

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: - (1938)

Heft: 891

Rubrik: La politique

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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 2321/2.

Published every Friday at 23, LEONARD STREET, LONDON, E.C.2.

Telegrams: FREPRINCO, LONDON.

VOL. 15—No. 891

LONDON, 10 DECEMBER, 1938

PRICE 3d.

PREPAID SUBSCRIPTION RATES.

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

(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, Tribune de Genève and Schweizerische Verkehrszeitung.)

FEDERAL.

RESIGNATION OF FEDERAL COUNCILLOR DR. A. MEYER.

Federal Councillor Dr. A. Meyer, head of the Federal Finance Dept., has informed the two Chambers that he is resigning his office as Minister of Finance at the end of the current year. (A biographical notice will appear in our next week's issue.)

A MEDICAL ANNIVERSARY.

Appendicitis operations have been performed for years and have saved innumerable lives. 1938 is a jubilee year for this branch of surgery. In 1888, fifty years ago, a Swiss doctor, Dr. Charles Krafft, of Lausanne, published his "Essay on the necessary of surgical treatment of appendicular perityphlitis."

WATCHES AND AIRCRAFT.

Interesting tests have recently been carried out by a Swiss watch factory. In order to test the resistance of their wrist-watches, pilots were requested to throw them to the ground from an airplane. The watches struck the ground at a speed of 18m. a second without their works stopping. This mystery is explained by miniature shock absorbers which prevent the fragile mountings of the balance wheels from being broken or twisted.

SWITZERLAND, COUNTRY OF ELECTRICITY.

A comparison of the quantity of electricity produced in the countries in which electrification is most highly developed reveals that Switzerland heads the list with 1642 kilowatt-hours per year and per inhabitant and 167,000 kilowatt-hours per km² of territory.

SWISS NATIONAL BANK.

On November 15th, the gold reserves of the Swiss National Bank amounted to 2,872 million Swiss francs; discounts and advances on securities reached 110.5 millions. The notes in circulation (1,662 millions) and the other liabilities at sight (1,687 millions) were covered by 85.7%.

AUSTRALIAN SWISS TRADE AGREEMENT.

A bill was introduced in the Australian Parliament validating a trade agreement with Switzerland which is expected to increase the value of Australian exports to that country to considerably more than the 1937-38 figure of £122,000. Imports from Switzerland were valued at £1,092,000. Under the agreement there will be a reduction in the Swiss duty on Australian wool from 7½ to 2½ a metric quintal, and duties on fresh, dried and canned fruits, eucalyptus oil, starch and lead will also be reduced. Australia lowers its duties on a limited number of Swiss goods, including cheese, soft goods and watches.

BERNE IN REICH.

The Swiss Federal Government has opened an inquiry into the authorship of a letter alleged to have been written by a German lawyer in the Reich to some Swiss clients affirming that one day Berne would be the seat of a Reich provincial administration.

The letter, which has aroused excitement in Berne, was anonymously reproduced in Swiss newspapers. A demonstration was held before the shop of a Berne watchmaker, a German national, who wrote protesting against the reproduction of the letter, and police were called to protect him.

One of the newspapers which reproduced the letter now declares that the watchmaker condemned the reference in it to German expansionist aims and that he wrote to the German Legation in Berne asking it to intervene.

NAZI PROPAGANDA IN SWISS UNIVERSITIES.

Switzerland's relations with Germany continue to figure prominently in the editorial and news columns of the Swiss papers. Papers of the Right in French-speaking Switzerland, in particular the "Journal de Genève" and "La Suisse," minimise the danger of Nazi propaganda in Switzerland and deplore the attitude of alarm which has swept over the German-speaking cantons.

A leading article in the "Journal de Genève" comments on recent incidents which have aroused public opinion and which have been the subject of representation in Berlin. One of the incidents cited arose out of an announcement at the University of Berlin concerning scholarships to be granted for study in Swiss universities. Scholarships can be granted to needy students who can be depended upon to sacrifice themselves to the "cause." This announcement created strong feeling in university and other Swiss quarters. Swiss university student organisations have adopted resolutions declaring that they are opposed to all Nazi propaganda in university groups.

Several weeks ago an incident occurred at the University of Geneva when German Nazi students attending a class in German law marched out of the room after a statement by the professor on the law adopted in Germany on November 11th. The incident caused much discussion in the local press. A group of Swiss students at the university circulated a resolution recalling the fact that one of the characteristics of university instruction in Switzerland was the liberty enjoyed by its professors.

GERMAN-SWISS TRADE PACT.

The terms of a German-Swiss trade agreement were settled after difficult negotiations lasting several weeks. It contains clauses arising out of the Anschluss with Austria.

THE UNIVERSITY OF FRIBOURG.

On November 15th, the Swiss Catholic University of Fribourg opened the session of the fiftieth year of its existence. Mgr. Besson, Bishop of Geneva, celebrated High Mass, which was attended by the students in their picturesque uniform, including the dolman, the Russian boots and the sword. At the opening session, the Rector, Mr. Bays, after reviewing the past year, handed over the insignia, the gold chain presented to the University by Leo XIII, to his successor, Rev. Berutti, O.P. The new Rector then conferred honorary degrees on a number of notabilities, among these on Councillor Piller, Director of Public Instruction and President of the University Friendly Society. In the afternoon the new buildings of the Institute of Anatomy were solemnly inaugurated, the first step towards the organization of the Medical Faculty. They were blessed by Mgr. Bernardini, Apostolic Nuncio in Berne, and handed over to the University. Councillor Piller, who had done most for the foundation of the new Faculty, made on this occasion a very unusual speech:—

"It is certainly not for the purpose of multiplying Institutes of Anatomy in our country that this Institute has been opened, but because we deemed it necessary, in the present confusion of ideas, that our future medical men might study man in the spirit and in the atmosphere that should inspire every research into the human body, that masterpiece of creation. The human bodies you are going to study, gentlemen, whatever their terrestrial fate may have been, were, in their lifetime, the temples of the Holy Ghost, and you have to remember that you will not touch them without a feeling of delicate and pious respect. That is why, both in the morgue and in the spacious dissection hall, whose vast proportions and restful harmony should make you conscious of the immensity opened out by death, we have insisted on placing altars to reassert Christ's triumph over death."

"Such is the purpose of this Institute. We are convinced that a spiritual atmosphere, far from interfering in any way with the intensity of scientific research, will stimulate study and provide additional reasons for trying to probe, with the assistance of chemical, physical and natural sciences, the mysteries of the human body, which in a certain sense has been made by the Incarnation—the temple of God."

LOCAL.

ZURICH.

M. David Farbstein, advocate in Zurich, has resigned his seat in the National Council.

* * *

The Superior Court of the canton of Zurich has condemned a motorist who was driving under the influence of alcohol, and thus causing the death of a cyclist, to 18 months imprisonment.

* * *

Lieutenant-colonel Edwin Bocksberger has celebrated the 25th jubilee as "Kantonaler Kriegskommissär."

BERNE.

The "Berner Tagblatt" celebrated on the 1st of this month the 50th Anniversary of its foundation, and on this occasion the Publishers issued a special illustrated number.

LUCERNE.

The Grand Council has elected Dr. G. Egli, to the post of "Schultheiss" for the ensuing year.

SCHWYZ.

The Grand Council of the canton of Schwyz has conferred the title of "honorary citizen" on M. Othmar Schoeck, the well-known Swiss composer.

GRISONS.

Dr. Joseph Vieli has been elected a member of the States Council (Ständerat).

Dr. Vieli was born in 1884 in Rhäzüns; after completing his studies he established himself as advocate in Chur. From 1917-1927 he was a member of the Grand Council over which he presided in 1924. For several years Dr. Vieli was a member of the cantonal court. In the year 1927 he entered the cantonal government of which he was a member until 1935.

VAUD.

Professor Jules Marchand has been nominated rector of the University of Lausanne for the years 1938-1940.

GENEVA.

M. Paul Bonnay, deputy of the Geneva Grand Council and member of the local Fascist organisation, has been arrested by the Swiss Federal Police on his return from Czechoslovakia, where he is alleged to have met Nazi agents and discussed with them propaganda activities in Switzerland.

He is at present in the Geneva prison at St. Antoine, and will be charged with acting to the detriment of the security of Switzerland by his relations with Nazi propagandists abroad.

LA POLITIQUE.

L'or intouchable.

Il y a, dans notre politique fédérale, un phénomène extraordinaire: on ne sait jamais dire carrément oui ou non. Ou du moins, ceux qui osent prononcer un de ces monosyllabes se comptent sur les doigts et passent pour des originaux, difficiles à contenir.

Que votre oui soit oui, votre non, non, dit l'Evangile. Sous la coupole, le oui même tient un peu de non, et le non garde prudemment quelques attaches avec le oui. N'est-ce pas? Il ne faut point trop se compromettre, il faut envisager toutes les hypothèses, et entre toutes, il sied de retenir celle où l'on devrait plus tard se contredire, en raison de ces "faits nouveaux" qu'invoquent régulièrement, au gré de leurs intérêts, les gens sans parole.

Il n'en va pas seulement ainsi au parlement, mais dans toute notre organisation politique et administrative.

Voyez la Banque nationale.

Le Conseil fédéral lui a demandé, au cours de l'été, si — oui ou non — on pouvait, sans mettre en péril le crédit de l'Etat, disposer du bénéfice, réel et concret selon les uns, purement comptable selon les autres, produit par la dévaluation. Le Conseil fédéral, en posant cette question, savait que la réponse serait négative. Et la Banque nationale savait que le Conseil fédéral le savait. Bref, c'était une simagrée, mais d'assez bonne tactique, car le procédé permettait de gagner du temps.

La Banque nationale poussa d'abord les hauts cris : de quoi se mêlaient donc ces profanes en science financière ? De quel droit le premier croquant venu fourrait-il son nez dans les délicats secrets et les astucieux arcanes d'un établissement qui doit pouvoir travailler à l'abri de la crie d'alarme populaire ? Le bénéfice de dévaluation, autrefois, n'exista pas, ou si peu qu'il était comme n'étant point, gisant sur le papier, mais non dans les coffres. Et puis, quand il eût existé ? Qu'est-ce à dire ? Allez-vous priver la Banque — celle qui a droit à un B majuscule — de son fonds de manœuvre pour protéger le franc ? Allez-vous faire en sorte que nous soyons le jouet d'une débâcle étrangère ? Ou d'une sournoise attaque, concertée par les vautours des changes ?

On s'inclina. La Banque nationale dit non. C'est en règle. Cherchons ailleurs. Ne parlons plus de ce bénéfice, puisqu'il est fictif. Soyons sages. Retournons-nous du côté du pressoir fiscal : n'a-t-il pas une de ces vis qu'on appelle justement vis sans fin ?

Mais, sur ce, il s'est produit pas mal d'interventions de la politicaile et de la politissommerie. Evidemment, la Banque nationale dit non, mais enfin, voyons, ce non, à tout prendre, à considérer de près les choses, ne pourrait-il pas se changer en un oui — oh ! pas tout de suite, doucement, lentement, avec des précautions et du tact ?

On a discuté, rediscuté et rediscuté.

Et maintenant — tenez-vous bien ! —, la Banque nationale, intraitable sur le chapitre du bénéfice de dévaluation, auquel, vous m'entendez bien ? il ne faut pas toucher, sous peine de catastrophes nationales, internationales, mondiales, universelles et interstellaires, la Banque nationale consent à mettre "à la disposition" des cantons 75 millions, à celle de la Confédération 75 millions aussi, soit au total 150 millions. Mais, attention ! Ils seront seulement prêtés... au... 4%. Et lorsque, éventuellement, par extraordinaire, par quasi-impossibilité, le bénéfice de dévaluation serait partagé, eh bien, ces sommes déjà versées seraient déduites de la part de chacun. "Bon appétit, messieurs !" disait Ruy Blas.

Car il va de soi que la Banque ne reverra jamais un centime de l'argent ainsi "prêté," en réalité distribué. Si elle peut s'en passer, personne ne songera à le lui restituer. Et si un jour elle en a vraiment besoin, ce sera parce que le marché de l'argent est serré ; et il le sera pour les débiteurs comme pour le créancier.

A parler net et franc, on partage bel et bien le bénéfice de dévaluation ; mais on le fait avec une parfaite hypocrisie, après s'être donné l'air de se refuser à l'opération.

Les "grands travaux" ont décidément bon dos. C'est même ce qu'ils ont de meilleur. Quant à nous, nous formons une jolie collection de poires.

Léon Savary.

(Tribune de Genève).

MEMORABLE DAYS IN THE ALPS.

All days spent in the Alps contain beautiful memories yet there are some of outstanding value to one inclined for reminiscence.

Some such days I wish to recall to-day.

There was a day in the year 1905 in the "Nesthorn" in the Valais, when a party of four started from the Oberaletsch Hut in fair weather for a mountain not considered difficult.

Everything went well for a few hours until close under the summit the weather began to show signs of breaking and of a coming storm ; there was lightning in the distance to the North coming nearer and nearer.

First, then, it was considered prudent to deposit the camera which one man carried, and later the ice axes were also discarded, and the ascent continued without, since we were not more than twenty yards from the top, on an easy snow arête.

Suddenly my guide and I felt the electricity in our hair, an alarming experience indeed, so alarming that my guide picked up a handful of snow and rubbed the snow all over his hair ; an instinctive act almost of panic by a hardbitten mountaineer. But it is well-known that even they fear nothing more than lightning and tempest.

Thereafter it was time to turn tail downwards !

The curious feature was that the other two climbers who were on another rope and a little in front of us did not experience the same awe-inspiring attention of this mysterious thing called electricity.

The explanation may have been that their head-dress was different : my guide and I wore

caps of fur and knitted wool respectively, whereas the other two climbers wore ordinary felt hats.

The descent to the hut was effected without further trouble. —

The Oberaletsch Hut was my unpremeditated residence for a few days on another occasion when bad weather set in and prevented any climbing.

We shared the hut with a number of labourers who were repairing the path to the hut and I found the time in the hut not without interest, listening to their tales of smuggling and poaching and sharing their weird concoctions called soup.

One evening we saw a magnificent spectacle of lightning a long way off on the other side of the Rhone Valley over the "Monte Leone;" never before or since have I seen such "fireworks" putting Mr. Brook's Crystal Palace displays easily to shame. Seriously I wish that my descriptive powers were of a class to do justice to this spectacle of nature; in the alternative one word must suffice, the lightning display was "grandiose."

The start for the Oberaletsch Hut is made from the Bel Alp, one of the most beautiful view points and Alpine resorts in the Alps. Did not the great John Tyndall single it out for the building of a chalet which he inhabited for many years and from which he studied the phenomena of glaciers.

John Tyndall was also an eminent climber : one of his disappointments in this capacity was that Ed. Whymper forestalled him on the Matterhorn.

In this same year, 1905, I was waiting for my guide, Alexander Burgen, on Bel Alp, and, by the way, of a little training walk I went up the Sparrhorn ; on my way down I decided in an evil moment to cut down off the track and very nearly came to grief ; it ended, however, on a humorous note because all that suffered in my unrehearsed slide of eight or ten yards were my nether garments. —

I was obliged to enter the hotel by the back door having first passed a few peasant women who noticed my plight and were not a bit sympathetic.

When my guide turned up the next day I was "for it." I got a good scolding for trying a short cut even on the harmless little Sparrhorn.

I was not dismayed, wrote home for more clothes, and continued to lift up "mine eyes to the hills."

J. J. Eberli.

COMMUNICATION RECEIVED.

BY THE REV. C. TH. HAHN.

Dear Friends,

On behalf of my wife and myself, I wish to thank everyone of you most heartily for the very friendly farewell dinner given to us on Thursday, 15th November, and for the great kindness accorded us. We were both deeply touched by the good-will and kind wishes of all of you and are most grateful for the splendid presents you have given us.

We hope to have the pleasure of welcoming you in our new home in Sierre, so that we may actively keep alive our friendship with all of you, who have been so kind and hospitable to us in London.

As soon as time permits, I will write and thank you all personally.

C. Th. HAHN.

AN APPEAL.

The Swiss Benevolent Society, the Eglise Suisse and the Schweizerkirche in London appeal once again to their compatriots for their kind contributions in cash or kind, in order to provide a little extra cheer for Xmas to our Swiss in need. Wearing apparel, underclothing and foot-wear are much appreciated and such gifts will be gratefully received.

Parcels should be addressed not later than December 12th, to :

34, Fitzroy Square, W.1.

or to 79, Endell Street, W.C.2.

and cash remittances to :

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Rev. M. Pradervand,

65, Mountview Road, N.4.

or Mr. F. G. Sommer,
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