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The Swiss Observer

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HOME NEWS

FEDERAL.

THE SPIES IN THE TICINO.

The investigations regarding the activities of the three spies recently arrested in the Ticino are still in the hands of the Cantonal authorities. When all the facts have been ascertained the question will arise whether a trial under the Federal Assizes is indicated. It seems that the prisoners were acting under orders from Italy, while the Italian consulates in Switzerland were probably not involved, as the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* states. If inimical acts against Switzerland which are contrary to international law are proved the trial will be by Federal Assizes, probably in the Ticino. Twelve members of the jury would be selected from the French and Italian parts of Switzerland.

FALSE SWISS PASSPORTS.

The Federal Authorities are engaged on investigations regarding the origin of the false Swiss passports which were found in the possession of Italians. Some of them are said to be in the hands of the Rome Government and Swiss officials will probably proceed to the Italian capital in order to examine the spurious documents.

THE FREE ZONES.

Since the interruption of the direct diplomatic negotiations regarding the future of the Free Zones near Geneva no further progress has been achieved. Federal Councillor Motta has had a discussion with the French Ambassador in Berne without, apparently, gaining the hope that matters may yet be settled amicably. Strengthened by the preliminary decision of the Hague Court our authorities will only negotiate on the basis of the maintenance of the Free Zones in some form, while the French insist on moving the customs line to the political frontier. The period allowed by the International Court of Justice for negotiations will lapse at the end of April.

NEW JAPANESE MINISTER.

The Berne Government received the new Japanese Minister Yada last Wednesday who presented his credentials. He was formerly General Consul in Shanghai.

LOCAL.

ZÜRICH.

A lodger in a house "im Winkel" near Meilen had a dispute with his landlady. To revenge himself, he set fire to the loft. The roof was destroyed, and the lodger's body was found among the debris. Evidently he was suffocated by the smoke. N.Z.Z.

BERNE.

A taxi skidded on the Kirchenfeldbrücke and collided with the parapet. The car came to a stop hanging partly over the bridge; fortunately the chauffeur managed to jump to safety. St. G.T.

LUCERNE.

A novel kind of theft is reported from Lucerne, where a black swan was stolen from the swan colony near the Seebücke. The missing bird is valued at 500 Frs. N.Z.Z.

SCHWYZ

On the Axenstrasse, between Brunnen and Sisikon, where the drop is sheer, traces of a skidding car were found. Apparently the car was being turned round, when it must have fallen over the precipice. The lake is very deep in that part, and endeavours are to be made to find the car. A few days before the discovery a car was stolen at Brunnen, and people are wondering if the same car is involved. So far nothing has been found, which allows any conclusion as to whether the car contained passengers or not, when it fell into the lake. N.

Dr. Busch, unmarried and aged about 30, from Baden and employed by a Zurich Insurance company, went on a ski-ing excursion from

Glarus towards the Wäggital. Sunday evening Dr. Busch suddenly disappeared at a sharp turning in the Siggensbachschlucht. His companion searched for him; all he could find was a spoor leading straight into the precipice. Evidently Dr. Busch had missed the turning in the road without noticing it owing to nightfall. He fell over the rocks into the Wäggital-Stausee. His body has been recovered. N.Z.Z.

The management of the Südost railway company is studying the question of electrifying the line. So far, this was impossible, as the supply of current was too costly. The Etzelwerk will remove this obstacle. The Bodensee-Toggenburg railway is giving attention to the same problem and would welcome the electrification of the Südost, as the latter line is the direct continuation of the former to the central parts of Switzerland. St. G.T.

GLARUS.

During blasting operations at the site of the Sernft-Niederembach power station, near Schwanden, a miner was struck by a stone and killed. The unfortunate victim is a man named Tresch, aged 27 years, from Uri. N.Z.Z.

BASLE.

A motion for the separation of State and Church has been tabled in the Basle Grand Council by National Councillor F. Schneider in the name of the Social-Democrat Party. This move follows the recent celebration of the 400th anniversary of the Basle Reformed Church, when the Government spokesmen presented their wishes and congratulations to the Church. The impression created by this fact is a very painful one, and is considered the beginning of an attack on religion itself, not only as the political move which the motion would seem to indicate. N.Z.Z.

During the excavations for the new railway bridge across the Birs near St. Jakob, four mammoth tusks, each one about two yards long, have been found. Further discoveries were made in a gravel pit nearby, where some molars were found, each one having a circumference of about twelve inches. Digging is continued with the greatest care and under expert guidance. N.

ST. GALL.

Melanie Wagner, who died in Lucerne, left her fortune amounting to 520,000 Fcs. to her home canton. She came from Wattwil. Her will leaves her money in equal parts to the following institutions and authorities: Wattwil hospital, for the care of mentally afflicted persons in the canton, to the Bürgergemeinde Lichtensteig for poor invalids, and a like amount to the same authority for free disposal. St. G.T.

SOLEURE.

Tobogganing through the village of Egerkingen, a 14 years old son and a 15 years old daughter of the widow Rosa von Arx-Peyer ran into a wall. The boy broke a leg; his sister smashed her skull against the wall and was killed instantly. The two children were the youngest of a family of seven. N.

FRIBOURG.

Two foresters who were hunting foxes in the mountain district above Planfayon were caught by an avalanche. One of them was able to fetch assistance. After many hours search in darkness they managed to dig the unfortunate man out of the snow just before midnight, but he died half an hour later. T.G.

VAUD.

A well-known and highly respected person in the canton, Mr. Jules Glardon, member of the Cantonal Tribunal and President from 1915 to 1925, has died at Lausanne, aged 73. N.Z.Z.

A serious accident occurred at Sainte-Croix when a bob-sleigh with eight passengers collided with another bob. Three young ladies had to be transported to the Infirmary at Sainte-Croix. T.G.

VALAIS.

The hotel Gruben has been completely destroyed by fire. A party of five, amongst them the son of the proprietor, called at the hotel after a ski-ing expedition. They managed to light a fire in the kitchen to prepare some supper. Less than an hour later flames were emerging from the roof, probably due to some congestion in the chimney. Unfortunately the "föhn" was in full force at the time so that practically nothing could be saved. T.G.

NOTES AND GLEANINGS.

By KYBURG.

Did the Ancient Britons Come from Switzerland?

Southend Standard, 30th Jan.

On Monday, under the auspices of the Southend and District Antiquarian and Historical Society, a lantern lecture, entitled "The Thames Estuary as the gateway to Ancient Britain," was delivered at the High School for Boys, Southend, by Dr. R. E. Mortimer Wheeler, M.C., D.Litt., F.S.A., Keeper and Secretary of the London Museum.

Speaking of the early lake-dwellers who came west, the lecturer said these had a special interest in Southend at the present time and went on to remark upon the traces of the famous lake villages discovered in Switzerland. The reconstruction of these lake dwellings revealed much of interest, for their submergence had enabled not only material objects, but even corn and other grain to be preserved. This helped the reconstruction of the early history of agriculture in Europe and more was known about these lake-dwellers than about most of other ancient peoples on the Continent.

Soon after 2000 B.C. much of our country was conquered by Germany, whose bands landed on our coasts and occupied them. Their traces were identified by their pottery, of which beakers were well-known examples; some found at Thorpe Bay were in the Museum at Prittlewell. But those Germans were not only known by their pottery; they brought a distinct type of skull with them on their own shoulders. Those German invaders had been described by a distinguished scientist as the prototypes of Bil Sikes!

In the course of the next 1,000 years the metal became very widely spread and many specimens had been found at Leigh. Other hoards were noted at Shoebury, and yet others at Colchester. Bronze, indeed, was largely used in East Essex and the local making of bronze objects by roving craftsmen made the district a sort of itinerant Sheffield. Each of such hoards represented the work of some prehistoric tinker. Up to about 1000 B.C. the ordinary "soldier" was content to use a kind of rapier as his sword; these were quite good for thrusting, but not so good for cutting. But about the period named great quantities of heavier cutting swords found their way into the Thames Valley.

The lecturer showed a slide depicting the edge of a Swiss lake, revealing the tops of buried piles, which had supported a lake village at that spot until the inhabitants were driven out of their homes. They came west, and one of his (the lecturer's) slides showed a typical lake village, dating from some time before Caesar. This was known as the Glastonbury Lake Village. Attempts had been made to trace the tracks of the Swiss lake-dwellers in this country. Here and there implements were found in the Thames Valley which resembled those seen in Switzerland. Among other discoveries were razors of some 3,000 years ago and tweezers for pulling out the beard if the razor would not cut; knives and sickles were also found, all of Swiss rather than British type.

So that if one of your friends calls you a "foreigner" again, you just inform him who really were the first ones to live here!

A very Sensible Idea:

Daily Express, 6th Feb.

Dr. Frida Imboden, of St. Gall, has founded a society to aid poor brides.

It is the custom in Switzerland for the bride, even among the working classes, to purchase her own trousseau and, if possible, household linen. Dr. Imboden counts chiefly on wealthy brides to come to the aid of their poorer sisters not only by contributing money, but by giving the many useless and expensive

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presents they receive on their marriage. As a recompense the contributor will receive a framed note of thanks from the society.

There is only one condition for the fiancée who applies for aid to buy her trousseau. She must send at the same time a medical certificate stating that she is in good health, and in a fit condition to marry.

A Great International Horse Race at Basle?

Birmingham Post, 1st Feb.

Another international horse race in addition to that to be organised in the United States is promised by Switzerland next autumn. The International Equestrian Federation has asked the Swiss organisation, corresponding to the English Jockey Club, to organise a big international race and they have agreed to do so. The race will probably be run on the Basle course.

Kyburg knows but little about horse-racing and less about making money by betting, but he seems to remember that a number of bookies years ago emigrated to Liestal and places in the vicinity. So, I take it, the betting spirit may invade staid old Basle next autumn and the International Bank, perhaps, provide the necessary funds, what?

SWISS INDUSTRIES FAIR BASLE.

The 14th Swiss Industries Fair will be held at Basle from April 26th to May 6th 1930.

This fair, which is gaining in importance from year to year, is housed in the new and very extensive buildings which represent the last word in such constructions in Europe. The show is thoroughly national in character, all goods being exclusively products of Swiss industries and trades. The number of exhibitors is about one thousand and, visitors and buyers come from over 30 different countries.

Special arrangements have been made with various railway companies and visitors to the fair enjoy greatly reduced fares on Swiss and foreign railways. Identification cards are delivered free of charge to foreign buyers by the Management of the Fair in Basle, as well as by all Swiss Consulates.

The old town of Basle has long been famous for its fairs and their origin can be traced back as far as the 15th century.

SWISS IMPORT AND EXPORT TRADE IN 1929.

The total import trade in 1929 amounted to the value of 2.7 milliard Swiss francs, which is an increase of 40 million francs on that of 1928. This increase is due to the fact that the big Swiss export industries, especially those of machines and chemical products, purchased large quantities of raw material. The chief purveyors to Switzerland in 1929, ranked as follows: Germany, France, U.S. of America, Italy and Great Britain.

The export trade amounted to the value of 2.1 milliard francs, the principal countries receiving Swiss goods being Germany, Great Britain, U.S. of America, France and Italy.

The total value of the Swiss import and export trade in 1929 amounting to 4,514 milliard francs, corresponds practically to that of 1928.

THE SKIDDING DANGER.

At one time there were numerous attempts to solve the skidding problem by the introduction of patented, and very often complicated, devices to prevent both rotary and lateral slip between the wheel and the road. None, however, met with either practical or commercial success, and it is now generally realised that the evil can best be reduced, if not entirely eliminated, by the use of non-skid chains.

In support of this statement we cannot do better than refer to an article in the November issue of our associated journal, *Bus and Coach*, contributed by Mr. K. Oftinger, chief of the Swiss postal motor car services. In view of the conditions under which the Swiss postal road services have to be—and are successfully—maintained in winter, Mr. Oftinger can be regarded as one of the greatest authorities on the subject of vehicle operation over snow and ice-bound roads.

He refers to successful results obtained with rubber creeper track and six-wheeled vehicles, but expresses preference for four-wheeled vehicles with twin pneumatic-tyred front wheels and large triple pneumatic-tyred rear wheels, carrying non-skid chains. With such machines he is able to maintain regular services in a satisfactory manner and under conditions which, in view of the gradients and depth of snow encountered in Switzerland, are generally much more exacting than those experienced in this country. Thus it can be accepted that for British users non-skid chains offer the most practical and economical method of travelling over snow-covered or frost-bound roads, particularly in view of their comparatively low cost and the ease and quickness with which they can be fitted when necessity arises.

Motor Transport.

We and Italy.

Following we print an interesting letter from a constant reader of the *Swiss Observer* who has for years been living in Italy. He is gently but firmly reprimanding us for publishing from time to time articles that, he alleges, betray "a rather hostile attitude amongst most of our informants towards Italy." We should deeply regret it if that reproach were deserved. We certainly would never knowingly countenance a hostility towards Italy or its present regime, as it would ill become the organ of a nation that is firmly wedded—both by our own volition and by international guarantee—to a policy of undeviating neutrality, quite apart from the fact that Italy is one of our immediate neighbours with whom we hope to preserve intact the very strong ties of a friendship of old standing, of cultural and economic intercourse.

We think that our friendly critic is confusing just complaints about certain matters of differences—which are bound to arise now and then between any two nations whose political traditions and governmental systems are so vastly different as those of Italy of to-day and our own country—and the general attitude we maintain towards our Southern neighbours no matter how they manage their own affairs. When recently, in common with practically the whole Swiss Press, we emphatically protested against unfounded defamatory allegations in the Italian Press concerning an alleged neglect of our authorities to prevent anti-fascist plots, surely that could not be named an expression of hostility on our part. When our Ticinese friends in the columns of the *Swiss Observer* criticise the Federal Government for unduly interfering as they allege with the constitutional rights of every Swiss to freely express his opinions and to hear lectures from political exiles, all in order to placate a foreign government, that again implies no essential hostility to Italy or its Government as such.

We very gladly publish the friendly article—or extract of such—by Mr. de Stefani so kindly translated for us by our correspondent. It contains a frank acknowledgement of respect for the way our people manage to be prosperous by honest and efficient business enterprise. It also points to the fact that Swiss purchases in Italy have declined since 1925 from 266 to 203 million Swiss francs annually and expresses the hope that this tendency may be reversed before long. Considering the fall of prices that has taken place during the last four years the above figures actually do not represent a falling off in Swiss imports from Italy. We certainly fully reciprocate the desire for an ever more active commercial intercourse between the two countries. Such a desirable development would, we submit, considerably be encouraged if the Italian Government were to relax its stringent regulations owing to which so many Swiss residents in the Kingdom have found themselves compelled to relinquish their posts and leave the country.

THE ED.

To the Editor of *The Swiss Observer*,

Dear Sir,

"*Il Corriere della Sera*," the chief Italian daily, published lately at a few days' interval two highly interesting articles on Switzerland by Mr. Alberto de' Stefani, ex Italian Finance Minister under the present Regime and now closely connected with the vast Government "Land Reclaiming and Irrigation" scheme. These articles, written by such an eminent Statesman and economist following his recent visit to Switzerland, are of special interest to Swiss residing in Italy; however, I venture to suggest that you may possibly welcome, for a change, a gleam of light in the rather gloomy annals of your valued paper as regards this country. I therefore take the liberty of attaching hereto a translation of fragments of Mr. de' Stefani's article "Italy and Switzerland's Possibilities" published in the "*Corriere della Sera*" of February 15th, together with clipping of the whole publication, in case you might be interested.

As a regular subscriber to the *Swiss Observer* since its inception, may I be permitted to state that I have noticed from time to time a rather hostile attitude amongst most of your informants towards this country, and publicity given to cordial articles such as those referred to above, may be appreciated in various quarters and contribute to a furtherance of friendly relationship between the two countries.

Yours very truly,
M. A. RYSER.

ITALY AND SWITZERLAND'S POSSIBILITIES.

"*Il Corriere della Sera*" February 15th, 1930.

The purchasing power of Switzerland, according to its import trade statistics, is gradually approaching 3 billion francs, i.e. exceeds 10 billion lire. This small people, formed by a population which is about one-tenth of that of Italy, buys abroad goods to a value which reaches one half of what Italy purchases. In the economy of Switzerland not only is its banking activity of importance, but also, concurrently with the latter, its

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MARRIAGE.

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