

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: 654

Rubrik: Home news

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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. 654

LONDON, MAY 5, 1934.

PRICE 3d.

PREPAID SUBSCRIPTION RATES

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

MEETING OF THE FEDERAL COUNCIL.

Federal Councillors Musy and Häberlin attended for the last time the meeting of the Federal Government. On this occasion M. Pilet, President of the Confederation, expressed to the parting members the thanks of the Confederation for the great services which they have rendered for many years to their country.

SWISS FRANC AND GOLD STANDARD.

M. Pilet-Golaz, President of the Swiss Confederation, opened last Friday the First International Exhibition of Air Travel. He made an important speech, during the course of which he said that Switzerland was entering on a period of drastic economies.

He declared that the Swiss Government would always maintain the gold standard, and added that his country, which bought considerable quantities of commodities abroad, would permit no inflation. The Swiss franc and the gold standard were linked by honour and interest.

SWISS BANK'S CLOSURE.

The Banque d'Escompte Suisse at Geneva has closed its doors. It has been in difficulties for a long time, and has already been reorganised once.

More than a year ago it was proposed to raise a fund of 30,000,000 francs to further reorganise the bank, of which 15,000,000 francs should be contributed by the Swiss Federal Government, 5,000,000 francs by the Government of Geneva, and the remaining 10,000,000 francs by the other Genevese banks. On April 10, 1933, the Genevese Parliament decided by a majority to authorise the Government to contribute 5,000,000 francs to this fund if necessary. The Socialist deputies voted against the resolution, and many of those deputies who supported it believed that it was only a question of giving moral support to the Banque d'Escompte.

Last Thursday afternoon the directors of the Banque d'Escompte informed the Government of Geneva that unless the 30,000,000 francs were forthcoming in 48 hours the bank would be obliged to suspend payment. The question was discussed at a Cabinet council on Friday morning, at which the managing director of the Banque d'Escompte was heard. The leaders of the political parties in Geneva and the Federal Government were informed as to the gravity of the situation, and finally, on Sunday morning, the Government of Geneva decided by a majority not to supply the 5,000,000 francs.

In a proclamation to the people of Geneva issued by the Socialist majority of the Government it is stated that the chief reason for this decision is that the Government has not 5,000,000 francs at its disposal. It has, in fact, inherited a large deficit from the preceding Government, and has already been obliged to borrow 10,000,000 francs from the Swiss Federal Government to meet its liabilities.

The "Journal de Genève" attacks the Socialist majority of the Government for having refused to vote the 5,000,000 francs.

Already 21,000,000 francs have been lost by the Canton of Geneva in the affair of the Banque de Genève, and it is felt that, disastrous as the failure of the Banque d'Escompte is, and in spite of the hardships to many people that it involves, it is impossible to go on squandering public money in enterprises of this kind. The banks of Geneva made an offer to the Genevese Government to find the 5,000,000 francs if the Government would guarantee them, but when M. Naine, the Minister of Finance, suggested that if the

banks had the money at their disposal they might lend it directly to the Banque d'Escompte, the banks declined to do so.

The Banque d'Escompte was founded in 1855. Its failure is due to unwise investments, which were severely criticised by the directors of the Swiss National Bank in a report on March 30, 1933.

The court declined to declare a state of bankruptcy. Instead a committee has been appointed to take charge of the assets and safeguard the interests of the creditors.

The committee will decide whether a reorganisation of the bank can be carried through, or whether liquidation will be necessary in six months' time.

COLONEL PHILIPP HEITZ.

Colonel Philipp Heitz died on April 23rd, at Alassio (Italy), where he had gone for reasons of health. His end came with unexpected suddenness, at the untimely age of 58, after a very full and busy life. He was cremated at San Remo, and the ashes were brought to St. Gall, where the funeral, which was largely attended, took place on April 30th.

Colonel Heitz, who will be widely missed, was a man who successfully pursued a dual career for the best part of his life. He was an energetic and experienced man of business, and at the same time a most distinguished officer of the Swiss Army, where he advanced to the rank of Colonel of Artillery. At the time of his death he was "Artillerie-Chef" of the 3rd Army Corps and a valued member of the General Staff. The last few months saw him busily engaged with preparations for the "Swiss Artillery Days," which are to take place at St. Gall in June. He was president of the committee organising this event, which, alas! he was not destined to survive.

He will always be gratefully remembered as a past President of the Offiziers-Gesellschaft of the Canton of Thurgau and the Offiziers-Verein of the town of St. Gall, respectively. At one time he likewise presided over the "Schweizerische Offiziers-Gesellschaft." Amongst the younger generation he was popular for the great and active interest he took in the Boy Scouts movement.

Although he was first and foremost an artillery officer, he yet had a great knowledge of, and respect for, the usefulness of all other branches of the army.

It was during manoeuvres that his great tactical and strategical abilities found their full scope, and he always managed to so arrange his forces that every arm of this essential service could display its qualities, and thus drive home the lessons of unified purpose and strength. During the War and after, he was in full charge of several convoys exchanging prisoners of war, wounded soldiers, civilians and children — a great and noble task, which taxed to the utmost those great qualities of organisation and leadership for which Colonel Heitz was famous.

In his civil career, after having spent his early years at his native Muenchwil, he abolished the "Gymnasium" at Frauenfeld, and then went for several years to France and England. On returning, he entered his father's business, where his adaptable mind and enterprising spirit soon brought him to the fore. During this time he was elected a member of the "Grosse Rat" of his native Canton of Thurgau, though in later life he no longer found time or inclination for active participation in politics.

Some 21 years ago he went to St. Gall, where he entered the firm of Messrs. Stoffel and Co., and he was soon given charge of the Near Eastern Department. As its head, he travelled Austria, Hungary, the Balkan Countries and Turkey constantly and extensively, and there were probably few business men in Switzerland who could rival his knowledge, his experience and his *savoir-faire* in those countries and of their peoples. His firm lost in Colonel Heitz an old and most valued collaborator and his colleagues a true and staunch friend.

LANDSGEMEINDEN.

The "Landsgemeinde" at Appenzell I/Rh. was an imposing affair. The cantonal government was re-elected, with the exception of Dr. Rechsteiner, head of the Police and Justice Department, who was replaced by Captain Broger.

At Trogen (Appenzell A/Rh.) eleven thousand citizens assembled. Amongst the visitors were Federal Councillors Motta and Haeberlin,

At Sarnen (Obwalden) the retiring three members of the government were re-elected. M. Joseph Stockmann was elected member of the cantonal government, replacing his brother, who recently resigned. M. Ruthin, of Kerns, was elected "Landammann." M. Kuchler, clerk of the court, was nominated a cantonal judge and President of the Tribunal.

The "Landsgemeinde" at Stans, which was attended by 3,000 citizens, has accepted the new financial taxes. The cantonal government which resigned was replaced; two of the resigning members were re-elected. Dr. Gabriel was re-elected as "Landammann."

HIGH POWER RADIO.

Following a decision to reorganise the Swiss broadcasting system, the power of the Beromünster station is to be increased from 60 to 100 kilowatts.

Plans are being made to make the station one of the most up-to-date in existence. The new equipment necessary is being manufactured at the Marconi Works, Chelmsford, and it is expected to be ready in the autumn.

M. Huber, President of the National Council, "Landammann" Hefti, of Glaris, and Colonel Lardelli. The cantonal government was re-elected. M. P. Rotach, of Waltstatt, was elected as an additional member of the government, and M. Ackermann, of Herisau, was confirmed as "Landammann". M. Jacob Zehner was elected Judge of the District Tribunal.

LOCAL.

ZURICH.

Four members of the "Nationale Front" have been arrested in connection with a bomb outrage which took place last January at Zurich, against a Socialist editor, Mr. Grau. One of the chief instigators, Mr. Werner Gloor, a clerk, has made a confession. The four men in custody are: H. Benz, W. Gloor, Stüssi and Brunner.

BERNE.

Two prominent members of the Swiss Civil Service are celebrating their 40th service jubilee.

M. Gassmann, "Oberzoll Direktor," a Berne, entered the Federal Customs Office 40 years ago, and for the last 14 years he was at the head of the Federal Customs Office. M. Gassmann has on many occasions represented the Swiss Government at international conferences, and is considered an expert on customs questions.

M. Hans Ryffel, from Stäfa, since 1927 chief of the Federal Finance Control, entered the Federal Post administration in 1894. He, too, took part in many international conferences and has rendered great service to the Federal Finance Department.

GENEVA.

Mr. Robert Chodat, the distinguished Swiss botanist, who was Professor of Botany at the University of Geneva, has died at Berne at the age of 69. He was educated at the Universities of Berne, Geneva and Paris. In addition to his university appointment, he was also Director of the Botanical Institute and Gardens at Geneva, and president of the scientific committee of the Swiss National Parks. He was a corresponding member of many foreign scientific societies, including the British Association and the Linnean Society, and he held honorary degrees of the Universities of Cambridge, Manchester and Liverpool.

BASLE.

Dr. Stofer (Liberal) has been elected as President of the Civil Court with 6,293 votes. His opponent, Dr. Baumgartner (Socialist) received 4,237 votes. An increase in the dog tax has been defeated by 8,108 against 5,473 votes.

NEUCHATEL.

The elections in the canton of Neuchâtel ended with the victory of the bourgeois parties. The government has been confirmed as follows: Renaud (Progr.), 16,809 votes; Béguin (Rad.), 16,475 votes; Humbert (Lib.), 16,275 votes; Borel (Lib.), 16,241 votes; Guinchard (Rad.), 16,121 votes. The candidates of the Socialist party received the following votes: Perret 13,149, Brandt 12,978, and Gruber 12,380. The elections for the Grand Council also resulted in a victory for the bourgeois parties.

VAUD.

The death is reported from Grandson of M. Jules Vautier, head of the tobacco firm Vautier Frères et Cie. M. Vautier was an honorary member of the cantonal Chamber of Commerce.