

**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:** - (1963)

**Heft:** 1429

**Artikel:** The calamity at Zermatt

**Autor:** [s.n.]

**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-689763>

#### **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:** 17.01.2026

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

was being watched and it was reassuring that a number of organisations had voluntarily agreed not to ask for any further shortening of the working week for the time being. He felt that prices should not surpass the international level and any increase of prices at home would have to be kept at bay. The sitting was declared closed at midnight.

On the last day the alterations in the Cantonal Constitution of Geneva were approved unanimously, also the tax provisions in the Constitution of Uri, and Parliament agreed to give a new concession to the Neuchâtel mountain railways.

At the end of the session the President announced that there were some 127 unfinished motions to be dealt with in the summer session, 78 from the previous sitting and to which a further 49 had been added during the present one. It might therefore be advisable to make the summer session four instead of three weeks. He thanked the M.P.s for the good work done, and a very fruitful session came to a close.

(Based on reports by National Councillor Ph. Schmid in the "Schweiz. Kaufm. Zentralblatt" and news received from the A.T.S.)

## FEDERAL SUBSIDIES IN 1961

The Federal Department for Statistics has now published the figures for the subsidies granted by the Confederation in 1961. These amounted to the record figure of 758 million Francs, 12% more than in the previous year. (1960 : 679m.) Under these subsidies come all those sums granted for a special purpose *à fonds perdu*. About one-third of the money was given to the Cantons for their own use or to be passed on. Per inhabitant Fr.76.13 were paid out (Fr.61.67 in 1960). The smallest *per capita* contribution was made to Basle, and the largest to the Grisons. The following table shows the groups and the amounts, in million francs and in percentages, with the previous year's figures in brackets:

	1960	1960
Agriculture (including grain stocks and alcohol utilisation) .....	348.6 (305.7)	46.0 (45.0)
Traffic .....	159.4 (124.5)	21.0 (18.3)
Health .....	81.8 (74.2)	10.8 (10.9)
Education and vocational training .....	35.4 (32.5)	4.7 (4.8)
Building .....	30.5 (29.8)	4.0 (4.4)
Culture, science and art .....	27.3 (46.0)	3.6 (6.8)
Welfare .....	22.5 (16.4)	3.0 (2.4)
International institutions and aid schemes .....	15.2 (13.2)	2.0 (1.9)
Forestry .....	11.0 (12.9)	1.5 (1.9)
River correction and water protection .....	10.6 (7.8)	1.4 (1.2)
Industry, trade and commerce .....	7.6 (6.4)	1.0 (0.9)
Leisure and sport .....	3.0 (3.3)	0.4 (0.5)
Labour and economy .....	2.6 (4.2)	0.3 (0.6)
Legal and political purposes ..	1.8 (1.7)	0.2 (0.3)
Animal protection and fisheries	0.5 (0.4)	0.1 (0.1)

The figures for health include an increase from 8.6 to 49.5 million francs for sickness insurance. The reason for the drop in the science grant is that in 1960 it included a contribution towards an atomic reactor.

International aid included 5.5 million francs for Technical Assistance. 5.2 million francs were spent on dairy produce for international relief schemes, and UNICEF received two million francs.

[A.T.S.]

## THE CALAMITY AT ZERMATT

For the past weeks the newspapers have been full of reports on the typhoid outbreak at Zermatt. Much has been printed and said which was not always accurate or fair. Perhaps Miss Elizabeth Nicholas adequately expressed facts and feelings in her article in the "Sunday Times" on 31st March, "An Era in Switzerland", extracts of which are given below.

"The train of events that first came to light in the British Press, the mysterious affair at Zermatt, has now developed into a major scandal. Bit by bit, a state of affairs has been revealed that I for one would never in my wildest dreams have believed could be true of Switzerland; and, indeed, the Swiss are now suffering for this very heavily. Their reputation which has been second to none in the field of hygienic efficiency has, almost overnight, been blown sky high.

"I am sorry for them; the very fact that this typhoid scandal has occurred in Switzerland adds enormously to the sensation. An outbreak of typhoid in some regions of the world, even in Europe, would occasion no particular surprise; but in Switzerland — that is quite a different matter.

"But if I am sorry for the Swiss people as a whole, I am naturally infinitely more sorry for the victims of typhoid, and for all those whose holiday has been ruined. At the same time, I have no sympathy at all with the hoteliers and shopkeepers of Zermatt if it is true that their sanitary installations were entirely inadequate to meet the needs of an expanding tourist traffic. That they will lose a great deal of money through this epidemic is salutary; it may ram home the fact that it might well have been cheaper to put their sewerage system in good order before a disastrous typhoid epidemic compels them to do so.

"The root of the trouble lies, of course, in the enormous expansion of the past decade, that has transformed small mountain villages into largish towns. Nevertheless, one would have thought that the Swiss, of all people, would have appreciated the vital necessity of expanding hygienic installations so that they might deal efficiently with the vastly increased number of people using them.

"That, it seems, has not been the case. On the other hand, one must, in fairness, say that the Swiss Embassy in London denies that typhoid was first diagnosed in Zermatt as long ago as January; the first case was, in fact, identified on February 25, and the presence of typhoid was publicly announced on March 10.

"Many people may think this was too long a delay, but it was, nevertheless, far less long than some reports suggest. It is also denied that the first victim, an Italian workman, was employed on one of the reservoirs that supply Zermatt with water; he worked, in fact, on a new hydro-electric scheme unconnected with water supplies. [Grande Dixence Dam (Ed.)] An Embassy spokesman draws attention, also, to the fearful drought in Zermatt last summer, when no rain fell between March and October. Winter, moreover, came early and hard, giving the reservoirs, whose level was far below normal, no time to fill.

"Be that as it may, we can be sure that the whole disastrous affair will now be investigated with minute care and a full report issued. The Swiss people themselves will insist on this, and on any reforms that may be necessary to prevent a repetition. They have been hit in one of their most tender places."

In the meantime, Swiss Army Medical Bacteriological Units have taken control of Zermatt, and all hotels and restaurants have been closed down. No staff employed by hotels, inns or shops, etc., are allowed to leave Zermatt until all the tests (taking four days) have been completed and a clean bill of health has been issued.

*Please turn to page 50502 for an Official Communiqué just received from the Swiss Embassy.*