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HOME NEWS

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FEDERAL.

SWISS ATTITUDE TO LEAGUE.

The Swiss Federal Government at a meeting unanimously approved M. Motta's report on the relations between Switzerland and the League of Nations and the question of Swiss neutrality. The Federal Government has refused to give any information about it even to the Swiss press.

Presumably, however, the report is on the lines of M. Motta's speech before the Swiss Federal Parliament on December 22nd. In that speech M. Motta declared that Switzerland must recover complete neutrality and must be neutral "even in regard to the League of Nations." He also said that the League was in danger of becoming a "coalition opposed to another coalition" and that "Geneva could not at any price become the seat of a coalition." This was taken to mean that if in the opinion of the Swiss Federal Government the League became a "coalition" it would have to leave Geneva. At the same time M. Motta said that there was no question of Switzerland's leaving the League of Nations.

It appears to be uncertain whether M. Motta's report will be produced at the meeting of the League Committee for the Application of the Principles of the Covenant next week. The Berne paper, the "Bund," which is usually well informed about the intentions of the Swiss Federal Government, has suggested that M. Gorgé, the Swiss representative on the committee, will propose the suppression of article 16 of the Covenant and that the demand of Switzerland for the restoration of unconditional neutrality will not be put forward until there has been a debate on the subject in the Federal Parliament.

In the opinion of the "Bund" a proposal to suppress article 16 would automatically raise the question of recognising the complete neutrality of Switzerland, but that is by no means generally admitted.

The restoration of complete neutrality to Switzerland would involve the suppression of the Declaration of London of February 12th, 1920, by which Switzerland was freed from any obligation to apply military sanctions under article 16 of the Covenant but remained bound to take part in political, economic, and financial sanctions. It is presumably the latter obligation from which M. Motta wishes to be released. Any modification of the relations of Switzerland with the League of Nations would have to be approved by a popular vote in accordance with a Federal decree promulgated when Switzerland entered the League. There was a referendum on the question of joining the League in which a majority of the cantons and of the electors voted in favour of joining, but the minority against was considerable.

SWISS SCIENTISTS HONOURED.

The University of Basle has conferred honorary doctorates on Profs. Paul Karrer and Leopold Ruzicka, who hold the chairs of chemistry at the University and Polyclinic at Zurich respectively. The former has investigated the structure of vitamins A and B, and the latter the structure of the sterols including vitamin D and the sex hormones.

ICE HOCKEY INTERNATIONAL.

The International Ice Hockey Match between Switzerland and Canada, which took place in Zurich on Sunday last resulted in a draw (1:1).

PITY THE LIONS OF GENEVA.

Troubles do not come singly to the Geneva Zoo. It is threatened with failure because: (1) There is an outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease; and (2) Funds are short.

For 49 days M. Molaron and an assistant have been in quarantine at the Zoo fighting to save the stock; but already animals worth £7,000 have died. Quarantine ends on Tuesday.

An appeal to the people of Geneva for funds brought in exactly £5.

ZURICH OPERA COMPANY.

The Zurich Opera Company has been invited to send a company to London to give a series of operas at Covent Garden next year. This company has for some time enjoyed a high reputation for its enterprise and ability.

Among the operas which it may present for the first time in England are Alban Berg's "Wozek" and "LuLu," and Verdi's "Luisa Miller." It is probable that the visit will be for one week, in February, when the London Philharmonic Orchestra will be able to support the company.

FAREWELL PARTY TO MINISTER DUNANT.

The Swiss Colony in Paris arranged a Farewell party on Sunday last at the premises of the Cercle Suisse, in honour of Minister Dunant, the Swiss Minister in Paris, who is shortly relinquishing his post. Several hundred of our compatriots congregated to say good-bye to this popular diplomat.

SAD REMINISCENCES.

Seventy-five years ago, owing to excessive snowfall, two catastrophes befell the canton of Ticino.

On January 7th, 1863, an avalanche almost completely destroyed the hamlet of Bedretto, in the district of Leventina, killing 31 of its inhabitants.

Four days later, on January 11th, owing to a heavy snowfall, the roof of the Cathedral collapsed, and a death roll of 46 was the result, whilst a great number of the congregation received more or less serious injuries.

NEW "SWISSAIR" PILOTS.

The Management of the "Swissair," with the consent of the Federal Air Office, has appointed the following new pilots on their international routes: Hans Ernst, Robert Fretz, Peter Senn and Anton von Tscharner. These new pilots have had four years training.

LISA WENGER EIGHTY YEARS OLD.

Lisa Wenger, the well-known Swiss writer, has celebrated her 80th birthday anniversary. Amongst her best-known books are the novels: "Vogel im Käfig," "Rosenhof," "Altweibermühle" and the "Amoralischen Fabeln." Lisa Wenger is the "Doyenne" of the Swiss Authors.

CONSIDERABLE REDUCTION OF SWISS FEDERAL RAILWAYS DEFICIT.

At a Meeting last week of the Federal Council, it was announced that the Deficit for 1937 of the Swiss Federal Railways amounts to 18 million francs, in the Budget a deficit of 70 million francs was anticipated.

The result of the "Eidg. Post, Telegraph and Telephon" administration shows a profit of 25 million francs (1936: 20 million).

SWISS BANK DIVIDENDS.

The following Bank dividends for 1937 have been declared:

A. G. Leu and Co., Zurich, 6 per cent.; Berner Handelsbank, Bern, 4 per cent. (1936: 3%); Allg. Aarg. Ersparniskasse, Aarau, 5 per cent.; Eidgenössische Bank, A.G. 5 per cent. (1936: 4%); Genossenschaftliche Zentralbank Basel, 5 per cent. (1936: 5%); Volksbank in Reinach (Aargau), 5½ per cent. (1936: 5½%); Hypothekarbank Lenzburg 5½ per cent. (1936: 5½%); Spar & Kreditkasse Suhrental, 5½ per cent. (1936: 5½%); Sparbank Escholzmatt, 4½ per cent. (1936: 4½%); Sparkasse Willisau 4½ per cent.; Volksbank in Schüpfheim, 4 per cent. (1936: 3½%); Basler Handelsbank, 4½ per cent.; Bank in Menziken, 5½ per cent. (1936: 5½%); Bank Wädenswil, 5 per cent. (1936: 4%); St. Gallische Hypothekarkasse, 4 per cent. (1936: 4%); Gewerbebank Baden, 5½ per cent.; Bank in Burgdorf, 4 per cent. (1936 no dividend).

ASSOCIATION FOR "SCHWYZERDÜETSCH."

Through the initiative of the Zurich group of the "Neue Helvetische Gesellschaft," a meeting took place, at which a great number of Delegates from all over Switzerland attended, to form a "Bund für Schwyzerdütsch." The aim of this Association is to further the "Schwyzerdütsch" language.

LOCAL.

ZURICH.

At the end of 1936, the town of Zurich registered 321,360 inhabitants.

BERNE.

Dr. Julius Maurer, formerly Director of the Swiss Meteorological Office in Zurich, has died at the age of 80. The deceased has written a number of books on Meteorological subjects, he was a member of the International Meteorological Committee, as well as a member of the German and English Meteorological Societies.

BERNE.

A sensation was caused in Berne, some months ago, when it became known, that Halde-mann, a well-known notary had decamped after having embezzled large sums which he had held in trust for clients of his.

For some weeks his whereabouts were a complete mystery, then it was reported that he has been seen in America, in fact it has since been established that he landed in that country under a false passport.

No less a sensation was caused in Berne, a few days ago, when it was reported that Halde-mann gave himself up to the Police in Berne, after having arrived from Paris.

URI.

There is a strong feeling prevalent throughout the canton of Uri to re-establish again the "Landsgemeinde," which was discontinued in 1928.

GLARUS.

This year's "Nafels-Fahrt" will take on larger dimensions, as it will be the 550th anniversary of the victory of the "Glarner" over the Habsburg's of Austria.

ST. GALL.

An industrialist in St. Gall has given an amount of 60,000 frs. to the Pension Fund of his staff on the occasion of his 60th birthday anniversary.

ARGAU.

The death has occurred of Dr. Otto Meyer, President of the Board of the "Wynental" Rail-way, the Gas Works in Aarau, and the "Aluminiumwarenfabrik" Gontenschwil.

THURGAU.

In Frauenfeld died, at the age of 78, Colonel Albert Brenner, Senior partner of the firm Brenner and Stutz, architects in Frauenfeld. During the Frontier occupation, Colonel Brenner was in command of the Hauenstein Fortress.

LAST SATURDAY.

Last Saturday morning, occurred the death of Colonel Victor Fehr, of the "Karthaus Ittingen" near Frauenfeld, at the age of 92.

For over 71 years the deceased had administered his well-known estate. On the occasion of the visit of the late German Emperor to the Swiss manoeuvres, in September, 1912, Colonel Fehr acted as host.

Colonel Fehr was one of the founders of the "Gesellschaft Schweizerischer Landwirte" over which he presided for over 50 years. On the 50th anniversary of this Society, the Technical University in Zurich, bestowed on him the degree of *doctor honoris causa*, for the great and numerous services which he had rendered to Swiss agriculture.

VAUD.

M. Jean Baup, a member of the cantonal government since 1934, has intimated that he does not wish to contest his seat at the next elections, which are taking place next March, for reasons of health.

GENEVA.

The death is reported from Geneva, at the age of 74, of M. Victor van Berchem, who wrote a number of historical Essays on Geneva.

The deceased was a *doctor honoris causa* of the University of Zurich.

SWISS BANK BOOKLET.

Increased world prosperity in the last few years has unfortunately done little to reduce interference with the normal course of trade. In its sixth year of publication, therefore, "Foreign Exchange Restrictions," compiled by the Swiss Bank Corporation, continues to provide a most useful statement of the regulations likely to affect the trader in his overseas dealings.