

The Bassanesi affair

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HOME NEWS



BERNE.

The City of Berne is issuing a 4 per cent. loan of 25,000,000 Frs. at 98.5 per cent. for the conversion of old loans.

The skiing people of Berne are in danger of losing their favourite winter playground, the Gurten. By a decision of the Bernese court the farmers on the Gurten have just obtained the right to prohibit skiing on their land.

According to the Swiss law no trespassing on private property in the open country can be prohibited so long as no damage is done. But it appears that snow trodden hard by skiers takes longer to melt, with the result that grass is somewhat slower in appearing. The city of Berne acknowledged the farmers' claim and offered to pay an indemnification to be fixed by experts every year. But the farmers would not have the money; they wanted prohibition right out, and now they have got it.

The skiers take the decision very ill, and there is a prospect of lively times on the Gurten. It is feared that other farmers may follow suit and the freedom of skiing generally be endangered.

LUCERNE.

A burglary took place at 79 Zürcher Strasse in Lucerne, where a great number of securities have been stolen, belonging to Miss E. Oberli. Amongst the missing stock are: Shares of the Bank in Zofingen, the Hypothekar Kasse Winterthur and the Bank Society of Aarau as well as bank deposit book. The value of the missing stock amounts to approximately 40,000 Frs.

FRIBOURG.

M. Alfred Reichen, Agent of the Banque de l'Etat and former President of the Grand Conseil has died at Bulle.

GENEVA.

M. Jules Vaney, Sen., Managing Director of the Laiterie Modèle Genevoise and M. Marcel Vaney, accountant of the same firm, are charged by the Public prosecutor with fraudulent bankruptcy. The liabilities exceed 367,000 Frs. against which approximately 38,000 Frs. are said to be owed by a firm dealing in the same commodities. The latter amount is stated to represent the only asset. It has been proved that the last few balance sheets and some of the books contain grave irregularities.

A band of 57 communists, headed by a certain G. Baumgartner, cycled to the home of M. G. Perrot at the outskirts of Versoix. On arriving there they left their bicycles outside and tried to enter the grounds. Pierre Meyer, a 56-years-old gardener, who was left in charge tried to prevent them from entering. Infuriated by the resistance of this faithful servant they knocked him down and assaulted him in the most savage fashion. When the police arrived the gang took to flight leaving their victim unconscious with several ribs broken and his face a mass of bruises. An investigation has been ordered.

T.G.

In the elections to the Geneva Cantonal Parliament on Sunday the Socialists won five seats from the Conservatives. There was a certain amount of animation, caused largely by the bourgeois accusation that the Socialists, in advocating the resumption of relations with Russia, were acting under orders from Moscow.

SWISS TELEPHONE GROWTH.

As a result of the telephone propaganda work carried on by the society known as "Pro Telefon," the rate of annual increase in the number of subscribers to the Swiss telephone system is reported to have been doubled. The society was formed in 1927, on the pattern of the Telephone Development Association, by the telephone authorities, working in conjunction with a number of Swiss telephone apparatus manufacturing concerns.

THE BASSANESI AFFAIR.

The effects of this trial, due to open on Monday, November 18th, in Lugano, are likely to be so important upon our relations with Italy that a clear understanding of Swiss public opinion, and more particularly of that of the Ticino, may be helpful to those who take an interest in the foreign relations of our homeland.

The Federal Council has come in for a good deal of severe criticism at the hands of the press of the Ticino, and of a section of that of the rest of Switzerland, mainly due to a great blunder our highest administrative authority committed from the very start. It is a fundamental principle of the administration of justice in all civilised countries that the government shall not seek to influence or hamper the free judgment of the Courts of Law. However, in instructing the judicial authorities to take action against Bassanesi and his supposed accomplices, the Federal Council directed that Bassanesi and his friends should be tried for breach of the rules of aviation, but that in passing sentence the Tribunal should take into consideration also the effect of the action of Bassanesi from the international point of view, viz., the political side of the question.

Swiss papers, like the *National Zeitung* and others have been very painfully shocked at the Federal Council committing such an unpardonable blunder. The press of the Ticino has been even more scandalised by this error. However, by such a manoeuvre, the Federal Council is achieving exactly the opposite result from what they intended, viz., the trial will become a political trial.

This is evident from the fact that the witness for Tarchiani (the ex-Editor in Chief of the "Corriere della Sera") will be Count Sforza, the ex-Italian Cabinet Minister for Foreign Affairs, and the witness for Rosselli will be the Apostle of Italian Socialism, the 73-year-old Filippo Turati, who played a big role in Italian politics before the advent of fascism. The papers of Lugano assure that the accused and their witnesses will be received in the Ticino, and in Lugano in particular, with great public enthusiasm.

In a recent issue of the "Avanguardia," G. G. (the initials of a well known lawyer, intimately connected with that newspaper) expressed himself as follows:

"The Switzerland of William Tell, that country which constantly ascribed as a great honour the disdain for tyrants and the solidarity of all victims of reaction, is covering itself in ridicule, not to say worse, so great is the diligent solicitude to please, at any price and even if not asked, the Duce of the black shirts, the negator of all liberty and the prejudiced exterminator of democracy and liberalism.

"It cannot be denied that in Switzerland, since Fascism asserted itself in the ways we know, the greatest care of our Federal authorities, kindly seconded by newspapers upon whose independence we are allowed to doubt, has been to prevent or restrict any manifestation which might have been, even only in a slight degree, hostile to the Italian Fascist Régime. Not only this but the Federal authorities have constantly displayed special sympathy and friendly tolerance towards the fascist authorities and fascist propaganda in our own country. The results of this policy of frightened-rabbits have, however, been exactly the opposite from what the admirers of fascism expected them to be. During the last few years the incidents have become more frequent and Switzerland always had to eat humble pie.

"... Every accommodation is attempted, every crooked path is followed, all sense of dignity is scrapped, traditions are sacrificed, principles are trodden underfoot, and this all in order to please Signor Mussolini. The Bassanesi case, over which so much noise is made, finds numerous equivalents in our history from 1830 to 1860, but at that time the Bassanesis were counted by the hundred. It is true that at that time there were no aeroplanes to carry the thousands of manifestoes and pamphlets which were to arouse Italy against Austria, but there were Ticinese and Swiss citizens, as well as foreigners, which took charge of the sacred contraband at the risk of their own lives, with the quiet complicity of the Ticinese Government and even of the Federal Council, who resisted undismayed all pressure exerted against them. In 1930 the Bassanesi case sets in motion the diplomacies and police forces of no less than three countries. The aviator is arrested and kept in prison for

several months while the prosecution exerts every possible pressure.

"But the Federal Council has not even the courage to place the whole affair on the basis upon which it desires it decided. Why not ask for the application of article 41 of the Federal Penal Code? Why fish out an administrative regulation which even the Federal authorities themselves had practically forgotten? The reply is easy, the Federal Council wanted to avoid, at any price, that the affair should develop into the trial of Fascism.

"By following too closely the lead given by the Federal Council the prosecution, in giving undue importance to the whole matter, and bringing to trial also well-known and valiant anti-fascist leaders residing abroad, has rendered a bad service to the Federal Council itself and to the whole nation. How can the proceedings now be prevented from degenerating into a political trial?

"If the severity of the Federal authorities against Bassanesi and his friends shocks and exasperates us as an action which disregards the most beautiful and noblest traditions of our country, we do not, however, doubt the sentiments of the Swiss people itself and that the people will, at long last, do justice to one and all. As Ticinesi we feel we could not have acted otherwise than have done our own fellow-citizens implicated in the affair. To be brought for trial for having helped Bassanesi directly or indirectly, knowingly or not, is a title of honour of which we are jealous.

"We know already now that the spies as well as those who put out their hands at the back and the people who lack backbone will shout scandal, but we cannot help exclaiming:—When will it again come to pass that in the Land of Tell the love of liberty and of our traditions shall no longer be a crime?"

Extracts from other issues are as follows:

"It can be said that both the press and public opinion are unanimously astounded at the excessive importance given by the Federal Council to the whole affair. We are disgusted at the illegal and inadmissible pressure exercised by the political authority over the judicial authorities. We protest and protest very loudly with all the passion of our republican soul against a procedure which offends profoundly our national dignity and tends to bring our highest Court of Law into disrepute, bringing it close, in principle, to any 'special' Tribunal of any dictatorship.

"We protest in the name of all those who—Swiss citizens—have not yet prostituted their sentiment of liberty, in the name of all those who place liberty before personal interest or cowardice, in the name of you, young citizens, who will one day be called upon to govern the nation. Let us make a clean sweep of treachery, it is time. The coming Bassanesi trial will give to the Swiss people the exact measure of its dignity and of its much trumpeted independence.

"It used to be assumed that the 'record' for stretching a point to its uttermost was to remain unchallenged in the hands of the Republic of the Ticino. Public opinion in the Ticino has, however, veered round to the certainty that even in this field of activity we have been beaten by the Federal authorities. If this does not add any merit to our Canton it certainly does not, neither, add to the esteem which the people of the Ticino used to place in the authorities of the Confederation.

"The Ticinesi would have asked for nothing better than a quiet and speedy decision of the whole affair, within the bounds within which it should really have been kept. Whether it be due to some gentle hint from the Fascist Government or some other underhand consideration of the Federal Council, the whole matter has been taken out of the province of the Law Courts of the Ticino and transferred to the Federal judicial authority.

"We do not grumble but let it be clearly understood, well in advance, that, having blown up the affair to such grotesque dimensions, the overwhelming majority of the people of the Ticino will not permit, at any price whatever, that attempts should be made to limit the scope of the discussions at the trial. The accused will have the right to justify their actions as they please, even if, in making their defence, they will of necessity have to refer to public men and happenings in the near-by Italy. The democratic Ticino has seen its judicial authority deprived of its proper task and has seen its sentiments

being distorted—we shall not permit any further humiliation. We Ticinesi do not want to become the chamber-maids of a tyrannical régime, even if, by chance, there should happen to be some invertebrates who are willing to do so.

"Already on other occasions we have been used to express our opinions without wrapping them in tissue paper, we have clearly and frankly expressed our disgust at the tactics followed by the Federal Council towards the Fascist Government as a procedure which brings our national dignity into disrepute and tramples our sentiments underfoot. Now, more than ever, we feel the need of manning our entrenchments, before it is too late. We await, however, the result of the trial with quiet nerves and full of hope that Swiss democracy will be spared the shame of further humiliations."

Although the outspokenness, of which the above is a sample, is more typical of the radical and socialist press, is a sample, even the responsible clerical-conservative papers, like the "Popolo e Libertà" are unanimous in regretting the exaggeration brought about by the Federal Council and are not above criticising their ex-Council.

O.B.

WINTER TRAIN SERVICES.

ENGLAND—BERNESE OBERLAND—VALAIS.

During the Winter Season 1930/31, i.e., during the months of December and January a Twice Weekly Sleeping Car Service will be instituted between Calais—Laon—Belfort—Delle—Bern—Lötschberg—Brigue—Zermatt and back to Boulogne.

Calais dep. every Tuesday and Friday as from 19th Dec. till 30th Jan., and on Dec. 20th, 22nd, 24th and 27th.

Brigue dep. every Wednesday and Saturday as from 20th Dec. till 31st Jan. and on Dec. 21st, 23rd, 25th and 28th.

The times are:—

London	dep. 16.00	Zermatt	dep. 12.30	16.15*
Calais-Mar.		Stalden	dep. 13.54	17.44*
Boulogne-Mar.	dep. 20.15	Brigue	arr. 14.30	18.20*
Belfort	dep. 6.01	Brigue	dep. 19.52	
Delle	dep. 7.46	Kandersteg	dep. 20.42	
Berne	arr. 10.32	Frutigen		
Spiez	arr. 11.30	(Adelboden)	dep. 21.04	
Reichenbach (Kiental)	arr. 12.10	Reichenbach (Kiental)		
Frutigen		Spiez	dep. 21.55	
(Adelboden)	arr. 12.15	Berne	dep. 22.49	
Kandersteg	arr. 12.37	Delle	dep. 1.12	
Brigue	arr. 13.20	Belfort	dep. 1.23	
Brigue	dep. 13.40	Calais-Mar.		
Stalden	arr. 14.40	Boulogne-Mar.	arr. 11.11	
Zermatt	arr. 16.00	London	arr. 15.30	

*From January 1st until January 31st.

On the section Calais-Spiez and Brigue-Boulogne this sleeping-car will go by the scheduled trains. On the section Spiez-Brigue a special fast train will run on the days of arrival of this sleeping-car, thus making up the connection with the Brigue-Zermatt line. The same train will take the ordinary 1st and 2nd class carriage Calais-Kandersteg-Boulogne as far as and from Brigue, so that apart from the sleeping-car there will be available for the journey to and from Zermatt a 1st and 2nd class through carriage going to and from Brigue.

WINTER SPORTS TICKETS ON THE SWISS RAILWAYS.

Again this winter most of the Swiss transport companies will issue sports tickets from November 15th till March 30th. The single fare also being valid for the return journey. These tickets are issued to any applicant and they entitle the holder to the journey out on Saturdays and Sundays and to the return journey on Sundays and Mondays by noon (12 o'clock). A prospectus is now being prepared giving all the winter sports stations to which sports tickets are issued and telling the reader about the issue of these tickets on the Christmas and New Years festival days. It will be sent free of charge to places abroad by the commercial department of the Swiss Federal Railways or the Swiss National Tourist Office at Zurich.

(Details of other special Winter Services will be published in next week's issue of the "Swiss Observer.")

Sens Pratique.

L'électricien vient de terminer la pose de ses fils; le contact est établi. Il n'y a plus qu'à unir. Mais diable! où est le pôle positif, où le négatif?

"Hé Charley."

L'apprenti accourt.

"Mets ton doigt là!... Bon... Tu ne sens rien?"

"Rien fait Charley."

"Alors ça va, mais surtout, ne touche pas l'autre, fil! Tu serais foudroyé"

* * *

"Est-ce vrai, qu'hier soir, vous avez traité ce gentleman de vieux idiot?" demanda d'un air indigné le commissaire d'une petite ville d'Angleterre, au prévenu arrêté pour tapage nocturne.

"Je ne me rappelle pas, monsieur, mais plus je le regarde, plus cela me semble possible," répondit poliment le prévenu.

Doings in Our Colony.

SWISS CHORAL SOCIETY. ANNUAL BANQUET AND BALL.

"Wo man singt da lass dich fröhlich nieder,
Böse Menschen haben keine Lieder."

These were almost the last parting words my father, who was himself an enthusiastic singer, gave me on my way, more than twenty years ago, when leaving the paternal home, to seek fortune in foreign lands.

The truth of these words has never before struck me so vividly as last Friday at the splendid gathering of the Swiss Choral Society, which took place at the First Avenue Hotel. Looking around I could see nothing but happy, smiling faces; forgotten were worries and troubles, everyone came there to pass a few care-free hours and to pay tribute to a Society which has on so many occasions gladdened our hearts with their beautiful songs, and has thus kept in us an evergreen memory of our beloved homeland.

It must have been very gratifying to the energetic President and his hard-working committee to see such a numerous array of guests and friends, as well over 200 people sat down to a most sumptuous dinner. I feel almost tempted to give the full contents of the menu, but space and a kindly feeling towards those who were not able to be present, prevents me from doing so; all I will say is, that it was a " princely " feast and I do not think that even this week's Lord Mayor's Banquet could have beaten it. But can we wonder, when we hear that our good friend, Mr. A. Indermaur, as Chef de Cuisine, was in command, and well did he deserve the praise bestowed on him.

The company present included, apart from the members and many friends of the Society and their ladies, Monsieur Th. de Sonnenberg, Chargé d'Affaires, representing our Minister, who, owing to absence from this country, was prevented from being amongst us, and representatives of all Societies and Clubs of the Colony, namely:

City Swiss Club: Mr. & Mrs. Chapuis; Swiss Mercantile Society: Mr. & Mrs. Paschoud; Société de Secours Mutuels: Mr. F. Forrer; Unione Ticinese: Mr. Braga and Mr. Lucca; Nouvelle Société Helvétique: Mr. J. Hansemann; Swiss Rifle Association: Mr. H. Sem; *Swiss Observer*: Mr. & Mrs. A. Stauffer; Union Helvétique: Mr. Sermier and Mr. E. Kunzler; Swiss Club (Schweizerbund): Mr. J. Christen and Mr. H. Humbel; Swiss Orchestral Society: Mr. & Mrs. Pellet; Swiss Gymnastic Society: Mr. A. Grammer; Société Culinaires: Mr. & Mrs. Juriens; as well as the Rev. C. T. and Mrs. Hahn, Doctor Egli, Mr. E. A. Seymour and Mr. Siegel of the West London Male Choir.

Having had the privilege to take part as a guest, I cannot help but to allude to the great generosity with which the S.C.S. treated its special "invités," even to champagne, liqueurs, cigarettes and cigars, nothing was forgotten, and the ladies who adorned this festival were presented, by the charming little daughter of the President, with pretty embroidered handkerchiefs, behind which they could hide their blushes for having received such a thoughtful special attention.

The tables were beautifully arranged with lovely flowers and adorned with artistic menu cards, which contained, apart from the menu, a list of toasts.

The speeches were of a passable length and were preceded by the customary toasts for the King and our homeland, proposed by Monsieur Th. de Sonnenberg.

Mr. F. Conrad, President of the S.C.S., addressed the company in the following words:

On behalf of the Swiss Choral Society I extend to you a most hearty welcome to to-night's Function.

Owing to his being in Switzerland we are deprived of the pleasure of having the Swiss Minister, Monsieur Paravicini amongst us.

But we are very glad indeed to welcome Monsieur de Sonnenberg and I want to express my sincere thanks to Monsieur de Sonnenberg for the spontaneous way he has accepted our invitation to be present to-night.

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