

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: 429

Artikel: The Swiss abroad and war damages

Autor: O.B.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-686280>

Nutzungsbedingungen

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. [Mehr erfahren](#)

Conditions d'utilisation

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. [En savoir plus](#)

Terms of use

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. [Find out more](#)

Download PDF: 23.02.2026

ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>

THE SWISS ABROAD AND WAR DAMAGES.

I am giving hereunder a translation of an article which appeared recently in the "Avanguardia" of Lugano, and which might be of special interest to some of your readers:—

"At the end of November a meeting was held of a commission of the National Council, to examine the question of the damages suffered by our fellow-citizens abroad during the world war. It is now fully ten years that this question painfully drags on before Parliament, various commissions and experts, without finding a solution.

Frankly, never more than in respect of this problem did the Federal Council and the competent Department give better proof of their lack of courage to face the problem in its various bearings. Rather than stand up for the undeniable rights of our countrymen against foreign States the Federal Council took refuge in paying eight million francs out of the funds of the Confederation which, however, means barely 12 per cent. of the effective damages suffered by Swiss who were abroad during the war. Our fellow-citizens are ventilating their grievances, and with just reason, while other experts are called in to advise on the practical possibility of obtaining compensation from the foreign States where they were resident and suffered serious damage.

The issue numbered 543 of the "National Zeitung" contained an article by J. B. Rusch in which the question is dealt with and from which we translate the following essential points:—

It is now ten years that the Swiss abroad are fighting to have their rights acknowledged not by the foreign States who caused them the damage, but by the Federal Council. The latter does not want to admit that our fellow-citizens have any valid claims against the belligerent States because by admitting that the Federal Council would have the duty to represent and defend our countrymen in respect to such foreign States.

As however any just reason is lacking for such an attitude on the part of our central administrative authority, so it is ten years that the Federal Council anxiously declares to all the Swiss who knock at the door, very often reduced to complete poverty, that there is no legal basis for their claims.

The Federal Council asked Prof. Dr. Burchardt for expert advice, and he took care to point out that, *even if it were still in time to do something the result would be problematic*. It is to be noted that, not even from their own adviser was the Federal Council able to obtain a general discharge, which would have enabled it to reject the motion submitted by National Councillor Dufft. It is a very sad story, that of our fellow-citizens who suffered damages abroad. In 1921 the Federal Council declared that it could do nothing for them. They did not believe it, however, and asked that the Federal Council should deal on their behalf with the foreign States, seeing that the damages suffered amounted to about 75 million Swiss francs.

Then the Federal Council granted them 8 million francs. But our countrymen had not asked the Federal Council for any money at all, and merely wanted that it should act for them towards foreign countries. They were, however, told that the legal means and the legal basis were lacking for enforcing a claim of such a nature. Nobody must therefore be surprised that those who suffered are seriously complaining.

It is a very old principle of the law of the nations that private property may not be damaged, not even in time of war, and that where reasons of military exigency compel the dispossessing of the private owners, this can only be done by equitably compensating them. It is true that this principle has been trodden underfoot during the war, but a breach of the law does not destroy the foundation of the law itself. The principle of the inviolability of private property has moreover found its place in the treaties of peace—the reparations rest on this basis.

The attitude of the Federal Council would be understandable if it were a fact that there is no legal basis for the claim against foreign countries, but this basis is not at all lacking and there are precedents of undoubted validity. In the course of the proceedings which followed the confiscation of the Nitrogen factories in Upper Silesia the Referee of the International Tribunal closed its verdict with the words: "Whether in time of peace or of war or in time of revolution it is always the duty of the State to respect and protect the property of foreigners."

The decision of the Commission of the National Council to submit the question to a fresh set of experts gives a ray of hope that Switzerland will yet be capable of protecting the interests of her citizens abroad. It is, fundamentally, not only a question of fairness but, mainly, one of national duty."

O.B.

INTERNATIONAL FOOD & COOKERY EXHIBITION.

"OLYMPIA," LONDON, W., JAN. 14th-25th.

We are informed that feverish activity takes place in the milieu of La Société Culinaire Suisse at 1, Gerrard Place, W, to prepare for the forthcoming battle of culinary art at Olympia in a few days' time, and we understand that the valiant President and 32 staunch adherents are "all out" to gain victory and prove to their Swiss compatriots in London, and the Provinces for that matter, that "the will to succeed" is a very helpful adjunct in any enterprise undertaken.

All the "gourmets" as well as the "gourmands" in our Colony are invited to visit the Exhibition and pay tribute to the commendable team work which is carried on at considerable sacrifice in money, time and energy, by the Members of La Culinaire Suisse, for the reputation of our native country as "le pays d'Hotels par excellence."

Appreciative thanks are expressed to our Minister, Monsieur C. R. Paravicini, who has kindly consented to become the Patron for the forthcoming Exhibition, and it is hoped that the results of this annual international contest will prove highly gratifying to everybody concerned.

The work and expenses entailed to ensure success are, however, of quite a formidable nature and it is hoped that there may be some readers who will endorse the efforts of "La Culinaire Suisse" by subscribing as generously as they wish, or can, to the "Exhibition Fund," to which the Colleagues of Birmingham alone have already contributed the sum of over £13—a very striking testimony of their sentiments of solidarity and patriotism. In addition to the hearty thanks already conveyed to them, may these supporters and well-wishers of the London Swiss Chefs Society derive the pleasure of seeing their confrères carry off the highest honours and awards.

Be it noted also that by special request the Swiss team will exhibit a replica of the Menu prepared some time ago for the famous "V.C." Dinner. On January 24th La Culinaire Suisse will hold its first Banquet at the "First Avenue Hotel," and it is anticipated that there will be a record gathering of members and friends, including certain competing teams from Switzerland, Germany, etc. Please reserve your evening for this occasion and if you have anything to spare "pour le bien de la cause," kindly address your remittance to Monsieur A. Juriens, Chef, De Vere Hotel, Kensington, W.S.

GARDE-MANGER.

List of Subscriptions received so far:—

BIRMINGHAM :	£	s.	d.
Mr. P. BRUN	1	0	0
Mr. F. BEER, Chef, Grand Hotel	5	0	0
Mr. P. BOLTER, Chef, Kunzle's	1	0	0
Mr. R. HOFLIGER, Chef, Imperial	1	0	0
Mr. R. SUTTER, Chef Patisserie, Queen's		10	0
Mr. R. WYSS, Chef, Y.M.C.A.	1	0	0
Mr. D'ALBERT, Chef Saucier, Grand	10	0	0
Mr. C. KUENZLE	5	5	0
Mr. M. SCHNEIDER, Garde Manger, Grand		10	0
Special Collection UNION HELVETIA	2	0	0
SWISS CLUB	1	1	0
Monsieur MONTAG, Swiss Consul, Liverpool	1	1	0
Mr. M. BEERSET, London Wall Restaurant	5	0	0
Mr. LAUENER, Chef, Gloucester Hotel, Weymouth	3	0	0
Mr. Leon JAEGGI, 26, Woodville Road, Golders Green.	5	0	0
Total	£32	17	0

SWISS WATCHMAKING INDUSTRY.

If one compares the volume of exports from year to year one finds that there is no appreciable variation. Thus, from the 1st of January to the 30th of August the consignments of pocket watches remained at the same level; but, an interesting fact, the different categories show decided changes. Whereas watches made of non-precious metals have increased in number (from 4,122,000 to 4,246,000) gold and silver watches have fallen off slightly. With regard to wrist watches the same tendency appears. Nickel and steel time-pieces have risen from 2,381,000 to 2,882,000, while the pretty gold and silver bracelets have been exported in somewhat smaller numbers.

Let us note in passing, as we are on the subject of sales, that the export of works destined to be encased abroad, has risen slightly: from 3,248,000 to 3,472,000 during the first eight months of the year. A fact which should be treated with the greatest reserve, because, as we have so often pointed out, the only authentic Swiss watch, worthy of complete confidence is the one which has been encased and regulated at the factory here in Switzerland.

During the present year, exports to central Europe have risen considerably. In Austria and Tchecoslovakia there is a growing trade for Swiss watches of good quality, as also in Yugoslavia where, however, the rise is much more moderate. A slight increase is also shown in the consignments to France. As regards Great Britain, Germany, Hungary and Poland there is a marked decline. As to the second of these four countries, the fall is explained easily enough by the slight reduction in the duty, importers not being inclined to renew their stocks on the eve of a reduction in the tariff. On the whole, what with one country and another, sales are roughly on a par with those of last year.

Everywhere work remains plentiful. On all sides, too, the great success and admiration which the exhibits of the chief Swiss horologists encountered at Barcelona is being freely commented upon. The foremost of them vied with each other in taste and luxury in the presentation of their choicest chefs-d'œuvre, which are of an astonishing variety, ranging as they do from the tiny wristlet watch to the grandfather clock and the electrically controlled time piece. This successful publicity augurs well, both for the future of our trade in Spain, and for our approaching advertising and selling campaigns in the majority of those countries whence came the thousands of visitors who passed through Barcelona during the summer and autumn.

S.I.T.

THE SCINTILLA MAGNETOS.

The beginnings of the world-famous Swiss watch-making trade can be traced back to about two centuries ago, when watches were made at home by the inhabitants of the Swiss Jura. This fact easily accounts for the high quality of the precision work done by workmen born and bred in these parts.

Taking advantage of the favourable conditions for work, a new precision industry was founded at Soleure about 12 years ago: the manufacture of ignition magnetos for motor cars and aeroplanes, and at the same time the manufacture of every kind of apparatus necessary for lighting and starting motor vehicles.

Owing to the rapid development of explosion motors, the ignition apparatus previously in use no longer sufficed. Efforts were made on all sides to improve the existing systems, and to adapt them to the development of explosion motors. Ceaseless attempts finally enabled the *Scintilla A.G. at Soleure* to place a magneto on the market, which can cope with the highest number of revolutions of a rapid explosion motor. The construction of this apparatus was only made possible by reversing the construction of the previous systems and fixing the more delicate parts, such as the spool and the condenser, firmly, only allowing parts which can stand more wear and tear, such as the permanent magnet, the cam, etc., to rotate.

Scintilla Magnetos are supplied for 1 to 18 cylinder motors with spark adjustment by hand lever control or by an automatic arrangement, for motor cars, aeroplanes, ships or stationary combustion motors.

As stated above, complete apparatus for lighting and starting (dynamos, starters, switches, projectors, direction finders) for motor cars, omnibuses, motor boats, etc. are made with equal precision in these works. The construction of these apparatus is also a proof of the pioneer work of the *Scintilla* who have largely employed entirely new methods.

In spite of the comparatively short period of time which has elapsed since the foundation of the works, 1,200 workers are now busy at Soleure, and about 700 in the licenced works at Sydney (New York), whilst large numbers are also employed in the eight chief European branch factories in Paris, London, Brussels, Prague, Berlin, Madrid, Vienna and Warsaw.

As early as 1922 a considerable number of the most important motor races, such as the Grand Prix de France, the Grand Prix de Belgique, the Grand Prix d'Italie, the Grand Prix du Mans, and the Grand Prix de Peña-Rhin were won by cars of varied makes fitted with these apparatus. Equally successful results are still being achieved. Thus five first prizes in the great international alpine races in 1928, and quite recently the Targa Florio of Divo were won by Bugatti cars with *Scintilla* apparatus.

The victorious career of those apparatus in aviation began in 1924, with the result that they now almost have the monopoly. It must be mentioned that the *Scintilla* apparatus were used in all transatlantic flights, such as those of Lindbergh, Chamberlain, Byrd, of the "Bremen," "Friendship," "Maitland," "Southern Cross," "Jesus del Gran Poder," the world flights of Pinedo, Broch and Schlee, Costes and Le Brix, the North Pole flights of Byrd and Wilkins, the great South African flight of Mittelholzer, the most famous record flight in the history of aviation, the six days' flight of the "Question Mark," which has recently been beaten by the seven days' flight of the "Forth Worth," etc. America has adopted the *Scintilla Magneto* as the standard magneto for civil, naval and military aviation.