

**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:** - (1940)  
**Heft:** 950  
  
**Artikel:** Giuseppe Motta  
**Autor:** [s.n.]  
**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-687386>

### **Nutzungsbedingungen**

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. [Mehr erfahren](#)

### **Conditions d'utilisation**

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. [En savoir plus](#)

### **Terms of use**

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. [Find out more](#)

**Download PDF:** 03.01.2026

**ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>**

The well-known surgeon, Dr. F. de Guervain, died in Berne at the age of 78; he first practised at La-Chaux-de-Fonds but soon moved to the university centres of Basle and Berne where his lectures and many publications earned him international fame. He has been in retirement since 1938.

\* \* \*

A water shortage is reported from districts along the Jura; receding of the springs and the custom of allowing the water to flow during the night to prevent freezing are said to be the causes.

\* \* \*

All the roads leading into Germany are closed during night time, i.e., from 8 p.m. to 6 a.m. Opposite Basle a high barbed-wire barrier is being erected to prevent unauthorised persons (Schwarzgänger) crossing into Switzerland. Local workmen engaged in German factories along the border are, however, allowed unimpeded passage.

\* \* \*

On behalf of the Committee of the International Red Cross, Mr. R. A. Haccius, who has many ties with the London Colony has been surveying prisoners of war and internment camps in this country. He is one of the five delegates charged with this mission in the belligerent countries.

### GIUSEPPE MOTTA.

("Irish Independent," 24.1.40.)

It is not only the man who was five times President of Switzerland, not just the statesman who for more than twenty years was her Minister of Foreign Affairs, whose loss his own country mourns to-day. It is the deeply Catholic leader, the undaunted upholder of the rights of small nations, who has passed away at a time when Europe can ill afford to lose a man of his calibre.

He was born at Airolo, son of the concessionaire of the mail coaches down St. Gotthard. That giant among Alpine giants, is more than the geographical centre of the country, it is the watershed of a Continent. To-day electric express trains thunder through its enormous tunnel, a masterpiece of engineering. No longer have man, horse and mule, to conquer its passage by their own humble devices.

## SWISS BANK CORPORATION,

(A Company limited by Shares incorporated in Switzerland)

99, GRESHAM STREET, E.C.2.

and 11c, REGENT STREET, S.W. 1.

Capital Paid up s.f. 160,000,000

Reserves - - s.f. 32,000,000

Deposits - - s.f. 1,218,000,000

NEW YORK AGENCY

15 NASSAU STREET.

All Descriptions of Banking and  
Foreign Exchange Business Transacted

Motta had still known it thus in his youth. At his father's place, those who had just made the descent mingled with those who still had to do the ascent. His character was formed by this medley of men and professions, of races and languages, round the very cradle of his youth. The great international statesman was born in the Swiss village where the North meets the South.

As a boy of nine, young Giuseppe went to Ascona to the College which St. Borromaeo had built three centuries before, between the forests, the mountain slopes and the magic mirror of the upper reaches of the Lago Maggiore, loveliest and greatest of the lakes. Here, in the perfumed silence of this veritable garden of paradise, the poet and the romantic within the realist ripened, influences which could be traced in all his official speeches.

From there he went to the Catholic University of Fribourg, in French-speaking Switzerland, and finally to that greatest of all German seats of learning, Heidelberg, where he graduated as Doctor of Law with the highest distinction. Hence, though Italian was his mother tongue, which he always spoke at home, he could switch over into the German of a Cabinet meeting at Berne or to the French of a League of Nations speech in Geneva, without being so much as aware of it.

As a young man of twenty-four he had returned home. These were his happiest years. With buggy and horse, the young lawyer went round the mountain slopes to look up his clients, and though the Tessiner is known to like litigation even more than law, he managed — it remained his proudest boast — to settle the great majority of his cases by agreement. This sense of balance marked also the budding politician. Hence he was selected to represent his *petite patrie*, the Tessin, in the Government of his *grande patrie*, Switzerland.

His long and honorable career was a worthy epitome of Switzerland's typical democracy. He was a devout Catholic in a country preponderantly Protestant; Italian-speaking amidst a population mostly of German, partly of French tongue; politically he belonged to a small minority party. The secret of his charm and his success was that the three greatest European civilisations had shaped his personality — Italian grace and humanity, clear French logic, and the methodic German order with which he was accustomed to work.

The world got to know him at the League of Nations. He was President of the First Assembly, and he held another unrivalled record, that of being the only Foreign Minister who has headed his country's delegation, ever since the League was founded.

More than once the universal regard in which he was held by the statesmen of all countries made him their spokesman at many a tense moment. At such times he was the keeper of the League's conscience. Only once did he speak out without that moderation which was so typically his — when, supported only by Holland and Portugal, he warned against admitting Soviet Russia amidst the council of civilised nations. On eternal values, on great principles, this astute diplomat did not know of any bargaining, though no one worked more convincingly for a better European collaboration.

As Foreign Minister he watched over Switzerland's neutrality unceasingly. The last years of his life saw his path beset with many difficulties, he had to tread warily in a world full of pitfalls. No wonder that his heart began to fail, but after the briefest of respites he always returned to his office, to resume his burden. He died almost in harness.

How well do I remember him in his office. The central seat of Switzerland's Government is a simple, sunny building — no guns in front, nor smart soldiers standing to attention. In Berne flowerpots grace the window-sills, and a few feet from the entrance door a vegetable market is held. It does not spoil the Government's dignity, for they need not fear each other, Government and people in Switzerland, since they share the same virtues of solidarity and simplicity.

To the last Giuseppe Motta retained his youthful vigour. His forehead was almost classically Roman in an otherwise robust and square peasant face, engraved with countless little lines. Parent of ten children, he looked eminently the jolly father — yet not to be tampered with.

He was very simple in his taste. In his study, overlooking the snowcapped peaks of the Bernese Oberland, hung only one painting of Tessin women kneeling at a wayside chapel. Once when he had been talking of his increasing political burdens, he suddenly, gazing at it intently, said simply: "... then I have to go back to my native Tessin, and walk hatless in the silence and purity of the mountains of my youth. As the years mount I feel my communion with nature grow deeper ..."

A man of peace has now gone to his reward, the Eternal Peace which is God.

### CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR TRAFFIC.

(*"Railway Gazette,"* 26.1.40.)

The almost total lack of foreign visitors on account of European conditions resulted, as was to be expected, in a marked decrease in holiday traffic as compared with 1938-39 figures. During Christmas week (December 20th to 26th) the Federal Railways ran 217 special trains, as against 625 the previous year, and passenger receipts amounted to fr. 3,013,300, or a decrease of about fr. 200,000; this figure does not, however, include receipts from military traffic originating at a number of small stations from which soldiers returned home on leave. Conditions were better during the New Year week (December 27th to January 2nd), when 253 specials were run on the Federal lines (as against 490), and receipts were some fr. 345,000 above those of the previous year and amounted to about fr. 3,100,000. Most of the winter sport resorts reported excellent numbers of Swiss visitors.

Generous facilities are now granted by the Federal Railways and most of the private companies for conducted winter excursions of parties of pupils from public and private schools, with a view to attracting traffic from points some distance from suitable resorts. The lowest existing rates, namely, those for parties of children under 12, with reductions between 65 and 75 per cent., are applied in such cases, irrespective of the childrens' actual ages.

### SWISS MERCANTILE SOCIETY.

Following the Monthly Meeting on Saturday, January 13th, Mr. B. St. Regensburger, a member of the Society, delivered a very interesting lecture entitled "*On Horseback Through Ireland.*"

Mr. Regensburger intended to spend last year's holiday on horseback in Hungary but owing to the political situation altered his plans and made Ireland the venue of his ride. The latter country was already known to him for the fame of its horses, for he rode Irish horses in the Swiss army. In all the 26 counties of Ireland horse-breeding is prevalent. Poetry helped the lecturer to choose the County of Wicklow for his purpose and he quoted Ruth Duffin's impression of that county in rhyme:

"When you have left us, keep in mind  
The things that you have left behind ...  
The "purple spears" when twilight's veil  
Turns Wicklow to a fairy tale."

Wicklow is a county of mighty, yet gentle mountains, of loughs buried among the mountains, wild valleys, brown moors, black and emerald forests. Wicklow has, as its own special attribute, many waters, streams, torrents and lakes. It was the very county where the fighters for Irish freedom were able to resist the English invasion the longest, because the wild mountains and vales were inaccessible to anybody who did not know the country.

The lecturer went to Ireland via Liverpool and reached Dublin by steamer. On arrival he was greeted by beautiful sunshine and did not fail to visit Phoenix Park — the Hyde Park of Dublin.

The County of Wicklow is south of Dublin, along the East Coast, about 30 miles down. Mr. Regensburger spent the night half-way between Wicklow and Dublin with an old friend of his, who on the following day, helped him to find a suitable mount. After driving by car from farm to farm he was eventually successful in finding the horse he was looking for at a mansion-like farm in a lonely bay — called Brittas Bay. It was a small, typically Irish horse. In the evening he sat down to fix an approximate route for his tour which was rather difficult since that part of the country was entirely unknown to him.

On the following morning, a Monday in early July, he left Brittas Bay on the tour proper. He rode along the so-called "Silver Strand" with its smooth white sands and marvellous rock formations. He then turned inland where the country is rather sparsely populated, and due to its mountainous nature there are few farms. Some old people told him about castles

TRADERS WITH SWITZERLAND  
are informed that the  
**WORLD TRANSPORT AGENCY LTD.**  
have resumed their regular Groupage Services to  
and from Switzerland.  
*All enquiries to:*  
**LONDON: 21, Gt. Tower Street, E.C.3.**  
Telephone: MANsion House 3434.  
**BASLE: Markthalle.**  
**MANCHESTER:** 28, Oxford Street. **HULL:** 25, Queen Street. **LIVERPOOL 3.** Dock Board Bldg.