

Zeitschrift:	The Swiss observer : the journal of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK
Herausgeber:	Federation of Swiss Societies in the United Kingdom
Band:	- (1930)
Heft:	470
Artikel:	Report on the eleventh Auslandschweizertag
Autor:	Suter, A. Fred.
DOI:	https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-695783

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The Swiss Observer

FOUNDED BY MR. P. F. BOEHINGER.

The Official Organ of the Swiss Colony in Great Britain.

EDITED WITH THE CO-OPERATION OF MEMBERS OF THE LONDON COLONY.

Telephone: CLERKENWELL 9595

Published every Friday at 23, LEONARD STREET, LONDON, E.C.2.

Telegrams: FREPRINCO, LONDON.

VOL. 10—No. 470

LONDON, OCTOBER 25, 1930.

PRICE 3d.

PREPAID SUBSCRIPTION RATES

UNITED KINGDOM	{ 3 Months (12 issues, post free)	3s
AND COLONIES	{ 12 " " 6s	6s
SWITZERLAND	{ 6 Months (20 issues, post free)	Frs. 14.—
	{ 12 " " 5s	

(Swiss subscriptions may be paid into Postscheck-Konto Basle V 5718).



FEDERAL.

THE 1931 BUDGET.

Estimates of the different Federal departments indicate increased expenditure with the likelihood that the year 1931 will balance with a deficit of nearly eight million francs. The disbursements for the army are more than eight millions, out of which four millions are earmarked for new aeroplanes, another four millions goes as a grant toward the Rhine regulations Basle-Strasbourg, two and three-quarter millions are necessary for financing the wheat requirements. Altogether the National expenditure shows an increase of 22.7 million francs.

MILITARY TAX OF THE AUSLANDSCHWEIZER.

At the June Session of the National Council a postulate was presented demanding of the Federal Council the revision of the law regarding military tax, specially pointing out the well-founded complaints of the Auslandschweizer. Now, at the September Session, National Councillor Dufft has again taken up this question and in a postulate demands that the Federal Council take steps regarding the levy of the military tax. That in such a short time two postulates have been presented, both dealing with the military tax of the Auslandschweizer, proves with what impatience the public is expecting an alteration of the existing rule. National Councillor Dufft is putting his finger on a sore spot, namely the inequality of treatment of the military taxpayer by the sovereign Cantons. This is one of the main sources of the dissatisfaction and is the point which must be altered first, because nothing is borne with less ease by a citizen of a democratic state than 25 different treatments of one and the same matter. And this is a case where the Federal Council, awaiting a definite revision, should take administrative action, by getting in touch with the different Cantons, to remedy an almost intolerable situation. *St.G.T.*

SWISS RAILWAY LOAN.

The Swiss Federal Railways will in all probability issue a fresh loan or loans early next year. On July 31, 1931, the 6 per cent. electrification loan of 1921, amounting to 210,000,000 francs (£8,400,000) falls due for redemption, and on December 31, 1931, the railways must refund to the Swiss Federal finance department the 4½ per cent. loan of 1926, amounting to 42,000,000 francs (£1,680,000).

There are also several other similar items to be met and the railways' available funds will not be sufficient for this purpose. It is expected that the new issue or issues will amount in the aggregate to about 300,000,000 Frs. (£12,000,000).

RAILWAY ELECTRIFICATION IN SWITZERLAND.

In 1929, Italy had 1,625 km. of electrified railway; Germany, 1,557 km.; Austria, 580 km.; France, 488 km.; and Norway, 119 km. Switzerland had, during 1929, 1,666 km., which will be increased by 476 km. in 1936, when the second electrification programme has been completed. The length of the principal lines in Switzerland is 3,703 km., and when in 1936, 2,142 km. are electrified the proportion will be 57.8 per cent., or if the various secondary lines and mountain railways be added, the total length becomes 5,485 km.; with 4,834 km. run by electricity the proportion will be 88.1 per cent.

THE BASSANESI TRIAL.

The use of third degree methods during the preliminary examination are alleged by some of the Swiss dailies. Apart from a rigorous search at the Italian home of Bassanesi's parents which drove the father to the verge of suicide, his mother, on trying—for what she thought the last time—to see him at the hospital at Andermatt, was subjected to a rigid inquisition before being allowed an interview in the presence of the warders. During the transport to Lugano, when still suffering intensely from his wounds, it is alleged that Bassanesi had to undergo incessant questioning by the police officer in charge who vainly endeavoured to extort admissions implicating anti-fascist leaders.

THE DEPRESSION ON THE WORLD MARKETS.

The following interesting table of the quotations at the respective exchanges shows that whilst the prices of most of the essential requisites have returned to pre-war level—or even less—the present cost of living shows very little relationship to this downward tendency.

	1913	June 1929	now.
Wheat, Chicago	68.50	113.75	78.00
Lard, Chicago	10.70	11.90	11.50
Butter, Copenhagen	2.18	2.95	2.36
Coffee, Rio, New York	9.00	16.75	7.32
Cocoa, London	58.0	41.6	27.3
Tea, London	—/84	1/24	—/104
Sugar, New York	3.12	1.77	1.12
Rice, London	7/7	13/9	12/9
Cotton, New York	12.57	18.45	10.45
Wool, Bradford	—/25	—/40	—/26
Silk, Lyon	247.00	290.00	163.00
Copper, London	65.12	74.50	43.62
Crude Oil, New York	—	4.60	2.00
Rubber, London	37.00	10.44	3.87

A WATCH MANUFACTURER HONOURED.

The British Horological Institute has elected Monsieur Paul Ditisheim of La Chaux-de-Fonds an Honorary Fellow in recognition of the services rendered by him to the watch industry. This is the first time that the Institute has conferred this distinction upon a foreigner.

LOCAL.

ZURICH.

The Grand Council of Zurich, on the proposition of the Town Council, has accepted the estimates and approved the plans for the alterations of the premises No. 42 Hirschengraben for a day-home and children's crèche of the welfare department. A credit to the amount of 185,000 Frs. has been granted. To ensure the safety of the children all traffic in the Künslergasse has been prohibited. *N.Z.Z.*

Two sisters, aged 72 and 83 years, who lived in the Zurichbergstrasse, died at the same time. The younger of the two was ill and was under the care of the doctor, whilst the elder one looked after the home. Last Sunday evening the latter was in the kitchen cooking the supper when she suddenly had an attack and fell on the floor and by so doing must have opened a tap on the gas-stove. She died soon after as a result of the fall. Almost at the same time the younger sister died as the normal outcome of the illness. Neither of the two sisters knew of the death of the other. *St.G.T.*

BERNE.

The Federal Council has prolonged the ban on hotel-building for another three years and this prolongation comes into operation on Jan. 1st, 1931. The only difference on the already existing ban is that places with more than 100,000 inhabitants are now excluded from this law, so that Zurich, Bâle, Geneva and Berne, from the beginning of next year, will be released from the hotel-building ban. *N.Z.Z.*

BASLE.

The news of the end of the Woodworkers' and Plasterers' strike in Bâle was received with a feeling of relief not only in Bâle but throughout Switzerland. The result of this most expensive struggle, by which the general public suffered intensely, has been a very meagre one. After 22 weeks, during which the families of the strikers had to undergo severe hardships, having to exist on only small strike pay, an increase of 3 cts. or a fraction more than a farthing per hour has been gained by the workers. On the other hand the employers have gained a not inconsiderable advantage in getting the carpenters to adapt their working hours to those of the bricklayers and also in having put aside the compulsory use of the official employment department. The gain, therefore, has been more on the side of the employers than on that of the strikers.

The prophets who warned the workmen from launching into a strike which they would surely lose have been right. All building activities, especially in dwelling houses, had already begun to flag, as the production very nearly came up to the demand and the inducement for further construction was very small. Both sides have lost millions. The strike funds, although aided from all over Switzerland, were not sufficient to save the families of the 1,200 strikers from dire distress. They are now completely exhausted. The employers on their side had to refuse large contracts, which have, in many cases, been placed with outside firms. And many a man, who had never had anything to do with the arm of the

(Continued on back page.)

Report on the

Eleventh Auslandschweizertag

at BâLE, August 30th and 31st.

By the PRESIDENT OF THE N.S.H. LONDON GROUP.

This function of extraordinary interest and importance to the Swiss Abroad took place in the great Hall of the Rathaus in Bâle on the last two days of August. The congress was called and arranged by the S.S.E., who had invited the Governments, both federal and cantonal, to be represented by the chiefs of the various departments and to take part in the discussions. The presence of Mr. Motta, chief of the political department, with a large number of other high dignitaries, was a clear indication of the benevolent and intelligent interest which the Federal Chambers take in the matters of the Swiss Abroad.

From abroad, there were present seven Ministers, nine Consuls and a great number of civil representatives of the various colonies and groups of the N.S.H. from every part of the globe. The Swiss press, also, was strongly represented.

The beautiful Hall was full to overflowing when the proceedings were opened by the president's speech of welcome. Mr. E. C. Koch, the new president of the C.S.E., discharged his duties of chairman in a most efficient and charming manner. His warm words of welcome set everyone at ease, although the physical heat of those two days was such that an invitation to take off collars and coats would have been promptly obeyed.

Here, then, was the right setting for a truly Swiss function:—The representatives from abroad with their complaints and appeals on the one side; the representatives of the federal government, mostly chiefs of their departments on the other, ready to listen and to advise. There was to be a clear exchange of opinion, a free discussion, a sympathetic mutual understanding. Each party stood to gain by the presence of the other, each member of the congress was sure to come away from the deliberations a better Swiss.

The Agenda before the conference included the following matters:—

1.—Report by the representative of the C.S.E. and the parliamentary Commission on matters of the Swiss Abroad. Nat. Councillor Dr. Pfister, a member of both bodies, gave his assurance that the federal authorities were fully aware of the value of the cohesion of the Swiss Abroad with their country. He mentioned that there were in particular, three problems which were foremost in the consideration of the authorities, viz.:—the question of the military tax; that of the war indemnities, and, thirdly, State insurance.

The speaker reminds the audience that it was the S.S.E. who first agitated for a revision of the Military tax, and that the federal council had been invited to revise the law. But he brought out the fact that the objections to the tax as such were untenable, as it was clearly a compensation for military duties not performed and in no way to be confused with income tax. The fact, however, that each Canton perceived this tax by its own peculiar methods laid it open to severe criticism.

From the discussion which followed it was apparent that the coupling of the military tax with the "Anwartschaftssteuer" caused general resentment. J. Ruof (Eidg. Steuerverwaltung) could give the meeting little hope of an abolition, or change in the perception of the tax. The vote in 1923 showed that no majority could be found for the separation, while it was impossible for the tax to become a federal matter so long as the Cantons held the existing power. Minor improvements had been effected, but the State regarded this tax as an integral part of the military service, so that the principle of its justice could not be attacked.

2.—Obligatory State Insurance. The desire of the Swiss Abroad to also benefit by the State

CITY SWISS CLUB.

PLEASE RESERVE

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 28th

for the

ANNUAL BANQUET AND BALL,

at the

May Fair Hotel, Berkeley Square, W.1.

Insurance scheme was first expressed by the N.S.H. group of Innsbruck. The draft of this law provided that all Swiss nationals leaving Switzerland after, and all such returning home before, the passage of the law, should be included. The S.S.E. went further and asked the Government to include all Swiss residing abroad at the time of passing the law. After mature study of the question, it was declined. But it was pointed out that all Swiss returning to reside permanently in Switzerland would automatically come into the scheme by the payment of the accumulated premia during the years of their absence.

Prof. W. Friedli (Bundesamt für Sozialversicherung) speaks for the government. There are, he says, five essential points in the scheme: (a) It is obligatory on every Swiss; (b) one uniform premium for all insured; (c) the contribution of the State; (d) the contribution of the employer; and (e) the special cantonal administration. The difficulties of bringing all Swiss abroad into this scheme are easily realized; they are, in fact, insuperable. If, on the other hand, the choice is left to them, the uniform premium would have to be sacrificed. Again, contributions on the part of the employer not existing in their case, the readjustment of the premium offers difficulties. Equal difficulties are anticipated in the control, the perception of the premia and the administration generally. The examining commission therefore, but with great regret, voted against the inclusion of the Swiss abroad. It was found possible, however, to effect an improvement for the Swiss returning home in respect of the payment of the accumulated premia, which may be converted into a deduction from the assured sum, if desired. Foreigners living in Switzerland are also included in the scheme, but lose both premia and insurance on leaving the country. The same case applies to Swiss in France and Belgium as well as the larger portion of Germany.

3.—Dr. Job, the secretary of the S.S.E., gives the conference an account of the activities of the S.S.E. The valuable services rendered to the "Auslandschweizertum" include such serious questions as the already discussed military tax and State Insurance; war indemnities (which most important point of the Agenda had by consent been postponed for the Sunday sitting); the collections for the Swiss schools abroad and the Swiss house in the Cite Universitaire, Paris; the Ferienheim Schloss Rhäzüns; the work among foreign born recruits; das Auslandschweizerbüch; the Swiss Echo; the film, lecture and newspaper-service; etc., etc.

4.—Discussions then followed, collected under the heading "Fürsorgeangelegenheiten" which included the desire of the Ludwigshaven Group for a larger inclusion of foreign born Swiss children in the holiday service, answered by Dr. Siegfried, of the "Stiftung Pro Juventute". The Group Troyes asked for information regarding assistance for indigenous Swiss in France, citing some cases of sickness and distress in their district being refused assistance by the local French authorities.

Dr. Rothmund, chief of the division of police, gave a most illuminating answer which made it apparent that the existing reciprocal treaty dating back to 1882 is very incomplete and leaves assistance almost entirely to the goodwill of the local (in Switzerland cantonal) authorities. The fact, however, that the draft of a new and much wider treaty to reciprocal assistance has now been submitted to France proves that the political department is taking sympathetic steps in this direction. France has accepted this project as a basis of examination and improvement of existing relations and it is hoped that a complete understanding may not be too far distant. Difficulties arising out of the reception by the hospitals of Basle of sick cases from beyond the German frontier were discussed by the Group Hüningen and Dr. Marcus Löw, President of the Basle Group.

5.—Possibilities of employment in Switzerland and abroad. Nat. Councillor Schmid-Ruedin, Central Secretary of the S.M.S., speaks of the importance of a period of employment abroad for young commercial people and deplores the difficulties which have arisen in consequence of the war. He particularly mentions the value of the S.M.S. school in London and is of opinion that the Swiss resident abroad can do much to further the possibilities of employment.

In the ensuing discussion Dr. Rothmund shows that political efforts by means of the diplomatic and consular services cannot be expected to be of much assistance. Tentative treaties of exchange in certain directions have proved abortive, the conditions and desiderata of the various States being too divergent. He agrees with the speaker that a great deal more may be effected by the Swiss abroad.

Mr. Suter, President of the London Group, emphasized the adverse conditions now existing in England, but reveals the fact that it is due to diplomatic intervention that the comparatively large number of young Swiss are permitted to enter the country for a period. Consul Neel of New York gives the outline of a convention whereby thirty young Swiss are permitted to work in the United States for a period, the consulate

guaranteeing their repatriation. Everyone laid stress on the absolute necessity of irreproachable character and qualifications of the young emigrants.

Mr. Suter, President of the London Group, in speaking of the reappearance of the volunteer system in commerce, tackled the problem from the other side. He cited numerous complaints by London members of their inability to place their sons in Switzerland otherwise than as volunteers and pointed to the deleterious effects of this form of employment. It is not practiced by English firms and is rightly regarded as an unfair exploitation of the young worker. In the discussion Schmid-Ruedin disputes the existence of the system as such in Switzerland, but is in agreement as to its bad effects.

M. Jobin, of the Ministry of Labour, then refers to the difficulty of finding employment for the returning Swiss, not only for the commercial world but also for the Swiss engineer and technician. In an interesting discussion it was again held as most important that only well qualified Swiss should think of emigrating. Good opportunities for dentists and medical men in Belgium and elsewhere, for engineers in West Africa and South America were spoken of. One participant strongly protested against the modern view-point of the young emigrants. They had, he said, lost all semblance of their former simplicity and tenacity and were unfit for the hard pioneer work which at one time distinguished the Swiss.

The field was now clear for the most important item on the Agenda, that of the War Indemnities. At this moment arrived a telegram from the president of the Confederation which was read to the conference amid tremendous applause.

"Empêché par une réunion importante d'assister à la journée des Suisses à l'Etranger à Bâle, j'adresse aux participants mon salut patriotique et l'expression de ma profonde reconnaissance pour l'œuvre splendide de rayonnement suisse qu'ils accomplissent à l'étranger."

A whole series of other telegrams and letters were read out before the president of the congress welcomed the presence of Minister Dinichert and Dr. Benziger as representatives of the Federal Political Department, a number of other high dignitaries and the following Ministers from abroad:—MM. Barbey, Brussels; Dunant, Paris; Gertsch, Rio de Janeiro; Jäger, Vienna; de Stoutz, Madrid; Peter, Washington; and Wagnière, Rome.

6.—Nat. Councillor Pfister gave a very clear account of the long history and the treatment of this very thorny subject of War Indemnities. He was ably seconded by Nat. Councillor Duft, the well-known protagonist. They informed the audience of the psychological changes which have lately taken place and which entitled the initiative to renewed hope of success. England had agreed to indemnify the Dutch fishing industry; France and Germany had found a basis of agreement respecting the liquidation of German property; the United States had submitted to the payment in full for the ninety-four vessels confiscated from Germany during the war. Many wrongs had been righted, only the Swiss Nation was denied the right to demand indemnification for the confiscation and damage to Swiss life and property to the amount of seventy million Francs, quite apart from the loss of 750 millions accrued in Russia.

The speakers referred to the work of such jurists as Hoffmann, Zellweger, Loncle, Robin and in particular to that of de Lapradelle, who were all in agreement that the right to indemnification existed internationally as a firmly established "customary right of civilization" which is and ought to be above all existing treaties and conventions. Based simply on the natural sentiment of justice, they declared, the demand for indemnification would be granted as a natural consequence. In the event of failure through the diplomatic channels, the subject must be submitted to the International Court of Arbitration at the Hague or to the League of Nations for decision. The speaker thanks the Federal Council for their readiness to reconsider the question in the light of the later developments and closes with the words of de Lapradelle—"On ne se trompe jamais, si on suit le chemin de la justice."

These speeches were followed by the recital of the personal experiences of a number of Swiss abroad who had suffered greatly by the war and its consequences. A very vivid picture of deprivation and misery deeply impressed the meeting with the determination and tenacity of the victims to obtain redress after all these years. By the unanimous desire of the conference the following resolution was forwarded to the Federal Council:—

"Der elfte Auslandschweizertag nimmt mit Genugtung Kenntnis von dem in der Frage der Wiedergutmachung schweiz. Kriegsschäden durch die Beratungen der nationalrätlichen Kommission erzielten vorläufigen Ergebnis. Die Versammlung hofft, dass es dem hohen Rate gelingen möge, durch Wiederaufnahme seiner Bemühungen im Sinne des Beschlusses der nationalrätlichen Kommission diese für das

Auslandschweizertum grundsätzlich bedeutsame Angelegenheit einem guten Ende entgegenzuführen. Sie ist insbesondere der Meinung, dass, wenn wider Erwarten die diplomatischen Mittel versagen sollten, die schiedsgerichtliche Behandlung der schweizerischen Ansprüche anzustreben ist. Für diese Erwagung spricht die Tatsache, dass die erwähnten Ansprüche sowohl völkerrechtlich als auch unter dem Gesichtspunkte der Billigkeit hinlänglich berechtigt und begründet sind."

Minister Dinichert, chief of the Foreign Division of the Federal Political Department, sounded a note of caution, when he said that, although not given to pessimism, he would have to warn the assembly against entertaining illusions. The recent failure of two international conferences, one in Paris, the other at the Hague, had clearly shown that the movement of the Völkerrecht was retrograde, especially in so far as the guarantee for life and property of foreigners in countries at war was concerned. At these two conferences Switzerland had been in the forefront of the fight for these rights, just on account of her own very severe losses during the late war. She had declared that the guarantee for these natural rights of a foreigner must be undertaken by the nations, and that no special treaties should be required for this purpose. But the expression of international jurists was not sufficient; what was required was the decision of the various governments. However, he would end his speech on a more hopeful note, assuring the congress of the determination of the Federal Council to continue the fight. "May charity become equity, and equity justice" were Minister Dinichert's closing words.

Mr. Koch, the chairman, closed the discussion with his thanks to all the speakers and reminded the audience of the force of the old Swiss proverb:—"Nid nalah gwünnt."

7.—Consul Biaggi from Genoa entered a plea on behalf of the emigrated Ticinesi who, according to the cantonal law, lost neither rights nor duties of citizenship. They were classed and regarded as resident citizens and taxable as such. Consequently, they were subject to double taxation, that of their host-state and that of the native canton. The president accepted the plea on behalf of the Secretariat and assured the speaker of its close examination.

8.—The Central Treasurer addressed a warm appeal for funds in favour of the Secretariat and, finally, the sincere thanks of Oberst Feldmann for the magnificent collection in favour of the Nationalspende in 1929 by the N.S.H. At the same time, he took the opportunity of warning the audience of the danger of too much charity which tends to make a people helpless.

SOCIAL SIDE.

The local committee of organization had taken great pains to receive, feed and house its guests in a highly commendable manner. The dinner on Saturday night was held in the blue room of the Mustermesse until long past midnight, and was graced with music, song and a bright little skit on the "WOBA." Needless to say the drummers were there, knocking modern jazz into a cocked hat with their snappy rattle.

At the great banquet in the Stadteasino on Sunday we were, more than 250 of us, the guests of the hospitable town of Basle. Mr. Motta occupied the seat of honour, and his flaming oratory will be remembered to the end of our days. His speech cannot be summarised but must be given in extenso, nor can the power and charm of his delivery be imparted into an English translation. A host of other speeches delighted the senses to the enjoyment of the thoughtful gift of a "Päckli Stümpe."

Later, a short run by train to Rheinfelden, where a steamer was placed at our disposal to enjoy a pleasant hour on the splendid river. And once more to a simple repast, as the guests of the famous breweries, with more speeches, and fun and song and fraternity.

Truly, this eleventh congress of the Swiss Abroad was worth while, and has made better Swiss of those who were present.

A. FRED. SUTER.

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