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# The Swiss Observer

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## HOME NEWS

The budget of the Swiss Confederation for the end of 1926 closes with a debit balance of 9.4 million francs, though a deficit of over 24 million francs had originally been anticipated. The total indebtedness on that date was 2,175 million francs and nearly 80 million francs had been paid off during that period.

It is officially announced that the long-standing dispute between Switzerland and the Soviet Government has been settled through the good offices of German diplomacy. As a condition the Swiss Federal Council "absolutely condemns and greatly regrets" the criminal acts at the Lausanne Conference in May, 1923, which culminated in the murder of the unofficial Russian delegate, Vorovsky, and also declares its willingness to grant an indemnity to the daughter of the victim, subject to certain Swiss claims being admitted. Great satisfaction is expressed in official circles at Bern over the success of these negotiations, whilst in Moscow the result seems to be hailed as a great diplomatic victory. The immediate outcome will be the removal of the trade boycott between the two countries, though the regular exchange of diplomatic courtesies by the re-opening of legations in the respective capitals will be subject to a good many other considerations.

The new Federal Motor Bill, which regulates the traffic of mechanically-driven vehicles in the whole of Switzerland, will be submitted to the plebiscite on May 15th, the referendum having secured over 91,000 signatures. Though favoured by all the political parties, considerable controversy is expected to precede the votation as the bulk of the motorists strongly object to the compulsory insurance and liability clauses contained in the Bill.—On the same date largely increased Federal subsidies to the cantons of Uri, Grisons, Ticino and Valais for the upkeep of the international alpine route will have to be voted upon.

At the next Landsgemeinde (May 1st) of the canton Uri a proposal is being submitted to fine all those who take their stand in the ring or participate in a show of hands though not entitled to the cantonal vote.

Probably on account of the heavy rains, a landslide has occurred just below the Balmlluh, near Balm (Solothurn), where a meadow and other cultivated land has disappeared into the abyss and the telephone standards sunk into the ground.

By a legacy of Frs. 122,000 under the will of Frau D. Legler-Weber, the widow of a former States Councillor, several philanthropic institutions of the canton Glaris are deriving considerable benefit.

For slandering the Rev. Mr. Altwegg, of Wipkingen-Zurich, the district court has sentenced the two editors of the now defunct publication "Morgenstern," Jean Hirt and Eugen Schneider, to a fine of Frs. 300 each. The slander was contained in an article which accused the clergyman of using the pulpit for propagating his own political views.

A cashier of the Zurich branch of the Swiss National Bank, Oscar Kessler, has mysteriously disappeared, a deficiency of Frs. 560,000 being subsequently discovered in his cash entries. As a few days previously he had obtained a passport it is surmised that he has left the country; in the meantime his private motor launch has been found adrift on the lake of Zurich with the engine in such a condition as to lead to the assumption that he had fallen overboard when refilling the tank with oil. A reward of Frs. 10,000 has been offered for information which may lead to his arrest.

Losing control of his car through the bursting of a tyre, Franz Grosse, a baker of Biberist (Solothurn) was thrown against a fence; he was taken to the local hospital in a hopeless condition.

The unattended level-crossing near Villmergen-Anglikon was the scene of a fatal accident when the farmer Adolf Setz-Berner, from Dintikon, crossing in a trap, was thrown on the boiler of an approaching engine; a child sitting next to him in the trap was later on picked up on the permanent way in a critical condition.

While cycling Hans Roth, a decorator in Olten, collided with a motor-cycle and subsequently died from the injuries received.

## FIRST OF AUGUST CELEBRATION.

As in previous years, the Swiss National Committee is making a special appeal for funds, which on this occasion will be devoted to the *Welfare of Invalid Nurses*. The badge, which will be sold in our Colony at 1s., is in the form of a silk ribbon depicting the Federal Cross. It is hoped that everyone will contribute to this patriotic work of charity, and that the London collection will constitute a powerful manifestation from Swiss abroad.

## NOTES AND GLEANINGS.

### The Basle Mission and the British Government.

In a leading article, *Truth* (April 6th) comments on the wrongs which, under the pressure of war-time agitation, have been inflicted on this neutral enterprise and which the British Government is very reluctant to redress. The article is inspired by a recent motion in the House of Lords in the name of Lord Templeton and drawing attention to the still unsatisfied claims of the Basle Trading Co. :—

For a great many years before the war Swiss missionary enterprises had been carried on in West Africa, in India and elsewhere by means of two separate and distinct, though associated, organisations—the Société Evangélique des Missions de Bâle, founded in 1814, and the Société Commerciale des Missions de Bâle, founded in 1854. It will be convenient to refer to these concerns as the Basle Mission and the Basle Trading Co. respectively. The former was engaged in purely religious work; the latter was a trading company which, after payment of 5 per cent. to its shareholders, handed over its surplus profits to missionary societies—chiefly the Basle Mission. The trading company devoted itself to the encouragement and development of native industries, especially agriculture, and I am told that it did much to promote the remarkably successful native cocoa-growing industry of the Gold Coast. In the course of time the Company had built up a very extensive and valuable business both in West Africa and in India. From the outset of the war there were complaints both in India and in West Africa of the German character and connections of the Basle Mission. It is admitted that the Basle Trading Co. also had some German directors, but 88 per cent. of the shareholders were Swiss. In November, 1914, the Company, as a neutral operating in British territory, got rid of its German directors and employees and stopped its subsidies to the Basle Mission, finally severing all connection with the Mission. Both in India and in West Africa the authorities took action against the Mission, eventually confiscating its properties in 1916.

In the case of the Basle Trading Co., an agreement was made with the British Government in 1916, whereby the Company transferred the control of its business to agents in England who were nominated by the Government. The Gold Coast Government, however, continued to hold that the presence of the Company was "a definite source of danger to the colony" (!) because of the alleged pro-German sympathies of some of its Swiss employees, and at the beginning of 1918 the Legislative Council passed an ordinance under which the Company's property was sequestered. Similar action had been taken in India, and the British Government, after protracted discussions, evolved a scheme for the permanent expropriation of the property of the Basle Trading Co. Its Swiss owners valued this property—comprising lands, factories, stores, machinery, and stock in trade—at £1,500,000. The British Government offered them £120,000 as compensation—this being the amount of the nominal share capital—but held that for the rest the property was in the nature of a trust for the natives and could be dealt with on that footing.

Eventually in 1919 the Commonwealth Trust, Limited, was formed with a nominal capital of £60,000 of which £51,000 was subscribed, to take over and manage the Basle company's assets and business, the articles of association keeping the new Trust in some respects under the control of the Colonial Secretary, strictly limiting dividends to 5 per cent., and providing that surplus profits shall be applied to native education and welfare. Coming into possession of a great commercial undertaking with no purchase price or even rent to pay, the Trust was placed in an exceptionally advantageous position. Instead of profits, however, the Trust made losses on the Gold Coast aggregating nearly £370,000. In India

## ANNIVERSARIES OF SWISS EVENTS.

April 24th, 1832.—First Federal Gymnastic Festivities at Aarau.

April 24th, 1732.—Execution of Major Abraham Davel. In the battle of Villmergen (1712) he had distinguished himself, and was therefore appointed one of the four majors who had to conduct the military manoeuvres of Vaud. Major Davel was universally loved as a man of the finest character and of profound piety verging on mysticism. In the dispute regarding the *Formula Consensus* he was wholly on the side of the academy of Lausanne; and the persecution which that body experienced at the hands of the Bernese government was regarded by him as an intolerable oppression of his conscience. He also regarded the temporal rule of the Bernese bailiffs with profound disapproval; and for these reasons there matured in his mind the idea of detaching Vaud from Bern, in order to make it a fourteenth canton of the Confederation. He disdained to gain over recruits in secret meetings, or to make underhand preparations of any kind, for he wished to have no accomplices in case of failure. The only crafty action performed by this remarkable conspirator was that in the spring of 1723, when the offices of the bailiffs were vacated and all of them had gone to Bern, he collected the unsuspecting troops of his district as if for a review and entered Lausanne at their head. Here he appeared before the town council and disclosed his design. If Lausanne would lead the rising the whole country would follow.

Instead of agreeing to this proposal the honourable gentlemen of Lausanne were so greatly alarmed "at this detestable proceeding" that they immediately sent a special messenger to Bern, and threw the guileless Davel into prison. In Bern the news at first caused great excitement which, however, soon subsided when it was seen that all remained quiet in Vaud. Consequently Bern was able to allow the case to be peacefully judged by the Lausanne council; and when this body condemned Davel to have his right hand hewn off and to be subsequently decapitated, Bern was able to display a semblance of magnanimity by commuting the sentence to a simple decapitation. With Christian calmness, and convinced that his sacrifice would not be in vain, the high-minded man went to meet his death.—*Oechsli*.

April 26th, 1573.—Duke Sforza cedes Lugano to Switzerland.

April 27th, 1792.—Porrentruy annexed by France.

April 28th, 1487.—The Confederates defeated by the Milanese.

the profits in six years have amounted to £25,000. Some time ago the Indian branches were entrusted to managing agents, Messrs. Parry and Co.

Seeing what a mess has been made of the African section of the business, a body of the shareholders have urged that this, too, should be placed in more experienced hands. The African and Eastern Trade Corporation has offered to assume the management in Africa on terms, including a guaranteed profit of £10,000 a year for the Commonwealth Trust. The offer has been rejected. As one reason for this decision, Mr. A. D. Jackson, the chairman, objected to the association of the Trust with a company which, among other things, is concerned with the sale of spirits to natives. Apart from the willingness of the proposed managers to undertake that liquor should not be sold in the Trust shops, the Trust chairman's objection is decidedly curious. Mr. Jackson holds one other directorship—and that is a directorship of an Indian distillery company. But there is another and perhaps a still more forcible reason why the Commonwealth Trust is reluctant to give up the management of a business in which it has been losing about £50,000 a year. The business provides a number of well-paid jobs.

Much more important, however, than this dispute in regard to the management by the Commonwealth Trust is the question raised by Lord Templeton's notice of motion. The question is whether the confiscation of the property of the Basle Trading Co. was not legally, as well as morally, an unjustifiable act. Sir John Simon, K.C., Mr. F. H. Maugham, K.C., and Mr. John Barrington Ward, K.C., gave a

very emphatic joint opinion on this question in 1919. "We are of opinion," they wrote, "that the action taken by the Government of the Gold Coast with reference to the property by means of the Ordinance of 1918 is entirely without justification according to international law."

*Truth* further points out that as long ago as October, 1921, the French Government revoked a similar confiscation referring to property of Swiss missionary enterprises situate in the former German Cameroons, and wonders how much longer the British Government will hesitate before it follows this example and puts matters right.

#### Switzerland and Russia.

In view of the resumption of diplomatic relations between these two countries the following somewhat fanciful reference published in the *Daily Herald* on April 9th (before the fact became known) is interesting:—

"Switzerland will not resume relations with Russia as long as the tension between England and Russia subsists," said a Swiss political leader when asked to comment on current rumours.

M. Motta, President of the Council of States and Minister for Foreign Affairs, is anxious above everything to please the Great Powers of the League—and the greatest of these is unquestionably England. He would never take the responsibility of a friendly move towards Russia in the present state of Anglo-Russian relations.

Certain Councillors from German Switzerland, on the other hand, would favour resumption. German Switzerland is highly industrial and desires Russian trade. In spite of the unsettled conditions, it carried on £1,600,000 of such trade last year. That is a small percentage of the total of Swiss foreign trade—roughly £64,000,000—but it is divided among a few very large houses, who have recently been exerting strong pressure for resumption.

French Switzerland, on the contrary, strongly opposes resumption. Its business is preponderantly banking, not industry, and its attitude is dictated by political fear of Russian propaganda. M. Motta is, of course, French Swiss.

#### To Commemorate the Pestalozzi Centenary.

An English biography just published (*Education and Social Welfare in Switzerland*, by A. J. Pressland, Harrap 3/6 net.) is sure to appeal to the residents in our Colony; the volume is thus reviewed by the *Times* (April 9th):—

Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi died at the age of 76 on February 17th, 1827, and the centenary of his death is being celebrated in Germany, France, Italy and England by the publication of biographies that will recall to educational workers in those countries the man whose tireless labours have meant so much to children not only in respect to education and the amenities of life but in respect to their entrance into a workaday world.

These biographies are accompanied, as in this book, by some account of what Pestalozzi's native land has done in the realm of education. Mr. Pressland declares that "Switzerland is the educational laboratory of Europe: within her frontiers are 25 sovereign States, each administering its own educational system." The constitution of the Federal Republic has one important check on the public and, indeed, private school system. It declares that "the public school shall be open to all members of all religious sects without detriment to freedom of conscience and belief." After the Great War the little State of Liechtenstein sought admission to the Federation, but this was refused, since compliance would have increased the Roman Catholic vote. England has outgrown these prejudices, but Switzerland has problems of her own that are not ours.

The Federal Constitution provides for the establishment of a national polytechnic—which, in fact, was founded at Zurich—and a national university, which remains in abeyance. The seven universities have remained cantonal institutions. The Federal Government encourages educational rivalry between the cantons in somewhat the same way as our Board of Education encourages the activities of our various educational authorities. But unfortunately the Federal Government is in the same position as the Federal Government in America, and has no power to appoint inspectors of schools. Consequently there is not the same co-ordination as in England, but economic causes have made all the cantons strive to put all possible advantages at the disposal of the children.

It is obvious that we have something to learn from the Swiss experiments. Mr. Pressland says in his preface that Sir Robert Morant made an exhaustive study of the Swiss Schools before drafting the Education Bill that became law in 1902. No doubt that Act shows traces of this study, especially in the facilities that the Act of 1902 and the Act of 1918, now combined in the Education Act of 1921, offer for the development of means to deal with the social problems of child life and of adult education.

#### From the Swiss Legation in Madrid.

In reporting on a reception given in Madrid by Sir Horace and Lady Rumbold at the British

Embassy the *Morning Post* (April 5th) adds the following:—

On both days the delightful French comedy, "La belle aventure," by MM. Flers and Cailhac, was performed in the theatre salon of the Embassy by well-known persons in Madrid. Madame Stoutz, the wife of the Swiss Minister, was an outstanding success as Helene de Trevignac, while Countess Brauer and the other actors and actresses earned much applause for their clever and amusing representation.

#### The Basle Fair.

Several—mostly trade—papers have published lengthy reports about the Basle Fair; the following is taken from the *Carpenter and Builder* (April 15th):—

The eleventh annual Swiss Industries Fair was opened at Basle on Saturday, April 2nd, by Dr. W. Meile, the Director.

The Fair, which is in direct descent from one held in Basle in the thirteenth century, is the most completely representative of Swiss national industries that has yet been held. It is housed in the new permanent Fair Buildings, which are among the finest in Europe, consisting of six exhibition halls, a restaurant, post and telegraph offices, and private offices for the use of buyers.

There are some 1,100 exhibitors. Every branch of Swiss industry and craftsmanship is included in the exhibits—from the delicate work of the peasant wood carver, done in remote mountain chalets in the winter evenings, to the massive machinery products of the manufacturing centres.

Progress made by the Fair during the past six years is illustrated by the following figures, showing the number of *bona fide* buyers 1921, 30,000; 1922, 36,000; 1923, 36,306; 1924, 49,974; 1925, 55,368; 1926, 65,000.

This year it is thought that between 80,000 and 100,000 buyers' tickets will be issued, as buyers are coming from thirty countries.

Switzerland is a greater factor in the trade of the world than is generally realised. For a small country of less than four millions, the output of goods is astonishing. In 1924 the three main industries exported goods to the value of 1,760 million francs, divided as follows: Textile, 857 million francs; Metallurgical, 746 million francs; Foodstuffs, 153 million francs.

The income derived from the tourist traffic is greatly over-estimated abroad. Actually it does not amount to more than 5 per cent. of the total national income.

Basle Fair is of especial interest to British producers of raw materials and the rapid extension of Swiss industries cannot do otherwise than open up new markets for them. For Switzerland has no coal and no raw materials. She can become a great producer only being a great importer. One of the chief hindrances to the importation of British materials has been removed by the opening of the new port of Basle with direct water communication by way of the Rhine to the North Sea. Previously the excessive cost of long overland transport and of transshipment was often prohibitive.

The exhibits are divided into 19 groups.

I had a brief interview after the opening ceremony with Dr. Meile, who expressed his great satisfaction at the interest in the Fair which was being taken in England. He stressed particularly the value of the Fair to British manufacturers and British exporters of raw materials as a means of bringing them into direct contact with Swiss importers. Swiss national industries were increasing in scope at a rapid rate. It was her aim to become a considerable manufacturing nation, but she could produce much only by importing much.

Dr. Meile recalled that imports from Great Britain into Switzerland in 1925 totalled in value 277,543,000 Swiss francs. Even that high figure could be increased. In 1925 Swiss exports to England were valued at 420,068,000 Swiss francs.

An interesting participant in the Fair is the tiny Principality of Liechtenstein, the smallest independent State in Europe with the exception of Monaco and San Marino. It is included because it lies within the same economic area as Switzerland, has a Swiss currency, and follows Swiss customs and regulations. It is twelve miles long and about sixty square miles in area.

Liechtenstein lies south of Lake Constance, along the right bank of the Rhine. Swiss, Austrian and Liechtenstein frontiers meet on the summit of the Rothe Wand, 8,445ft. high.

#### LA RUSSIE ET NOUS.

De Romanshorn à Genève, de Bâle au Tessin, des Verrières aux Grisons, on ne parle depuis hier que d'une chose; tous les journaux y consacrent de longs articles et de nombreuses colonnes; le public suit avec avidité les moindres renseignements qui nous arrivent de Berne et de Berlin, prend parti, juge, réplique avec plus ou moins d'aigreur, congratule on se fâche; car l'opinion de la Mère-Patrie est complètement divisée sur ce brûlant sujet. L'affaire en question, comme vous

l'avez deviné, c'est le récent accord russo-suisse, qui vient d'être passé en la capitale de Germanie.

Nous n'avons jamais eu de grandes sympathies pour la dictature du prolétariat et ceci, quelle que soit la force des partis socialiste et communiste chez nous. Les relations diplomatiques d'avant-guerre n'avaient donc jamais été renouées; nous vivions sur une situation de fait comme tant d'autres pays d'Europe, lorsque soudain éclate le drame de Lausanne. En plein Palais-Hôtel, un Suisse échappé de l'enfer soviétique tire sur le plénipotentiaire russe Worowsky, le tue et blesse deux personnes de sa suite, Messieurs Ahrens et Divilkowsky; arrestation et jugement; toute l'Europe emplit la vieille Maison de justice vaudoise et bientôt, à la satisfaction des uns, à la réprobation des autres, c'est l'acquiescement de l'assassin. Aussitôt la Russie des Soviets rompt unilatéralement avec nous et nous boycotté au sens le plus strict du mot.

Vers fin 1925 les Puissances sous les auspices de la Société des Nations décident de réunir une conférence préparatoire du désarmement. Il leur faut la participation de la Russie. En ce qui la concerne cette dernière ne tient nullement à se rendre à Genève. C'est le moment où l'accord de non-agression avec la Pologne n'est pas encore conclu, et c'est à Moscou une période de cerveaux échauffés et de difficultés intérieures. Pour ne pas aller discuter il faut un prétexte; l'affaire Worowsky s'y prête admirablement; la Société des Nations ayant son siège en Suisse on entreprend un petit chantage politique qui de toutes façons ne peut qu'être utile aux Soviets et nuisible à l'institution wilsonienne. Si les Puissances acceptent de se réunir ailleurs, c'est un affront sans précédent et grave par ses conséquences pour ce peuple de libres paysans qui eut le courage d'affirmer sa totale indépendance en libérant Conradi; si elles refusent, les bolchévistes restent chez eux et en sont entièrement satisfaits. Mais la France tient à la présence des Russes, elle s'entremet entre les deux pays. Elle cherche un compromis, elle parvient à la mettre sur pied, la Suisse l'accepte, au dernier moment la Russie le rejette, et resse chez elle. La raison? Les excuses ne sont pas assez accentuées; ce n'est pas une note diplomatique que l'on cherche c'est l'humiliation de la Suisse. Les négociations sont rompues et le temps passe...

Comme un coup de foudre la presse suisse apprend vendredi dernier qu'un accord a été conclu la veille par l'entremise de notre Légation à Berlin entre nous et Moscou. A trois mois près, ce sont les mêmes bases et les mêmes formules qu'en 1925. Réservant l'avenir et l'indemnité à verser à la fille de Worowsky notre Conseil Fédéral se laisse aller à de plus ou moins plates excuses, et ouvre ainsi la porte de Genève aux Représentants de l'Union des Républiques socialistes et soviétiques.

En situant cet accord dans le temps on en devine fort bien la portée et l'utilité. Il va s'ouvrir le mois prochain à Genève sous les auspices de la Société des Nations cette fameuse conférence économique qui doit apporter au monde un remède propre à tous ses maux. Pour réussir ce reconstituant universel il faut la présence du médecin russe. De ce premier contact on attend même plus. Les diplomates, plus que quiconque, savent bien que le bras suit toujours la main et que les Russes une fois à Genève il sera beaucoup plus facile de les retenir que de les appeler. La Suisse n'apparaît plus que comme un pion sur le vaste échiquier des Chancelleries. "On" l'a mis en mouvement. Si ce mouvement répond à une nécessité internationale il n'est nullement prouvé qu'il soit du cadre national. Car les Russes, une fois établis à Genève, ne se contentent nullement des quatre murs du Secrétariat; leur activité se dédoublera bien vite et suivant une habitude qui leur est chère. L'opinion publique proteste. Elle réproche cette courbette trop basse devant ceux qui massacrèrent tant de vies suisses, qui ruinèrent tant de citoyens helvétiques, qui violèrent notre légation pour la piller, et qui assassinèrent notre Chancelier, dont la femme paralysée par la terreur et le chagrin, vient de s'éteindre dans la plus grande misère à l'hôpital d'une de nos grandes villes. Les citoyens estiment en outre pour le moins inopportun de permettre à un des agents provocateurs de venir librement s'installer chez nous et de mener à bien un nouvel essai de communisme intégral.

Voilà où nous en sommes et l'incident n'est pas près d'être clos!

Un citoyen.

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