

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: - (1934)

Heft: 671

Rubrik: Football

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The Swiss Observer

FOUNDED BY MR. P. F. 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. 13—NO. 671

LONDON, SEPTEMBER 1, 1934.

PRICE 3d.

PREPAID SUBSCRIPTION RATES

UNITED KINGDOM AND COLONIES	{ 3 Months (13 issues, post free) : 3/6 6 " " (26 " ") : 6/6 12 " " (52 " ") : 12/-
SWITZERLAND	{ 6 Months (26 issues, post free) : Frs. 7.50 12 " " (52 " ") : " 14-

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



HOME NEWS

(Compiled by courtesy of the following contemporaries: National Zeitung, Neue Zürcher Zeitung, St. Galler Tagblatt, Vaterland and Tribune de Genève).

FEDERAL.

CORPS COMMANDANT COL. BIBERSTEIN DEAD.

Col. Biberstein, the commandant of the third Army Corps, died on Monday morning at Berne from pneumonia, at the age of 69.

The "Tribune de Genève" says:

Le défunt suivit les écoles de Soleure, puis fit des études de philosophie à l'Université de Zurich. Il suivit l'école militaire du Polytechnicum, puis entra au service d'instruction de l'armée. En 1890, il fut nommé instructeur de l'IIme classe dans la Vme division. De 1893 à 1894, il fit un stage militaire en Allemagne. De 1905 à 1909, il enseigna aux écoles centrales et fut chef de service auprès de l'instructeur en chef de l'infanterie. De 1913 à 1916, il dirigea les écoles centrales.

Le colonel Biberstein, en qualité de commandant de troupes, fut d'abord mis à la tête de troupes soleuroises, puis de troupes grisonnes et tessinoises. Il fut commandant de l'ancienne brigade d'infanterie 16, puis de la brigade d'infanterie 15, qu'il commanda pendant la durée du service actif.

En 1914, on confia au colonel Biberstein le poste important de commandant du détachement du Tessin-sud. En 1917, il fut nommé commandant des forces d'occupation du Gôthard, avec le grade de divisionnaire. Il changea cette charge contre le commandement de la IIIme division, puis contre celui de la IVme division. Il fut promu colonel commandant de corps d'armée en 1925 et devint chef de la IIIIme division. Il publia plusieurs ouvrages militaires et avait acquis comme écrivain militaire l'estime générale par son objectivité et son sentiment des réalités.

SWISS HOTEL INDUSTRY.

At the recent meeting of the central committee of the Swiss Hotel Association it was stated that this year's summer season was as unsatisfactory as the previous one. Travel restrictions and the exchange position continue to discourage an expansion of the tourist traffic; excessive taxation and high mortgage interest added to the protectionist price-policy of the authorities have, it is maintained, further accentuated the existing crisis.

On the other hand official statistics compiled by the Federal Office record a small though steady improvement in the number of hotel-guests since 1932, which was the worst year. At the end of July last 52.7% of the available beds were occupied against 44.8% in 1933 and 44.1% in 1932; the figure for 1929 was 80.2%.

A TRAGEDY NEAR THE JUNGfrau.

A Lucerne student, the son of Mr. Bühler-Schweizer, met with a fatal accident when crossing from the Mittaghorn to the Grosshorn (3765 m.); he was accompanied by two local guides, Robert Bischoff and Rudolf Brunner, who also lost their lives. Young Bühler was an only son whilst the two guides are mourned by large families.

OUR DIPLOMATS.

The usual annual conference of Swiss Diplomats abroad which takes place in Berne to-day has attracted a "full house;" there are present the Swiss Ministers from Paris, London, Rome, Brussels, The Hague, Stockholm, Vienna, Bucharest, Madrid and Buenos-Aires.

TOUR DE SUISSE.

The second "Tour de Suisse," an International cross-country cycle race started from Zurich last Saturday at 8 a.m.; it consists of

seven daily stages (Zurich — Davos — Lugano — Lucerne — Lausanne — Berne — Basle — Zurich) and finishes this evening at the starting place. Altogether sixty competitors, all of them aces in this sport, have entered the field representing Switzerland, Germany, France, Belgium, Italy, Spain, Holland and Austria. The total sum of the official prize money amounts to Frs. 25,500; furthermore a large number of special prizes are offered by business firms, clubs and individuals. Apart from a daily "refresher" for each competitor ranging from Frs. 30 to Frs. 500 according to place final results prizes of Frs. 2000 down to Frs. 100 are awarded.

The event has been organised on a large scale and has evoked tremendous popular interest. No less than forty-five cars will follow the competitors in order to render all possible assistance, such as massaging facilities and a travelling hospital. Forty press reporters representing about a hundred newspapers will record the performance of each competitor.

So far the Swiss contingent has made a very good showing and is likely to be amongst the first three.

THE CONQUERING MOTOR-CAR.

Zermatt, one of the highest resorts, will soon cease to be the town without motor cars. At present it is linked with the rest of the world only by a mountain railway and a footpath up the gorge, which is 18 miles long.

In the cobbled streets of the town antiquated open carriages and a few horse-drawn hotel omnibuses are all the transport available, but now a motor road is being pushed up the deep gorge, climbing perilously high on the steep sides. About two miles of it have been completed, and another four miles will bring it to St. Niklaus. A narrow cart road runs from St. Niklaus to Zermatt, and that should greatly facilitate the task of the engineers.

LOCAL.

BERNE.

The communes in the district of Saignelégier have now agreed to the projected new water works and they are contributing Frs. 800,000 to the estimated cost of 3½ million francs. The construction will be spread over three winters and is expected to employ about 500 unemployed drawn mainly from the watch industry.

* * *

The cantonal accounts for the year 1933 show a deficit of nearly eight million francs.

SCHWYZ.

Small amounts collected by school children throughout Switzerland have so far secured Frs. 75,000 towards the fund to build a bye pass near Küssnacht in order to relieve the traffic through the historic "Hohle Gasse."

The estimated cost of this road is Frs. 310,000 and the collection is proceeding.

GRISON.

The "Bank für Grubünden," a small banking firm with a capital of 4.2 million francs, has closed its doors; it is hoped to resume business after a thorough reorganisation. Already in December 1933, temporary difficulties were bridged over with the help of the cantonal authorities and the National Bank, when eight million francs new money was secured by the undertaking.

FOOTBALL.

We are sorry to hear that Etoile Chaux-de-Fonds, by withdrawing their team from the Second League Championship and the Swiss Cup, have taken the first step towards liquidation. For some time negotiations took place with F.C. Chaux-de-Fonds with a view to a fusion of the two clubs; due to opposition by many old members this led to no result.

Etoile were founded in 1898 and entered the F.A. in 1902, reaching the top class in 1909. In 1912 and 1919 they won the regional championship and in the latter year became Swiss Champions. During the last few years, misfortune befell the club, losing in successive seasons their place in the National and in the First League.

Another victim of the world crisis. A great pity!

M.G.

NOTES AND GLEANINGS.

By Kyburg.

Holidays:

When the Editor of the Swiss Observer rings up and informs me that he intends calling on me, "it's ages since I had the pleasure of seeing you, old chap" I know that the probability of I having to do the "Notes and Gleanings" for a couple of weeks or so, is great and I am seldom wrong. You would think, wouldn't you? that Editors of popular papers, receiving all day long bits of news from all over the world, seeing all the various periodicals with the beautiful holiday-pictures, High Mountains and Bathing Belles, lovely sylvan scenery and "Mr. So and so and friend taking tea on the terrace at Dinard" and, in addition to that, listening on their daily business rambles, to endless stories of other people who have been away on holiday already, you would think, wouldn't you? that Editors loathed the very idea of a holiday. But such is the force of habit, such is the desire for a change that even Editors will cave in and come to think it a quite natural thing for them to go away for a holiday. Of course, it's perhaps their wives who want a change from domestic duties and from everyday life more than their husbands do and, as Editors on the whole are very good husbands, because they learn such a lot of the grievous results which attend the doings of bad husbands, they naturally do the right thing and arrange for that holiday duty to take place.

I am sure all our Readers will wish our friend ST., and his good lady a very successful and charming holiday. Editing is no light job and very nerve wracking, and our Editor in particular needs the refreshing stimulus of a real holiday, not because he has gone stale, but in order to prevent his wonderful versatility from becoming stagnant. Where would the Swiss Observer be then? So, here's to wishing our Editor all the very best and many of them and plenty of them!

I wonder what he will think, though when he reads this drivel, always supposing the thing is printed! Kyburg has gone right off and I wonder whether he does it on purpose so that I shall not ask him again?

Well, I can assure you all that I am doing my best. The week's gleanings have been duly submitted to me, but they are a very poor lot.

There is an article in the "Financial News" 23rd August, entitled

Swiss Control of Industry:

The Swiss Federal Board has recently issued a decree prohibiting the erection of industrial plant unless the consent of the Government has been obtained. The decree, which is retroactive, has been enforced without Parliamentary consent.

For the present, it applies only to the shoe manufacturing trade and is clearly directed against a company, mainly financed by foreign capital, which established a business in Switzerland a few years ago. In its decree, the Swiss Government refers to a law concerning economic proceedings against foreign countries, and it now appears that a branch of a foreign company established in Switzerland will be regarded as a foreign concern, despite the territorial principle which has hitherto been relied on.

This procedure will certainly not encourage foreign capitalists to invest money in Switzerland. Indeed, it has already caused anxiety among the existing foreign establishments, since foreign owners of Swiss industrial plants must apparently be prepared for similar action against them without notice.

Danger of Retaliation.

In the present case the retroactive nature of the decree and the elimination of Parliamentary or any public discussion has increased anxiety. The effects of the economic blizzard on Switzerland are appreciated by all, and a desire to limit individual liberty for the good of the general community is understandable. But Switzerland should realise that she is in a somewhat vulnerable position and should avoid steps which may disturb international relations and lead to retaliatory measures.

According to a statement by Federal Counsellor Meyer, foreign capitalists have invested