

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: - (1931)

Heft: 484

Rubrik: Notes and gleanings

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The Swiss Observer

FOUNDED BY MR. P. P. BOEHRINGER.

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. 11—No. 484

LONDON, JANUARY 31, 1931.

PRICE 3d.

PREPAID SUBSCRIPTION RATES

UNITED KINGDOM	{	3 Months (15 issues, post free)	3s
AND COLONIES	{	12 " (20 " " ")	6s
SWITZERLAND	{	5 Months (20 issues, post free)	Frs. 7.50
		12 " (20 " " ")	14.—

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



HOME NEWS



FEDERAL.

SWISS ARMY MAKES INSTRUCTION FILMS.

For some time the Swiss Army Authorities have been studying the possibility of employing the film for the instruction of its soldiers.

A film, specially produced, was recently shown before the Society of Army Officers at Berne. It presented the principal technical elements of army defence, and had been produced under the direction of an infantry officer instructor. The company manoeuvred in the region of Zweisimmen and Saanenmoser.

The final verdict of the Army representatives is that the film, produced with care and precision, will be an invaluable aid in army training.

Two categories of films are suggested—the technical film and the tactical film, and the authorities have decided to form a special section which will be responsible for the provision to each group of projecting apparatus and suitable films.

SWISS BANK RATE LOWERED.

The Swiss National Bank has reduced the official discount rate by one half per cent. to 2 per cent., and the rate for advances on security by one half per cent. to 3 per cent.

SWISS DIESEL ENGINE.

It is officially reported that in pursuance of their policy of adapting their Scotswood works to new industries, Sir W. G. Armstrong Whitworth & Co. have entered into an agreement with the Saurer Company, of Switzerland, to manufacture here diesel engined motor lorries. For this purpose a new company has been registered under the title of the Armstrong Saurer Company.

FASCIST "CENSUS" IN SWITZERLAND.

The *Squilla Italica* ("Italian Bell"), the organ of the Italian fascists in Switzerland, is reported to have addressed a circular to Swiss local authorities asking for lists of Italians living in their locality, adding that some municipalities have already supplied these lists, and that they are only required in order to send copies of the journal to Italians throughout Switzerland.

The newspapers suggest that this is only a ruse by which the Italian legation at Berne is endeavouring to obtain a full list of Italians in Switzerland, and it is recalled that a Government circular was sent out to police departments in 1920 saying that such requests should not be complied with, but that inquirers should be referred to the Federal Department of Justice and Police.

SWISS BANK REPORTS.

For the year ending 1930, the directors of the Crédit Suisse propose to pay a dividend of 8 per cent. on the share capital of 150,000,000 francs. The net profit is returned as 16,419,924 francs (1929—18,589,391 francs). The Handwerkerbank Basle earned net profit of 1,190,000 francs for 1930, a slight increase over 1929. The dividend is repeated at 8 per cent. The net profit of the St. Gallische Creditanstalt declined from 1,021,000 francs in 1929 to 969,000 francs in 1930. The dividend has been reduced from 10 per cent. to 8 per cent.

A DIPLOMAT'S JUBILEE.

Monsieur Frédéric W. Barbey, Swiss Minister in Brussels, celebrated last Saturday his 10th anniversary as diplomatic representative of the Swiss Confederation to the Belgian Court. On this occasion the Swiss Colony of Brussels, in conjunction with the various Swiss Societies in Belgium, offered a banquet to Monsieur Barbey.

UNEMPLOYMENT IN SWITZERLAND.

The latest figures to hand show that there are at present 23,045 persons unemployed.

LOCAL. ZURICH.

The Italian Consul-General in Zurich, Signor Bianchi, was on Tuesday seriously wounded by an Italian, who fired three revolver shots at him in his office at the Consulate.

The assailant—a young soldier named Bassi—

had presented himself already twice at the Consulate asking for assistance during his period of military service, which had been refused. To-day Bassi called at the Consulate and insisted on seeing the Consul-General himself, who received him and explained that the Italian authorities did not see their way to grant his request.

Thereupon the young man fired, hitting Signor Bianchi in the hand, the left lung, and the lower abdomen. He then ran out into the street, where he was speedily arrested by the police with the assistance of some passers-by. The attack had no political motive. Signor Bianchi is lying in a serious condition.

D.T.

The Canton of Zurich proposes to issue a new Four per Cent. Loan of Frs. 25,000,000 to provide funds for the conversion or redemption of various loans which will be maturing shortly. These are the three 1916 issues totalling Frs. 18,000,000 and the 1917 loan of Frs. 8,000,000, while Frs. 1,000,000 will be available out of current funds.

The new loan will be issued at 99 per cent., plus Federal stamp tax of 60 centimes per cent. It will be redeemable on 31st March, 1946, or after 1943 at the option of the Cantonal authorities.

F.T.

BERNE.

A memorable gathering took place in Berne last week. Through the initiative of the Society of Army officers, an invitation was sent out to the veterans of Berne's regiments, who took part in the occupation of the frontier during the Franco-Prussian war in 1870-71. Well over three hundred persons answered this invitation. M. Joss, a member of the State Council, was in the chair, and amongst the visitors were the colonels Wildbolz, Guisan, Schaubli, Roost, Bridel, Schmid, Hartmann and Buhmann. During the dinner, the 99 years old veteran Schmid was presented with a bunch of flowers. One of the participants was the trumpeter Gasser, who accompanied the officers with a flag of truce to ask for the surrender of the Bourbaki army before crossing the frontier. Many patriotic speeches were delivered, and a message was sent to the widow of General Herzog, who lives at St. Gall.

B.

The Bernese Government has issued a proclamation to the population acquainting them with the fact that 100 years ago the introduction of the new constitution (Staatsverfassung) took place. In order to celebrate this important event, the Grand Council and the cantonal authorities will meet in solemn conclave at the Town Hall in Berne. All the schools will be closed that day.

N.Z.

M. M. Flückiger (liberal) has been elected President of the Municipal Council, as first Vice-President M. Berger-Stalder (Bürgerpartei) and as second Vice-President M. Fritz Marbach (socialist) have been elected.

B.

GLARUS.

Bartholomä Tschudi-Streiff, the last "Ratsherr," has died at Glarus at the age of 86. St.T.

A meeting of the population of Linthal, which was evacuated some few weeks ago owing to the danger of an alandslide at the Kilchenstock, took place. Professor Heim from Zurich acquainted the meeting with the position, saying that, owing to the cold weather, no further movements have occurred, but that the danger was by no means obliterated. M. Hauser, Landamann, assured the population of the support of the whole canton. A collection in aid of the sorely tried inhabitants, which was started some time ago, has yielded so far 33,000 francs, but as the distress is great and help urgently wanted, a committee has been appointed in order to make a wider appeal. J.S.P.

BASLE.

The death is reported at a nursing home in Basle of Colonel H. Keller, formerly commander of the St. Gotthard fortress.

N.Z.

(Continued on page 2245.)

CITY SWISS CLUB.

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NOTES AND GLEANINGS.

By KYBURG.

A Campaign in the Alps in 1799—continued.

So matters stood at the end of the second day of operations, the 15th of August, with the Austrians cleared completely out of the Reuss valley below the Devil's bridge. For the description of what happened on the following day, it is necessary to go back and to consider the events which took place in the Rhone valley during the previous days.

The assistance which Turreau's Division was directed to give to Lecourbe consisted in an attack on the Austrians under Strauch in the upper Rhone valley (the Goms) from Brig. The Antrona and Monte Moro passes had been occupied by the French on the 12th of August to prevent the possibility of the French flank being turned from that direction. On the 13th of August a column consisting of the 1st and 2nd/89th and the 3rd/110th attacked the Warasdin Battalion which was stationed at Rosswald and formed the liaison between Strauch's Brigade in the Goms and Rohan's on the Simplon pass. The Austrians retreated, pursued by the French, and a certain interest is attached to the location of the place which the French reached. It is known that the Warasdin Battalion retired on the Binnenthal where its support (a battalion of regiment Wallis) was posted, and the French are stated by Stutterheim (quoted by Günther) to have taken up a position on the "Safnitzer Alps." The Archduke Charles gives "Safnitscheralp (Safnismatt)" as their position, and Hennquin states that it was on "the heights of the Safnischalp." The interest arises from the fact that there is a valley, the Safnischalp, which runs parallel with the Rhone, from the Binnenthal to the pass of the Safnischjoch (8,467 feet) close behind Rosswald. Safnischmatten is in this valley close to the Binnenthal. The only other way by which the French could have reached this place is by going up the Rhone valley and then up the Binnenthal, but this would have necessitated their passing positions which were still held by the Austrians at this time. It seems, therefore, impossible to avoid the conclusion that these operations took place over the Safnischjoch, resulting in complete severance of the communications between Strauch and Rohan.

At all events, in the evening of the same day (13th of August) the French column fell back on Rosswald. On the following day, Turreau again attacked Strauch. One column under Jardon attacked on the (northern) bank of the Rhone and drove the Siegenfeld battalion back from Ried to the Teischberg, where its support (Battalion Carneville) held up the French advance. The French column on the left bank pushed up as far as Bister.

Seeing that his left flank was seriously compromised, Strauch ordered four companies of the Wallis Battalion which was posted at Münster to march down the Rhone and assist in stemming the tide of Turreau's advance, and to retake the lost positions. This they partially succeeded in accomplishing. But in so doing, Strauch fell completely into the subtle trap which the French had laid for him, for Strauch now had only two companies left in reserve with which to support his two battalions on the Grimsel pass, and it was precisely at this moment that Gudin's Column attacked the Grimsel pass and took it.

On the 13th of August Gudin had concentrated his Column at Guttanen, at the entrance to the Haslital, and he did not relish the task which was appointed for him on the morrow. Patrols which had reconnoitred the Grimsel pass had found it to be strongly held. One Austrian battalion defended the rock called the Nollen at the foot of which the old Hospice stood, while another battalion held the summit of the pass itself (7,135 feet). It appears that while the French officers were in the inn at Guttanen which was kept by a certain Fahner, they overheard him boast that he knew of a way by which the French could get at the Austrians from behind. Gudin jumped at the chance, and by persuasion and coercion determined Fahner to lead a detachment by the way of which he had spoken.

Accordingly, a column of four companies of the 2nd/25th light demi-brigade started off in the middle of the night, and, early on the morning of the 14th of August, Fahner led it across the Bögel-

einbrücke to the right bank of the Aar, near the Kurzalpinnen. From there he led the way up the gulch which runs up to the Gersten glacier. Meanwhile, the remainder of Gudin's Column followed with its two guns and reached the little plain of the Raetierboden. After a skirmish at a bridge, the French formed a line facing the Austrian position on the Nollen.

When the little column which Fahner was leading reached the Gersten glacier, he turned to the right and started on a traverse to the Nägelisgräthli, which is the ridge descending on to the Grimsel pass from the north east. The column reached the little lake on this ridge after five hours' scrambling, during which the French troops, unaccustomed to such exercise, more than once suspected Fahner of tricking them and leading them to ruin. The officers had difficulty in preventing their men from putting their murderous threats against Fahner into execution. However, they reached the Nägelisgräthli in safety and unseen by the Austrians, in whose flank and rear they now stood.

Gudin had directed two more companies of the 2nd/25th light to make another flanking movement to the right of the Nollen, and the combined attack from both flanks and from in front settled the fight to the total discomfiture of the Austrians. Not only that, but the column which Fahner had led had now descended from the Nägelisgräthli and reached the little lake known as the Tödtensee, and thus cut off the retreat of the Austrians down the path on the Maienwang to Gletsch and to the Furka pass. The only way open for their escape lay down the path to Obergesteln.

For the reasons already mentioned, Strauch was unable to support the defenders of the Grimsel with more than two companies, and these arrived too late to achieve any object. They collected the fugitives and took up a position at Im Loch, at the mouth of the Eggental, opposite Ulrichen.

With regard to the name of the Tödtensee, the legend which attributes it to this battle, on the supposition that the dead were thrown into the lake, is devoid of foundation. The name is found in Gruner's description of the Grimsel, published in 1760, and refers to the fact that the lake is often frozen even in the height of summer.

After their capture of the Grimsel pass, the French descended into the Rhone valley, in which Strauch now found himself hemmed in from both ends. He sent urgent orders for the remainder of his Brigade (which as already seen was engaged farther down the Rhone valley) to concentrate on his position at Im Loch. But this was no longer possible, for by now (15th of August), the French had occupied Münster and had thus got in between Strauch and the rest of his troops, and his Brigade was cut clean in two. Rohan could give him no assistance, for on the same day (15th of August) he was attacked by Turenne and driven off the Simplon pass, whence he retreated to Domodossola.

There was nothing left for Strauch but to retreat with the few troops with him over the Nufenen pass (8,005 feet) to Airolo, and thence down the Ticino valley to Bellinzona which he reached on the 17th of August. Meanwhile, the other portion of his Brigade was led by Colonel Carneville out of the Binntal in which it was hemmed, over the Albrun pass (7,907 feet) into the Val Formazza, and thence over the Furka del Bosco (7,946 feet) into the Val Maggia, eventually reaching Locarno.

The days of the 14th and 15th of August had thus been just as fortunate for Lecourbe's Division in the Haslital and Rhone valley as elsewhere. Not only was the Grimsel pass in French hands, but the Austrians were cleared right out of the Rhone valley, and there was nothing to prevent Gudin from crossing the Furka pass (7,975 feet) and completing his allotted task. This he did on the 15th of August, leaving the 2nd/25th light in the Rhone valley, and bivouacking at Realp in the Ursental. At that time the Rhone glacier extended a mile further than it now does.

Next morning (16th of August), Gudin advanced along the Ursental, and at Hospenthal he detached the 2nd/67th over the St. Gotthard pass (6,936 feet) to Airolo. In front of his advance, Simbschen's Austrians evacuated Andermatt and the Devil's bridge, and retreated to the Oberalp pass. And so it was that Lecourbe and Loison, who had been held up at the Devil's bridge on the night of the 15th, found on the morning of the 16th that the Austrians had vanished and that Gudin had appeared in their place. The Devil's bridge was repaired, and Lecourbe's Division thus found itself concentrated again at the very place which he had set out to capture: the cross roads of the Ursental.

All that now remained to be done was to drive the remnants of Simbschen's Brigade off the position which it had taken up on the Oberalp pass. Just to the east of the Oberalp lake, this pass forks into two: the Pass da Tiarmi (7,068 feet) on the north, and the Surpali (or Oberalp pass proper, 6,732 feet) on the south, separated by a hill called the Calmot. Both these

sub-divisions of the Oberalp pass lead down into the Rhine valley, and they were defended by two battalions of regiment Kerpen.

On the 16th of August, Lecourbe ordered the 1st/67th to descend the Reuss valley to Gurtellen and then to turn up the Felliatal so as to attack the Austrian position on the Pass da Tiarmi over the Felliälücke (8,170 feet). Another detachment is reported to have been directed to turn the Surpali by going over the Badusberg. The remaining troops attacked the Austrians in front. The attacks were repulsed and repeated several times, until at length the French formed up a column of grenadier companies and charged with the three generals, Lecourbe, Loison, and Gudin, at their head. This attack succeeded, and the Austrians were driven down into the Rhine valley along which they retreated to Chur.

In this manner, on the 16th of August, three days after the outset of the operations, Lecourbe obtained possession of all the passes in the St. Gotthard massif. Of the soundness of the operations from the military point of view this study does not intend to say much, and it has already been discussed by expert strategists. It has been said that Lecourbe's plan was too hazardous and complicated, that his columns were too widely dispersed, and that the double victories which were expected of the reserve Column on the left (at Brunnen and at Flüelen) and of Gudin's Column on the right (on the Grimsel and in the Ursental) argued an excessive optimism. It may, however, be noted that Lecourbe's plan was in perfect agreement with the principles formulated by Pierre de Bourcet in a work called *Principes de la Guerre de Montagnes*, written about 1775, but not published. Extracts from this work are given by Spenser Wilkinson, and one passage may with interest be quoted here. Speaking of the splitting of the army into little packets, he says: "but this method, which would be dangerous in any other type of country, is essential in mountainous regions and forms the science of this kind of warfare when the general who uses it has the means already prepared of reuniting his forces at the necessary moment." At all events, the chief impression which the present study is intended to convey is one of a successfully accomplished alpine exploit.

Lecourbe's operations were not conducted on so large a scale as those of Kao Hsien-Chih in the Pamirs and Hindukush in A.D. 747, which have been so admirably traced and described by Sir Aurel Stein. They have, nevertheless, several features in common, such as the dispersal of the force into a large number of separate columns for the approach, and concentration for battle. It may also be mentioned that at the time of Lecourbe's attack, when the country had been devastated by a year's warfare, the valleys of the St. Gotthard region were almost as barren as those of the Pamirs.

The effect of Lecourbe's success on the fortunes of the war was not unimportant. The Austrian Minister Thugut's incorrigible liking for intrigue was not calculated to help the Allied armies to bring the war to a successful conclusion. In the first place, the entry of Korsakof's Russian Corps into the Swiss field of operations (which was largely due to English influence) was most distasteful to Thugut, for he would have preferred it to remain in observation of Prussia and of the new Elector of Bavaria, who was looked upon with grave suspicion by Vienna. As a result, Thugut forbade the Archduke Charles (who had just beaten Jourdan at Stockach) to cross the Rhine into Switzerland for the purpose of attacking Masséna. Next, Thugut was by no means pleased that it should be by Russian troops under Suvorof that Piedmont should be taken from the French. Still less did he like Suvorof's proclamation to the Piedmontese that it was the intention of the Allies to restore King Charles Emanuel to his throne in Turin, for Austria had other views concerning the future of that monarch's dominions. The result was that Suvorof was directed not to follow his good fortune while it was warm, and grievous misunderstandings arose between him and the Austrian court under whose orders he nominally was.

Meanwhile, the military results of the campaign suffered. A plan, which is said to have been of English origin and which was approved by the Tsar, required the concentration of all the Russian troops in Switzerland for the purpose of freeing that country. This plan was accepted by Thugut, and so it was that Suvorof was directed to march over the Alps into Switzerland to join Korsakof, while the Archduke Charles' Army left Switzerland for Germany and for operations on the Rhine. The latter marched out of Switzerland on the 1st of September, and on the 21st of the same month Suvorof's Army was at Bellinzona in the Ticino valley, preparing to cross the St. Gotthard pass. But as a result of the operations of Lecourbe which have just been described, the way was not open, and it was only by dint of continual fighting that Suvorof was able to crash his way through to Altdorf on the 26th of September, only to learn that he was too late and that on the previous day Masséna had completely routed Korsakof's Corps at the second battle of

Zürich. Headed off by the French at the lake of Lucerne at Schwyz, and at Glarus, and so prevented from debouching into the plain of Switzerland to help his countrymen, Suvorof who had led his Army over the Kinzig Kulp and Pragel passes, turned back over the Panixer pass to the Rhine valley. Eventually he reached Chur, complaining bitterly that his Austrian allies had let him down, as indeed they had, for the support given to him by Jellalich's and Lincken's Brigades was very lukewarm. The Tsar was offended at the way in which his army had been used, and Russia withdrew from the Second Coalition. Masséna and Lecourbe had between them saved the French Republic.

In conclusion, it is not without interest to turn a little attention towards the lives of some of the persons involved in the foregoing operations. The name of Loison is not unknown to British ears, for he was to measure himself (to his disadvantage) with British troops in the Peninsula. It is doubtful whether Gudin's name ever came much to the notice of this country, and the name of Lecourbe himself is hardly likely to have attracted much attention on this side of the Channel either. And yet, it might have been very different but for the irony of fate. Shortly after conducting these operations in the St. Gotthard region, Lecourbe was promoted to command the Army of the Rhine. In 1800 he contributed to the success of his friend Moreau, under whom he was serving, in the campaign which led to the triumph of Hohenlinden.

Lecourbe had now reached the zenith of his career, and he enjoyed the esteem of Napoleon, who even considered him as a possible husband for his sister Pauline. But that was not to be. The conspiracy in which Cadoudal and Pichegru were involved, and Moreau was implicated, resulted in a still closer cementing of the friendship between Moreau and Lecourbe, and the estrangement of Lecourbe from Napoleon. From this moment Lecourbe became suspect to Napoleon, and, not only was he retired from active service, but he was actually banished to his native village and later on to Bourges, under conditions which closely resembled detention.

And so Lecourbe was compelled to remain in disgrace and enforced idleness while the Grande Armée performed one prowess after another, and the officers who (like Ney) had served under him as juniors became Marshals of France.

(To be continued.)

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