoverished almost beyond rescue, our dear old Continent, up to 1914 the torch-bearer of Christian Civilisation, bears to-day the burden of even more armed soldiers—a great number of them coloured troops—than it had to bear before the Great War.

Treaties are to-day worth less, or at least not more, than before 1914. Their Sanctity is more of a pious wish than ever. My readers will have instances to bear out this contention ready in their mind.

And is there any sane man who to-day believes that the late Great War made further wars impossible? It might have done, if there had not been the Peace by which it was succeeded.

That "Peace" is breeding new wars in all directions. Never has there been a more fruitful

field for underhand diplomacy, for wire-pulling feats by interested industrial-financial combines and for poison-gas-propagating newspaper trusts than now.

To-day, five years after the end of the war, we have 2,000,000 unemployed in Great Britain, civil war and absolute famine conditions in many parts of Germany, coloured troops stalking about Europe under French authority, international trade and industrial life severely checked and check-mated in many instances. We have most of the European monetary exchanges in a state of trade-hindering uncertainty, some of them utterly collapsed. Instead of the Brotherhood of Nations, we find that even Great Britain is thinking of adopting Protection. Every man for himself, and devil take the hindmost!

Truly, an edifying spectacle! My one consolation is that I am not a missionary! How easy it must be to convince the pagans of the blessings of Christian Civilisation!

And you, dear reader, what about you? Do you still think that, for instance, the Germans only get what they deserve? If so, just read the following lines, taken from a poem entitled "In Time of Famine," by the well-known Irish writer Katharine Tynan, who, during a visit to Cologne, sent it to the *Observer* (11th Nov.):—

What shapes flit loathly through the glooms
And halt by the threshold?
It is the Hungry Death that comes,
Yea, and the Death of Cold.
Lord have mercy!
They look to East, they look to West;
No help by land or wave.
Ever the ticking minutes haste
Near the full-fed grave.
Christ have mercy!
Oh, Lord, if hoary sinners must
Endure Thy whips for sin;
What of the flowers sprung of our dust,
The children, washed clean?
Lord have mercy!
Lord, turn Thy wrath away ere one
Of the precious children die:
The soft, small bodies, skin and bone,
Written in agony.
Christ have mercy!
Yea, bid Thy earth go up in smoke.
Thy stars, Thy dawn, Thy eve!
Ere one of Thy small piteous folk
Accuse Thee and forgive.
Lord have mercy!

Do you think that the Allied Soldiers died for this? If they did, God help Europe! But I do not believe it. I have spoken to a great number of men who actually "went over the top," and I do not recall one who is not disgusted at the turn events have taken, and who is not appalled at the misery the Peace, not the war, is causing to-day.

If I had an Oriental mind, I would say "Kismet" and forget it all. Having had Christian teaching, I am worried, and I want you, dear reader, to be worried, too. It is, to my mind, fairly evident that Providence ordained that Europe should drain the bitter cup to the last drop. I hope that what we witness now is not the end of the Christian Civilisation, but the travail heralding its re-birth. Especially in Germany, I think, will this be the case. There "Kultur" had developed along wrong lines altogether, and it requires probably a gigantic economic and social upheaval to re-establish ethical values in their proper focus. Germany at present is again undergoing her "Sturm- und Drang-Periode," from which she will rise, as did the Germany of 1913. France, on the other hand, seeming to follow the Prussian line of policy and reverting to her old traditions which made of her an ethically "Grande Nation," will inevitably have to suffer greatly. How much, depends on how far she will travel along the wrong path.

I wish to state here clearly that the opinions expressed in this article are "Kyburg's" alone.

Meanwhile, during all this time of re-birth and re-orientation, Europe and the world suffer grievously. Switzerland suffers with the rest.

If there is to be a great re-birth of our Christian Civilisation, there must needs be a great revival of true Christian feeling. At present, in my opinion, our religious leaders are either too much absorbed with dogmatic questions, or they are too timid. Christian Churches do not provide bread for the masses. They give them stones! Witness the empty Churches. Where the Churches are full, it is where a specially gifted orator holds sway, not because the masses of the people are drawn to the Church. The Churches have little in common with the Carpenter's Son of Nazareth, who would feel terribly ill at ease in one of our episcopal palaces! True, circumstances have altered. But then, there were rich and poor in Jerusalem. In labour circles I have often heard that Religion is the handmaid of the capitalistic State. To overcome such an idea, which can be made so plausible to the "have-nots," will require quite different teaching *personnel* than the Christian Churches seem to possess at present.

Each one of us ought to help in this Christian revival. We find it sufficient, as a rule, to affirm our Christian principles in rather a vague way, and we are, as a rule, rather shy of living up to them!

"Kyburg," I am afraid, is no exception. But let us be honest and confess that, if the world is in a very sorry plight just now, it is, to some extent, our own individual fault. Let us confess that we are all far too materialistic and far too little Christian. Let us, on this Day of the Armistice, remember that, if we really want to save Civilisation, we have each to do our bit by, trying hard to live up to Christian principles. And one of the very first of these principles is *Love*, as I wrote in last week's *Swiss Observer*. *Love and Charity of Mind* are the two great forces which can help and without which Civilisation cannot be saved, yea, without which Civilisation would not be worth saving.

These, dear readers, were some of my thoughts to-day. I may not have succeeded in expressing them coherently, but, as I am sure that some of them were also your thoughts, I hope that the above lines will help to keep the flame of earnest endeavour, which your own reflections must have kindled in your heart to-day, burning brightly from now onwards.

THE COMING OF AGE OF MUSICAL SWITZERLAND.

Ere it develops a genuine civilisation of its own, every nation must needs have attained a certain economic standard: ere it can allow creative artists fully to develop themselves, a nation must have created a respective audience for them. Great art can only be found amongst a society which has leisure enough to attain a refined taste. The nearly complete absorption by the immense and overwhelming national resources of their country has been not the least cause for the still very remarkable dependency of the American people on other countries in the realm of music, literature and art. The Americans have simply found no time yet to develop their own civilisation. A similar argument holds good for the Swiss. Switzerland, though she, as a loose confederation, can boast of a past of six centuries, is as a modern, self-conscious nation hardly more than three-quarters of a century old. It is only within the last one or two generations, when the industrial revolution had definitely increased her wealth, that her people have begun to develop a cultural outlook and a cultural consciousness of their own. The beginning of a national Swiss literature fell in the last century. A tradition of painting has only developed in the second half of the 19th century, though, of course, minor painters have lived before. But it is only in Hodler that the Swiss have produced for the first time a really great painter who, though he ranks in the forefront of European artists, is felt to be immensely Swiss too. The development of a national consciousness in Swiss music dates even a shorter time back. To the careful observer, however, it can no longer be disputed.

In this country one knows that *Maurice Block*, though he has become a naturalised American, is of Swiss-Jewish origin. However, the particular surroundings of Switzerland have not had very much to do with his artistic development. *Arthur Honegger*, another modern Swiss composer, has identified himself so much with the French "Six" that too many people believe he is a French composer. No one, however, has ever ventured to declare that *Hans Huber*, the only great composer Switzerland has produced in the last half of the nineteenth century, was anything but Swiss. Huber has written many things which are not highly original, but in his eight symphonies, especially in the "Heroic," the "Tell" and the "Böcklin" symphony, he has tried to express, in a highly artistic way, certain elements of the Swiss spirit which nobody had ever attempted to express in Swiss music before. His popularity, of course, he owed not so much to these symphonies and a few operas, but to the music he had written for the Basle Festschele, a form of theatrical art which between 1890 and 1910 developed like wildfire in Switzerland. The conductors *Hermann Suter*, with his Swiss Symphony, and *Fritz Brun*, with his mighty third symphony, march to a certain extent in the footsteps of Huber, though in no way do they impress you as being dependent on him. Of *Jacques Dalcroze* and his Festschele (the last and grandest is the "Fête de la Jeunesse et de la Joie") one has heard every now and then in this country, and *Arthur Honegger*, *Gustave Doret* and *Emile Lauber* have written Festschele music, especially for the Théâtre du Jorat.

Amongst the considerable number of contemporary composers who, in a sense, have tried to find a synthesis of French (Debussy and Ravel) and German (Reger and Strauss) tendencies, and who form quite a cohort of promising artists, we will only mention *Othmar Schoeck*, an original, extremely melodious talent—some say even genius—who started with his songs somewhere in the neighbourhood of Hugo Wolf, but has now gone far beyond him. In the voice, as in the pianoforte part, everything must convey atmosphere to Schoeck, though, by giving the melody a primary right, he has gone back to the now too much lost style of Schubert. His two operas, "Don Ranudo" and "Venus," have been performed before international

audiences at the Zurich festivals, but his songs are far too little known beyond the borders of Switzerland. The generation after him has hardly begun to rise. Schulthess, Martin, Frey, Laqui, Strubin and others have, however, already given proof in a series of works that the younger men are eager to carry the torch forward, elevating it higher and higher.

Watchers of contemporary musical developments on the Continent may be interested in an informal Swiss contemporary music concert, which is to take place on November 26th at 28, Red Lion Square, W.C.1, at 8.15 p.m. Invitation tickets can be obtained on application to Dr. Paul Lang at the same address.

FINANCIAL AND COMMERCIAL NEWS FROM SWITZERLAND.

The revenue expected from the Customs duties in 1924 is estimated in the budget at Frs. 171 million. The figure seems justified by the results achieved hitherto in the present year. Up to the end of June the revenue from this source was 82 millions, and the figure for the whole year is expected to be Frs. 160 million. The Federal Council base their figure for 1924 on the prospect of a considerable increase in production.

The Canton of Basle (Stadt) propose, in the course of the present month, to issue a new 5% loan at par, which will serve to convert the 4% loan of 1908, of which Frs. 10,000,000 is falling due. The holders of 5% Treasury Bonds of the Canton, which matured at the 15th of November, are being offered subscription rights in that portion of the loan which is not absorbed by conversion options.

The memorandum, which accompanies the trade returns for the third quarter, contains some interesting explanations of the figures. The preliminary details, given in these columns last week, may be supplemented by a few details drawn from this official report. The great apparent increase of exports, from 365 millions in the June quarter to 462 millions in the September quarter, is attributed in part to the early closing of the accounts for the former period. Now that the figures can be adjusted to the correct and even dates, it seems the actual increase was about 34 million francs. In the case of the imports the total is approximately even, but a falling off of some 10 millions, under the heading of industrial raw and semi-manufactured products, is balanced by a corresponding increase in the imports of coal, building materials, etc.

It is interesting to note that imports of coal have risen to 85% of the pre-war level. This is very noticeable in view of the greatly reduced quantity of coal now required by the Swiss Federal Railways. Another interesting increase is in the case of raw cotton, but in this case it is remarked that last year a large quantity of English yarn and cloth was imported. The present figure of 174,201 quintals brings the total under this heading approximately to pre-war level.

STOCK EXCHANGE PRICES.

	BONDS.			Nov. 6			Nov. 13		
Swiss Confederation 3% 1903	75.12%	...	...	75.12%	...	...
Swiss Confed. 9th Mob. Loan 5%	100.37%	...	...	100.50%	...	...
Federal Railways A—K 3½%	77.65%	...	...	77.65%	...	...
Canton Basle-Stadt 5½% 1921	101.67%	...	...	101.50%	...	...
Canton Fribourg 3% 1892	67.00%	...	...	67.00%	...	...
	SHARES.			Nov. 6			Nov. 13		
Swiss Bank Corporation	500	640	...	639	...	...
Crédit Suisse	500	675	...	672	...	...
Union de Banques Suisses	500	530	...	532	...	...
Fabrique Chimique ci-dev. Sandoz	1000	3075	...	3110	...	...
Société pour l'Industrie Chimique	1000	2165	...	2185	...	...
C. F. Bally S.A.	1000	1085	...	1090	...	...
Fabrique de Machines Oerlikon	500	616	...	617	...	...
Entreprises Sulzer	1000	610	...	600	...	...
S.A. Brown Boveri (new)	500	259	...	259	...	...
Nestlé & Anglo-Swiss Cond. Mk. Co.	200	167	...	167	...	...
Choc. Suisses Peter-Cailler-Kohler	100	106	...	107
Comp. de Navig'n sur le Lac Léman	500	485	...	485

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