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The Swiss Observer

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HOME NEWS

FEDERAL.

THE FREE ZONES.

The ten-year old Swiss-French dispute on the Geneva free zones has entered into a new phase by the rupture of the Swiss-French negotiations at Berne, which means apparently a definite failure of the joint efforts to find a compromise by mutual concession. On August 19 of this year, it will be remembered, the Hague World Court of Justice upheld the Swiss claim, declaring that the Versailles Treaty has not abolished the free zones, and does not expressly demand their abolition, but only imposes on the French and Swiss Governments the obligation of entering into negotiations for a new arrangement of the economic relations between Geneva and Upper Savoy. This Hague award involved that M. Poincaré's arbitrary act in 1923 of placing French Customs officers on the political frontier between France and Switzerland was contrary to international law and a violation of Switzerland's treaty rights.

Although the Hague interpretation of the Versailles Treaty was completely contrary to the French legal thesis, the French Delegation, at the fresh diplomatic negotiations started at Berne, refused to enter into any negotiations except on the basis of complete abolition of the free zones. The French delegate, M. Marilly, refused to admit the possibility of any agreement that might involve the withdrawal of French Customs officers from the political frontier. The Swiss Delegation, however, contended that the Hague decision was that the Versailles Treaty did not expressly require the abolition of the free zones. He suggested that the negotiations should be on a broad basis, not excluding necessarily the existence of the free zones, although perhaps contemplating their maintenance in a much restricted form. As both delegations maintained their positions and no progress seemed possible they agreed to discontinue negotiations.

The dispute must now again be submitted to the Hague Court in conformity with the arbitration compromise concluded between M. Herriot and M. Motta in October 1924. Last August the Court had only to decide upon the legal position; now it will have to settle the whole dispute and lay down regulations for the future commercial relations between Geneva and Upper Savoy, deciding at the same time whether the free zones should continue to exist in any form.

The "Manchester Guardian" (of Dec. 12th) made the following interesting comment to the above news:

It is only natural that France should press her claim to economic unity corresponding to her political borders. It really looks as if Switzerland were in a position to claim much the same sort of compensation for the suppression of the "free zones" as France is likely to demand of Germany if economic and political unities are restored in the Saar before 1935. It will be interesting to see how the French case is handled in these two complementary cases.

ILICIT DRUG TRAFFIC.

Several new links have been added to the chain of evidence concerning the illicit drug traffic organization whose premises in Basel were raided by the Swiss police last week. The Swiss authorities are of the opinion that the revelations of the last few days in this country, astonishing as they have been, touch the activities of only minor characters in an illicit traffic the actual centre of which is outside Switzerland, and whose dimensions exceed anything yet brought to light.

Dr. Müller, the German chemist who was arrested in the police raid, has not yet appeared in court. The inquiries made at Vernier, a suburb of Geneva, during Thursday and Friday at the laboratory of a doctor whose name figured in the documents seized at Basel, failed to reveal any illegal action on his part. Numerous further arrests have been made in various parts of Switzerland and at Milan and Trieste, and at Zurich a young manufacturer of chemicals has been arrested on a charge of making a much larger quantity of drugs than is permitted by his licence.

It now appears that the drugs manufactured at Basel and smuggled into Egypt were concealed in powdered glue—not lime, as was reported—and in drums of printing-ink. They included, in addition to what the Basel Cantonal chemist asserts to be heroin, a narcotic made from hemp, the manufacture of which, it is said, is not illegal, but which can be transformed into hasheesh.

LOCAL.

ZURICH.

Thieves forced an entry into the Jelmoli stores in Zurich. They ransacked various offices, but all cash had been put in a safe which they could not attempt to open. The sports-wear department apparently supplied some of their needs; that is the only department which reports goods missing.

Three bandits attacked two men walking along the road from Friesenberg to Albisrieden and demanded their money. The attacked offered resistance, and one of them was stabbed in the course of the struggle. The police has, so far, secured two of the robbers.

N.

Stationmaster Theodor Kym at Schlieren while directing shunting operations, fell in front of a passenger train. The engine severed his head from his body. Kym was 56 years old and married.

St. G.T.

URI.

A tank wagon containing wine jumped the metals inside the St. Gotthard tunnel a few hundred metres distance from Göschenen station. Fortunately the train had already slowed down, so that a serious accident was prevented. But the wine flowed along the tunnel!

N.

BALE.

Miss Franziska Schmidt, aged 72, proprietress of a small drapery shop at N. 9, Feldbergstrasse in Bale, was attacked by a young man who entered the shop on pretence of purchasing something. As soon as the proprietress's back was turned, he hit her on the back of the head with his fist. However, he must have got frightened, for he dashed from the shop without stealing anything. Passers-by took up the pursuit, but were eluded. Miss Schmidt suffers from a broken nose.

A six years old boy, who had been left alone in a first floor flat at Klybeckstrasse, climbed on the balcony railings and lost his balance. He fell head foremost and landed on a washing line drawn across the court yard, so that somebody was able to reach him before he continued his fall. A few abrasions caused by the rope is all the damage done.

N.

ST. GALLEN.

Aged 81, Dr. Elisabeth Völkin died in St. Gall. She was the first woman to establish herself as medical practitioner in St. Gall.

The establishment of Niederer & Co., in Krummenau, cotton weavers, suffered loss by fire. The weaving sheds could be saved, while the premises of some of the auxiliary services connected with the factory were destroyed.

Linus Schneider, merchant in Murg, had suffered financial losses, caused partly by the incompetent way in which he carried on his business. He was also school treasurer and, to help himself out of difficulties, he "borrowed" 22,000F. from the school funds. When found out, he declared himself bankrupt and disclosed liabilities amounting to 40,000F. He continued his purchases until quite recently and, as he must have known that he was insolvent, prosecution for fraudulent bankruptcy has been started.

St. G.T.

BERNE.

Swiss Protestantism has lost one of its leading scholars by the death, at the age of sixty, of Professor W. Hadorn, who held a chair at Berne University. He played an active part in the movements of his Church and was a delegate to the Stockholm Conference on Life and Work. His writings were voluminous. They included a history of the Protestant Churches of Switzerland.

SOLEURE.

With the title "Association des Coureurs Motorcyclistes Suisses" an association of motorcycle racing men has just been formed at Olten, with 30 members as a beginning.

ALPINE MEETING PLACE FOR WORLD'S SCOUTS.

Mr. G. Kunzle, of Ley Hall, Northfield, has just made a magnificent gift to the Boy Scout movement.

Mr. Kunzle owns a chateau at Davos Dorf. This he has adapted, by the addition of an annexe, for the accommodation of guests.

These guests are to be Boy Scouts of all nations, the purpose being to foster international friendship and understanding between the youth of the various peoples.

Preference in the matter of accommodation is to be given to Birmingham Scouts, and Mr. Sam Harrison tells me that he hopes to take a party of fifty to the chateau in January.

£600,000 SMUGGLING ALLEGED.

The Grand Jury at New York indicted nine men and a woman for alleged conspiracy to smuggle into the country 3,000,000 dollars' (£600,000) worth of Swiss watch parts.

What role the woman in the case is alleged to have played officials have so far declined to divulge.

THEOLOGY DOCTORATE FOR POET.

Basle University has conferred an honorary doctorate in theology upon the Swiss poet, Emanuel Stickelberger, in recognition of his distinguished services to literature.

NOTES AND GLEANINGS.

By KYBURG.

Life Insurance & Flying Risks:

Amant my notes in our issue of the 7th instant, I have received the following much valued communication from a correspondent, to whom by best thanks:

"It may interest your readers to know that already in 1924 the four Insurance Companies with whom my life was then insured, endorsed the Policies free of any extra charge to cover death through flying risks in machines duly licensed for the carrying of Passengers and I have no doubt that all Insurance Companies will readily include this risk in their Life Insurance Policies, provided always that the insured person is a Passenger in a duly licensed machine."

So now we know and thanks again to my Correspondent!

Writing about flying, I have gleaned some rather wonderful news about the Swiss Air Services. From *The Times*, 10th inst.

Our Geneva Correspondent states that the aggregate distance covered by Swiss air services during the past eight years was 3,906,250 miles, and the number of passengers carried was 62,000. During the same time the machines of Swiss air companies covered 1,562,000 miles without accident and without a single mail-bag being lost. Truly, a wonderful achievement.

And, although I do not think I am very old, I well remember helping my grand-parents, when spending my summer holidays with them, working in the vine-yards of lower Thurgau, and how we used to cease work for a few minutes, about four times a day, i.e., whenever we could see the train slowly perambulating across the scenery on the other side of the lower Thur-Valley and finally run across the very lofty railway bridge near Ossingen, then considered "some" bridge. Fancy, anyone looking up from work now in order to see the train go by! And Swiss air companies covered 1,562,000 miles during the last eight years, without a single accident and without a single mail-bag being lost. Truly, a wonderful achievement.

But, Air Services will be utilised still further and for even more humanitarian purposes. Says "Flight," December 6th:

Arrangements have been made by the Swiss Alpine Club with the Swiss Military Dept. for an experiment to be made next summer with the object of employing military aircraft for life-saving purposes in the Alps. It is intended to discover from the air marooned or injured climbers on the mountains and snowfields, to drop parcels of food to them, and report their precise position.

And I am quite sure that our old friend Tartarin would still think, when one of those food-parcels hit him on the head, as he was sitting in a crevasse, that the whole thing had been engineered by the Society of Hotel-Keepers for his and other tourists' benefit!