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# The Swiss Observer

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## HOME NEWS

On the initiative of the Swiss Communist Party, which hopes to secure the support of the Socialists and trade unions, a demand for a referendum is to be launched against the new Federal Bill defining and regulating the working conditions of state and railway employees. The necessary signatures to bring about a referendum have to be deposited at the Federal Chancellery within three months. —The Bill has been passed in the closing sessions of both houses with overwhelming majorities; in the National Council by 111 against 10 (the minority being made up of the three Communists and seven adherents of the Farmers' Party) and in the States Council by 25 votes with one abstention.

Federal sanction has been accorded to some slight alterations in the constitution of Geneva, which were voted upon by the electors of the latter canton last April. In the future any decisions authorising an expenditure of more than Frs. 125,000 for one particular purpose, or the issue of fresh cantonal loans exceeding one million francs are subject to a compulsory referendum.

The Swiss delegation for the next League of Nations meeting consists of President Motta, States Councillor Dr. Bolli and National Councillor Godard.

The Basle Grosse Rat voted a credit of Frs. 875,000 for a new school building, and a subsidy of Frs. 250,000 to a co-operative society for the construction of houses to benefit large families.

The two charity postcards issued in connection with this year's first of August celebrations are now on sale in Switzerland. One of them shows a reproduction of a well-known picture by the Vaudois painter, Eug. Burnand, and the other is designed by the Appenzell artist Karl Liner.

President Motta is spending his summer holidays at Schuls-Tarasap.

Federal Judge Dr. Alb. Ursprung, who completed last Saturday 25 years' activity, has been presented by his colleagues of the Federal Tribunal in Lausanne with an illuminated address.

Mr. Henry Schaub, of Basle, has been appointed honorary Swiss Consul at Brisbane.

During their short stay in Switzerland the two American aviators, Chamberlin and Levine, paid a visit to the Scintilla works, near Solothurn, the makers of the magnetos which were fitted to their aeroplane engines.

Two young Swiss, Jakob Benz and Eduard Hitz, both from Zurich, have been arrested at Le Havre on a charge of spying; they are stated to have taken photographs of the coastal fortifications at Dollemard.

Copious rains have fallen in the canton Ticino, partly interrupting railway traffic and threatening inundations from the swollen rivers.

An appalling motor accident happened last Sunday afternoon above the Urnerloch, when a descending eight-seater fell into the Schöllenen ravine, owing, it is alleged, to a defect in the steering gear. Two of the occupants were killed on the spot; they are MM. Thiel and Eug. Hurschler, both on the staff of the Grand Hotel and Kurhaus Cattani in Engelberg. With the exception of the owner-driver, C. Feierabend, from Engelberg, and a passenger, the others were taken to the military hospital at Andermatt.

National Councillor Alberto Vigizzi has died at the age of 54 at Solduno, near Locarno, from pneumonia following influenza. A Liberal in politics, he took an active part in the public life of the Ticino, and was also at the head of several industrial undertakings. His place in the National Council will be taken by Sig. Rusca, the syndic of Locarno.

## EXTRACTS FROM SWISS PAPERS.

**Comité Suisse de la Fête Nationale.**—Le Comité Suisse de la Fête Nationale qui s'efforce depuis quelques années de faire du 1er août une journée où se manifestent tout particulièrement nos sentiments de solidarité envers nos concitoyens déshérités, a décidé, avec l'approbation du Conseil fédéral, de répartir le résultat de la prochaine collecte entre les garde-malades invalides, décision qui sera sûrement approuvée par le public. Depuis la fondation du Comité en 1910 il a été institué, en faveur d'oeuvres d'utilité publique, 17 collectes qui ont rapporté une somme totale de fr. 1,813,000. Depuis 1922 le produit de ces collectes a été constamment en augmentant pour atteindre son maximum, à savoir fr. 365,000 l'année dernière. Cette somme a été distribuée aux mères nécessiteuses et répartie uniformément dans tous les cantons, sur la base de la population. Un reliquat de fr. 12,000 a été réservé aux mères suisses nécessiteuses à l'étranger. Ce beau résultat est un témoignage éclatant de l'esprit de sacrifice du peuple suisse en faveur de ceux qui luttent avec peine pour leur existence, et il justifie pleinement l'activité du Comité de la Fête Nationale et le but qu'il se propose.

Deux cartes de fête et un insigne de soie, produit d'une industrie suisse qui souffre cruellement de la crise économique, seront mis en vente, comme les années précédentes. Nous espérons que notre action considérée comme une manifestation d'entraide sociale pourra compter sur l'appui et le bienveillant concours du public.

Feuille d'avis, Montreux.

**Des démissions sensationnelles ?**—Le bruit court avec une étrange persistance au Palais fédéral que l'année 1928 ne verrait plus à leur poste MM. les conseillers fédéraux Haerberlin et Chuard, deux hommes qui, à des titres divers et dans des domaines différents, ont su conquérir le respect populaire.

Bien que M. Chuard, qui, on s'en souvient, avait refusé son élection au Conseil fédéral et ne s'était décidé que sur les pressantes instances de ses amis et pour conserver au canton de Vaud un siège qui risquait de passer à un autre, parle très ouvertement de son désir de revenir à Lausanne et à ses chères études, nous ne croyons réellement pas qu'il résigne son mandat avant la période normale, autrement dit avant fin 1928. Sa santé, qui avait été un peu chancelante au début, semble s'être plutôt raffermie et l'on peut souhaiter de tout coeur que ce magistrat, si droit et si bon sous des apparences parfois un peu froides, conserve encore son poste jusqu'au moment où l'on aura trouvé un successeur digne de lui.

Pour ce qui est de M. Haerberlin, on dit qu'avant la votation populaire du 15 mai sur la loi frappant les automobiles et les cycles, il aurait déclaré à ses amis que, si cette loi ne passait pas, il se retirerait de la vie politique, ne pouvant supporter ce nouvel échec. Comme M. Haerberlin ne parle pas à la légère et ne fait pas de menaces en l'air, on appréhende fort qu'il ne donne suite à son funeste dessein d'ici à la fin de la présente année. On fait tout pour l'en dissuader. Dans le peuple comme dans le monde parlementaire, on regretterait vivement de voir un magistrat universellement estimé prendre sa retraite dans un geste de dépit. On le regrettera encore bien plus suivant le successeur que lui donnera le Parlement.

Espérons donc, à tous égards, que M. Haerberlin reviendra sur ce qu'on donne comme étant son intention.

La Suisse, Geneva.

**Les poursuites et faillites à Bern.**—D'après une statistique, les commandements de payer qui n'étaient envoyés avant la guerre qu'au nombre de 20,000 ou 25,000 par an dans la ville de Bern, se sont élevés en 1926 à 50,000. Ainsi, à Bern, un habitant sur deux reçoit un commandement de payer. La moitié de ces commandements de payer concernent le paiement d'impôts en retard. Les impôts prélevés par la ville de Bern ont d'ailleurs, eux aussi, augmenté dans une proportion effrayante. Le chiffre index qui était de 100 en 1914, était pour la moyenne des années 1921 à 1925 de 430. Les poursuites fiscales ont passé elles-mêmes de 123 à 300 pour mille habitants.

Sur 45,000 commandements de payer envoyés en 1926, 5,400 seulement ont abouti à une constitution de sûreté, et 1,088 à une réalisation de gage. 6,600 actes de défaut ont été délivrés.

Avant la guerre, il y avait à Bern, 60 à 80 faillites par an. De 1921 à 1925, 54 seulement en moyenne; en 1926, 73.

Des 634 faillites prononcées de 1911 à 1925, le 22,1% concerne des commerces de confection et d'objets de luxe; le 13,9% des représentants; le

## ANNIVERSARIES OF SWISS EVENTS.

July 10th, 1509.—Calvin born at Noyon in Picardy.

His father, an episcopal official, intended him for the priesthood. Though in his studies he outstripped all his fellow-students, his father changed his mind and forced him to abandon theology for jurisprudence. On the death of the father, however, in 1531 the son followed his own inclination and Humanism occupied the chief place in his studies. Thoroughly shaken in his belief in the Catholic Church—his father had died excommunicated—he took part in the secret assemblies of the small Protestant community in Paris. When, towards the close of 1534, Francis I. began to burn heretics, Calvin fled to Strasbourg, subsequently settling down in Basle, where he completed his famous work "Institutio Religionis Christianae." After a short visit to Italy, and with the intention of returning to France, he stayed for one night in Geneva, where Farel heard by chance of his presence and at once determined to keep him as a fellow-worker. Late in the evening Farel arrived at the inn and spoke to Calvin with so much weight that the latter agreed to take up his residence in Geneva. At that time Calvin was a man of twenty-seven, of small stature and with a haggard and sickly countenance; it was only his penetrating eyes, overshadowed by a powerful brow, which produced an impression. —(Oechslin).

July 16th, 1890.—Gottfried Keller dies in Zurich.

"Lass unser Vaterland niemals im Streite ums Brot, geschweige denn im Streite um Vorteil und Ueberfluss untergehen."

13,6% des marchands de denrées alimentaires; le 12,8% des artisans; le 8% des fabricants, banquiers, hôteliers et architectes. 235 faillites furent suspendues en cours de route, 443 liquidées. Les sommes perdues dans les faillites, y compris les successions involvables se montent à 47 millions de francs. Plus du 80% de ces faillites ont abouti à un découvert inférieur à 100,000 fr.; le 14% à un découvert de 100,000 fr. à un million; et le 1% à un découvert supérieur à un million de francs; à cette catégorie de faillites appartiennent surtout les tenants des professions libérales: médecins, avocats et notaires. Le 62% des pertes est supporté par le commerce et l'industrie.

La moyenne des pertes s'est élevée par comparaison avec les chiffres d'avant-guerre. De 1911 à 1915, le 82% des pertes était de 50,000 fr. Actuellement, il n'y en a plus que le 55% de ce chiffre.

La Liberté, Fribourg.

**Les dégâts des hannetons.**—Maintenant que le temps des hannetons est passé, on peut se rendre compte des dégâts qu'ils ont causés. Si ces insectes nuisibles ont été moins nombreux que d'autres années, ce n'était pas une raison pour ne pas leur faire la chasse, comme l'ont cru certains agriculteurs.

Voici une expérience qui se passe de commentaires. Dans une commune suisse de la vallée du Rhône pour laquelle les hannetons avaient une prédilection particulière, on choisit deux hectares de terrain cultivé ayant à peu près la même valeur. L'un fut consciencieusement fouillé et débarrassé de tous les vers blancs qui s'y trouvaient. Sur l'autre, on ne toucha pas aux vers blancs et on laissa se multiplier les hannetons. Au bout de peu de temps, la différence entre les deux champs sauta aux yeux. Le champ duquel on avait extirpé tous les vers blancs produisit 1000 kilogrammes de foin de plus que l'autre. De ce fait, c'est une perte de 15,000 litres de lait pour le propriétaire du champ dévasté.

Qu'on calcule maintenant ce que les hannetons coûtent à la Suisse!

En 1869, grande année de hannetons, des forêts entières de l'Allemagne du sud ont eu leur feuillage complètement mangé et les arbres furent réduits à l'état de balais.

En 1911, dans le Palatinat, on a recueilli sur un espace de terrain de 1750 hectares 23 millions de hannetons. En Saxe, 30,000 quintaux de hannetons ont été pris et apportés aux autorités.

Democrate, Delemont.

**Témoins d'au revoir.**—Au cours de travaux de canalisation à Winterthur, on a trouvé la semaine passée un boulet de canon en molasse de 22 centimètres de diamètre et d'un poids de 1,5 kg. Ce projectile provient sans doute du siège de la ville

de Winterthur par les Confédérés, en automne de l'année 1460, car à cette époque elle appartenait à l'Autriche. En conquérant la Thurgovie, les Suisses avaient également jeté leur dévolu sur Winterthur qu'ils serrèrent de près du 20 septembre au 7 décembre.

La chronique relate entre autres que les Bernois avaient mis un gros canon en position au Heiligberg; mais ils n'osaient pas s'en servir à volonté, car la ville de Winterthur leur devait passablement d'argent et en la bombardant ils risquaient de perdre le gage de leurs créances. Les Zurichois, de leur côté, qui disposaient aussi de très bonnes bouches à feu, désiraient cependant pour leur part posséder à eux seuls la ville, qu'ils ménageaient ainsi à leur tour. Les projectiles qu'ils lançaient ne causaient pas grands dégâts. Ils avaient un mortier tirant avec des projectiles de pierre pesant jusqu'à 80 livres; mais ils ne faisaient que briser des tuiles ou des fenêtres. Un de ces "obus" traversa le toit d'une maison et vint choir à la cuisine où il écrasa une écuelle à soupe sans blesser personne. Un autre boulet fut retrouvé dans une étable du Marché-Neuf entre les jambes d'une vache, qui n'avait eu aucun mal. C'était encore la guerre pour rire vis-à-vis de notre époque actuelle.

Feuille d'Avis, Montreux.

**L'invasion pacifique.**— La presse a maintes fois fait allusion au grand nombre d'agriculteurs de la Suisse allemande cherchant à acquérir des domaines dans le canton de Vaud. Mais ce qui est plus significatif c'est la cohorte de jeunes gens et jeunes filles venant chaque année pour apprendre le français et si possible trouver une place stable. On peut s'en rendre compte par la proportion de Suisses allemands constatés dans les classes de cours complémentaires en hiver surtout en campagne où leurs services sont généralement très appréciés. En villes ces jeunes gens forment en moyenne la cinquième de l'effectif. Dans les villages les Suisses allemands sont parfois plus nombreux que leurs camarades helvétiques.

Cet engouement pour la langue française et la terre romande est encore plus fort chez les jeunes filles. Dernièrement une ménagère des environs de Rolle désirant une volontaire pour aider aux soins intérieurs de la ferme mit une annonce dans un journal bernois. Elle eut plus de 40 offres. On devine son embarras.

La présence de tant de jeunes gens en ville cause une concurrence sérieuse à ceux de la localité tandis que dans les villages ils comblent des vides causés par des départs toujours regrettables.

Feuille d'Avis de Lausanne.

**NOTES AND GLEANINGS.**

**Switzerland and Russia.**

The *Manchester Guardian* (June 27th) has an exhaustive report of the proceedings in both the States and National Councils, when the government had to justify and clarify its position in regard to the compromise which enabled Russia to send official delegates to the conferences in Geneva.

The Swiss Parliament discussed the compromise on the Vorowski dispute and Swiss-Russian relations in general. As had been expected, the Swiss Government was severely criticised by Conservative members for having concluded the Berlin Agreement with the Soviet Government and thus helped to make possible the presence of a Soviet Russian delegation at the League Economic Conference and therefore their presence on Swiss territory. It was asserted that the Swiss Government had rendered no service to the League by enabling the Soviet delegates to attend League conferences, and that their presence in Geneva might lead to Bolshevik propaganda in Switzerland. The Opposition, in particular, urged that the Swiss Government should take no further step towards agreement with Russia, and in no case recognise the Soviet Government *de jure*.

The Swiss President, M. Motta, declared that the Swiss Government unanimously accepted full responsibility for the Berlin compromise. It was known that the League of Nations desired that the Swiss-Russian dispute on Vorowski should be settled so that any pretext for Russian absence from the League conferences in Geneva should be taken away. Nevertheless, the League of Nations had with strict correctness abstained from any pressure on the Swiss Government and had maintained Geneva as a meeting place for important League conferences notwithstanding Russian protests. Under those circumstances the Swiss Government unanimously felt obliged to enter into direct negotiations with Russia in Berlin as soon as the Government was informed from a private source that the Soviet Government desired to re-open the Swiss-Russian negotiations of last year.

The question whether it was useful to the League that the Russian delegates should attend League conferences had not to be answered by the Swiss Government but by the League itself. As for the danger of Bolshevik propaganda by Soviet delegates to the League conferences, the Swiss Government would never tolerate Bolshevik propaganda in Switzerland by foreigners.

M. Motta reassured the Opposition that the Swiss Government had no intention of granting *de jure* recognition to the Soviet. The Swiss Government realise that Governments had no business to interfere with the internal policy of other Governments, but in the Russian case the Swiss Government is not convinced that the Soviet system conforms to the free wishes of the Russian nation. Moreover, the Soviet Government had not yet renounced the idea of kindling the fire of revolution in other countries. Notwithstanding all promises to nations which officially recognised Soviet Russia, the Soviet Government did not cease revolutionary propaganda, which was inconsistent with the rules of international law.

Finally, M. Motta declared that events in Soviet Russia during the last few weeks completely justified this negative attitude. "Civilised man," M. Motta said, "is horrified by those bloody reprisals which recall the darkest periods of history."

**The Basle Trading Co.**

According to the following from *Truth* (June 22nd) there are good prospects that this concern will receive some compensation for the unwarranted confiscation of its property during the war. The B.T.C. was, of course, a creation of the well-known Basle Mission, which was so extremely successful in combining the propagation of the Gospel with commercial activities amongst the natives of the Dark Continent. If the claim for reparations succeeds, it constitutes one of those rare cases where the rights of neutral property—supposed to be inviolate in war on the strength of international agreement—have not only been officially admitted but their infringement rectified. Viscount Templeton, who has identified himself with these particular Swiss interests, is not unknown in our Colony; his Lordship has for the last few years regularly attended the annual banquets of the City Swiss Club.

When I last referred to the remarkable story of the confiscation of the property of the Basle Trading Co. in West Africa and in India I mentioned that Lord Templeton, supported by other peers, would probably call attention to the matter in the House of Lords. The discussion has been deferred, and there is now reason to hope that it may, after all, be unnecessary. There is an extraordinarily strong case for the restoration of the Swiss company's property, or alternatively for the payment of compensation.

As the outcome of war-time measures, the property was alienated and handed over to the Commonwealth Trust, an English company, under what was obviously a complete misapprehension of the facts in regard to its neutral ownership, which, in the opinion of high authorities, rendered such a proceeding "entirely without justification according to international law." The French Government recognised this some time ago. The British Colonial Office has virtually admitted that a mistake was made, and I understand that Mr. Amery is now conducting negotiations, which it is to be hoped will terminate in a speedy and satisfactory settlement of a very awkward and unpleasant affair.

**Hero Worship.**

Personal feats of a passing importance do not arouse the same interest in Switzerland as over here, and this is why the Bernese correspondent of the *Manchester Guardian* (June 30th) calls us "unemotional." No doubt the attitude of the Swiss Press is partly responsible for this; the imagination of the masses is not stimulated as is done by the English papers, and the relationship of the latter with the particular trade interests which benefit by this apparently free propaganda is much more intimate. However, I believe we dispose of a truer appreciation of things that matter: the exploit of these two airmen is an affirmation of human endurance and determination exhibited daily by many in less obtrusive walks of life and not acknowledged by a fraction of the spectacular recognition so precisely staged in the capitals of Europe and emulated by our own magistrates.

The famous transatlantic flyers, Messrs. Chamberlin and Levine, were the guests of the Swiss Government at Berne, where they were received with similar official honours as in other European capitals, though the Swiss people once again confirmed their rather unemotional nature and their dislike of hero-worship. Hardly a hundred people were present when at noon Messrs. Chamberlin and Levine arrived in a Swiss Government motor-car before the Federal Palace, where the Swiss President, M. Motta, granted them an audience and welcomed them to Swiss territory.

Many anxious hours were spent at Dubendorf, near Zurich, where Chamberlin and Levine were expected to land about five o'clock, coming from Warsaw. Representatives from the Swiss Government, the Zurich canton and the municipality, and the American Legation from Berne attended in vain until ten o'clock at night, but news about the flyers arrived neither from the German intermediary stations nor from Prague

or Vienna, where the flyers possibly might have stopped. It was reported from all sides that stormy weather prevailed everywhere over Central Europe. The officials then returned to Zurich, where they enjoyed, with fifty invited guests, an excellent banquet, but the carefully prepared English speeches of welcome to Chamberlin and Levine could not be delivered.

Later information showed that the airmen had been obliged to land at Munich owing to a terrible thunderstorm, but they would continue their flight to Dubendorf early this morning, where they arrived at nine o'clock. The Swiss airman, M. Mittelholzer, well known for his flights to Persia and Africa, welcomed the Americans at Dubendorf and conducted them to Thun, near Interlaken, whence Government cars transported them and their wives to Berne, where to-night they will be the guests of the Swiss Government at an official banquet.

**Air Taxies in the Alps.**

From the *Morning Post* (June 24th):—

Plans for a unique air service have been completed by Captain Leslie Hamilton, the owner of the only private amphibian air taxi in the country. It is designed to cater solely for Swiss winter sports enthusiasts and will operate between Lake St. Moritz and the Marie Maltiz glacier.

A fleet of three Napier-D.H. machines will be used at the outset and an hourly service will be maintained. Each machine will carry eight people and their equipment. Passengers will embark on the frozen lake, and for "taking off" from and landing on the ice the planes will be fitted with special large runners or skis.

The intention is for winter sports enthusiasts to fly to the glacier, from which they will ski down, and they will be able to make the return by air. This will obviate the necessity of climbing. The service will be opened as soon as the winter sports season begins. It was his own experience in Switzerland last winter which made Captain Hamilton decide to inaugurate this novel airway.

**A Queer Case.**

Some choice morsels are sometimes picked up in strange places, and the following I found in *West Africa* (June 29th):—

The cantonal tribunal of St. Gall, Switzerland, tried a queer case last week, when a tradesman asked for a divorce from his wife, an enormous woman, on the sole ground of her "abnormal obesity." The petitioner declared that his wife ate as much as four adults, and his savings had been squandered in buying food for her. She had taken a dozen different medicines in attempts to reduce her appetite and weight, but all of them had failed. The amused jury dismissed the case, considering obesity no cause for divorce.

**QUOTATIONS from the SWISS STOCK EXCHANGES.**

| BONDS.                             | June 28 |         | July 5  |    |
|------------------------------------|---------|---------|---------|----|
|                                    | Fr.     | S.      | Fr.     | S. |
| Confederation 3% 1903 ...          | 79.25   | 80.00   |         |    |
| 5% 1917, VIII Mob. Ln ...          | 101.50  | 101.75  |         |    |
| Federal Railways 3½% A—K ...       | 84.10   | 84.10   |         |    |
| " " 1924 IV Elect. Ln ...          | 101.75  | 102.00  |         |    |
| SHARES.                            |         |         |         |    |
|                                    | Nom     | June 28 | July 5  |    |
| Swiss Bank Corporation ...         | Fr. 500 | Fr. 771 | Fr. 777 |    |
| Crédit Suisse ...                  | 500     | 823     | 820     |    |
| Union de Banques Suisses ...       | 500     | 690     | 700     |    |
| Société pour l'Industrie Chimique  | 1000    | 2335    | 2375    |    |
| Fabrique Chimique ci-dev. Sandoz   | 1000    | 3763    | 3885    |    |
| Soc. Ind. pour la Schappe ...      | 1000    | 2860    | 2855    |    |
| S.A. Brown Boveri ...              | 350     | 565     | 557     |    |
| C. F. Bally ...                    | 1000    | 1293    | 1333    |    |
| Nestlé & Anglo-Swiss Cond. Mk. Co. | 200     | 672     | 674     |    |
| Entreprises Suizer S.A. ...        | 1000    | 1010    | 1043    |    |
| Comp. de Navig'n sur le Lac Léman  | 500     | 560     | 555     |    |
| Linoleum A.G. Grubisacco ...       | 100     | 110     | 100     |    |
| Maschinenfabrik Oerlikon ...       | 500     | 733     | 735     |    |

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