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IT HAPPENED IN THE CANTON OF THURGAU

Lake Constance was called the potter's wheel of Europe in the Middle Ages, for here many trading routes of Europe and beyond crossed. This is how "The Times" began an article on 26th September last on "Wind of Change over Lake Constance". The writer went on to say that since the war, and particularly during the past ten years, "something like a peaceful revolution has been taking place along its shores — an industrialisation which, together with an ever-growing tourist trade, has taken more and more people off the land and put them to work in factories. The change has been common to Baden-Wuerttemberg, the Austrian Vorarlberg, and the Swiss Cantons of Schaffhausen, Thurgau and St. Gall. Lake Constance is therefore, inspite of the political frontiers, the centre of an economic unit".

Reading through the news sheets dealing with happenings in Thurgau received from Switzerland during the past few months, there certainly is every indication that economic life is brisk in that particular Canton, and that the economic boom has by no means by-passed the region.

The ordinary accounts for 1963 showed a surplus of 5.7 million francs, with revenue amounting to 78 million francs. The extraordinary accounts (cantonal road construction) showed a deficit of 4.7 million francs. The budget for the current year estimates a deficit of nearly three million francs in both accounts.

The cantonal Parliament, sitting alternatively at Frauenfeld and Weinfelden, has increased cost of living grants to civil servants from 5 to 8%, and that of teachers from 30 to 37.5%. Allowances for M.P.s., which had not been altered for eight years, were brought into line with the present state of the cost of living. The increases amount to between 40 and 60%. Increases were also granted to members of the police force. The draft of the new taxes Bill proposes that interest on savings bank books, which is no higher than Fr.400.— should be exempt from income tax in order to encourage saving. It is also proposed that annuities and pensions should be partly free from tax. Another sign of the times is that the cantonal assistance fund, started in 1888 to support agriculture, is to be abolished as all individual benefits are now covered by grants which the state is obliged to give as a matter of course. The Thurgau Cantonal Bank made a surplus in 1963 of 3,221,249 million francs, over 2½ million francs more than in the previous year.

As in other Cantons, building has gone on steadily in the Thurgau. The hospital at Muensterlingen is being renovated and considerably enlarged. The commune of Schoenholzerswilen has its own new secondary school. Incidentally, there is a shortage of teachers, and the authorities are considering special training courses for candidates from other professions or trades. The government building at Frauenfeld is to be enlarged; the agricultural estate of Arenenberg is to be improved; the communal vineyards of Niederneunforn has received a modern heating plant; the "Bernerhaus" at Frauenfeld is to be renovated; new water purification plants are to safeguard the town's water. Finally, the Canton has made various building grants to the Sanatorium of Thurgau and Schaffhausen at Davos, to the Swiss Epileptic Institute in Zurich and the welfare organisation for the blind of Eastern Switzerland in St. Gall. The new building is to house an enlarged training centre for blind metal workers.

An unforeseen grant had to be made to the teachers' training college at Kreuzlingen, which was gutted by fire

in July last year. Owing to the carelessness of a workman who did some soldering in the roof of the college, the old church of St. Ulrich and the cantonal teachers' training college, until 1848 a monastery, were largely destroyed. The catastrophe resulted in damage amounting to about five million francs. There was a hitch in the alarm system, which brought help later than desirable. Fire brigades from neighbouring communes, including the German town of Constance, took part in fighting the fire. The church was one of the finest baroque churches of the whole of Switzerland, dating back in its pre-fire state to 1653. During the last few years, the church, which was the Roman Catholic parish church of Kreuzlingen, had been expertly renovated. Many priceless art treasures were lost in the fire. Fortunately there was no loss of life — the two hundred students were on holiday.

A few days later, there should have been the traditional summer lakeside festival which has been held with the town of Constance since 1951. The people of Kreuzlingen had to withdraw, and the fête was held in a smaller way by Constance alone. There was much work to be done clearing the wreckage. The Thurgau builders' federation decided to make the job a communal undertaking, and thanks to splendid co-operation it was possible to do the work expeditiously.

The R.C. community decided to rebuild the church exactly as it had been. The government took the opportunity of planning for a much larger training establishment when rebuilding the college. Gifts of money were sent from Appenzell-Ausserrhoden whose prospective teachers are being trained at the Kreuzlingen college. Another gift was taken to Kreuzlingen in January by the authorities of Wolfach in the Black Forest. The visitors were accompanied by the village band — it was the eightieth anniversary of the municipal band of Kreuzlingen. Wolfach was thus able to express thanks for food, clothing and drugs which Kreuzlingen had sent repeatedly during the difficult times after the war. The Protestant community of Kreuzlingen also gave financial support towards the rebuilding of the Catholic church.

At the end of February, the District Court of Kreuzlingen sentenced the workman responsible for the fire to five months' imprisonment and cost.

More bad news came from Kreuzlingen in February, when a young engaged couple was attacked and injured by two foreign ruffians. And finally in March, a series of burglaries in shops, business and dwelling houses took place, very likely committed by the same man.

A sensational trial took place in February at Weinfelden, when Walter Kellenberger who had mortally wounded his divorced wife in June 1962 was sentenced to five years' detention and another three years' loss of civic rights.

News from Weinfelden of a happier character came in March when the dairy producers decided to build a cheese maturing centre there.

The electorate of Ramanshorn accepted a proposal for a civil defence first aid post at a cost of 1,140,000 francs of which the Confederation will bear 60% and the Canton 20%.

Waengi had trouble with its drinking water. Investigation showed an alarming state, and the inhabitants were warned only to drink boiled water. A group of young electors organised a meeting at which competent experts made speeches. An extraordinary commune assembly was

asked for at which measures for immediate and long-term improvement of the water situation were accepted. A resolution was sent to the government asking for urgent steps to prevent further water pollution. In particular, it is the river Murg whose filthy waters have infiltrated into the subsoil and made the drinking water unsafe. Many industrial establishments have already taken the necessary measures to purify their waste water at their own cost. New sanitary arrangements have been planned in many communes.

Water news of a different character came last August, when the first Swiss police patrol boat on the Lake of Constance, the "Thurgsu 3" was launched. New regulations for the safety of lake traffic had been issued by the cantonal government shortly before. A new ferry boat carrying six hundred people and twenty cars between Constance and Meersburg has been in use for some time. In March this year, a new one-man U-boat was demonstrated for use in sport. In 1963, there were 118 boating accidents on the Lake of Constance and the Rhine between Rheineck and Schaffhausen. The boats involved included 69 sailing boats and 21 rowing boats, and 15 people lost their lives. Bathing accidents amounted to 24, half of which were fatal. In November, bird shooting began officially, though there was a large reduction in the number of wild lake birds, mainly owing to the previous cold winter and the increasing pollution of the lake.

Since Steckborn has now a new modern R.C. church, the old one which was used by both denominations, has gone over to the Protestant community. The "Stiftskirche" at Bischofszell has now become the property of the R.C.

community; until a new Protestant Church has been built on the "Nagelpark", the Protestant community may use the other church as hitherto. The "Stiftskirche" will then be renovated when the Catholics will have the temporary use of the new Protestant church. The precious altar cloth from the former convent of St. Katharinenthal near Diessenhofen, a precious piece from the sixteenth century, has been bought at an auction in Munich, thanks to the Gottfried-Keller Trust and other bodies. The Evangelical Church Synod decided to admit women pastors into office.

Last summer, Taegerwilen celebrated the hundredth birthday of one of its famous citizens, the artist Ernst Kreidolf, by having an exhibition of his works.

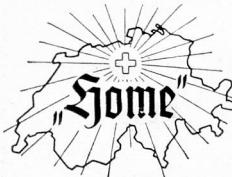
At the end of 1963, 24,409 foreigners resided in Thurgau after the departure of some 4,200 seasonal workers. The largest foreign contingent are the Italians with 15,000.

The Swiss like to point out special characteristics of the various cantonal citizens. They say the Bernese are slow, and the Thurgovese are fleet of fingers. In this connection it is amusing to read that last year the Swiss police officials chose Frauenfeld for their delegates' meeting, and in February, Kreuzlingen was the venue for a Germano-Swiss police conference.

One final item of news: the electorate of the Canton chose Dr. Albert Schlaepfer, Weinfelden, as successor to Dr. Reiber, whose resignation from the government made a by-election necessary.

(Based on news received by courtesy of the Agence Télégraphique Suisse.)

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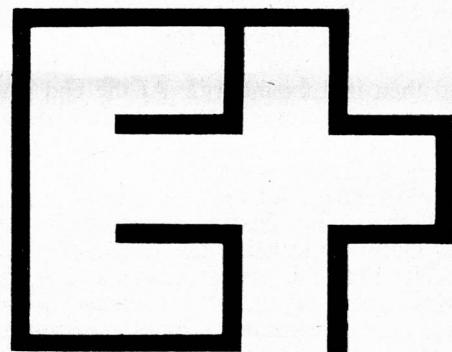
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1964

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"50 JAHRE WELTENBUMMLER" A NEW BOOK BY AUGUST KERN

In 1959 we received a book called "I wanted to see the World". Its author was a friend of ours and well-known by many of our compatriots in Great Britain, Mr. August Kern. It was a collection of stories from his memoirs, dedicated to his family and to his many friends and former colleagues all over the world. The book was in English and illustrated by James Cliffe. It made entertaining reading, and revealed not only many interesting facts about foreign lands or better, people, but many endearing facets of the author's personality. He was then retiring to Switzerland, nearly half a century after he had left his native village, determined to see the world. He ended his reminiscences with the following words: "I hope that following all these experiences I have grown more tolerant, patient and charitable; I am certainly more deeply grateful to the fate which let me see the greater part of the world, in fulfilment of my life's fondest dreams!"

These words were written in Liverpool, at the end of a brilliant career in the world of commerce. Now August Kern is back in Switzerland and has written his memoirs in German. The book "50 Jahre Weltenbummler" is an attractively produced and much larger and more "professional" book than its English predecessor. It is published by Schweizer Spiegel Verlag, Zurich, and again illustrated by James Cliffe.

The author begins with his experiences as a young man in pre-first-world-war Russia. From there his travels took him to Spain and later to America which became his second home — he says that even today he feels a different man in the atmosphere of the New World which had been a revelation and an inspiration to him from the day he landed in Providence, way back in 1920.

Mr. Kern joined the Standard Brands Concern, makers of the famous "Royal" baking powders, with whom he stayed until his retirement. He soon graduated to foreign traveller with a reputation that he did not mind "the damnedest places". Ethiopia, Mexico, Panama, South America, Berlin and London. It was from here that he supervised the European business activities of his firm. He had lost his wife and had come to England with his four-year-old daughter in March 1939. At the outbreak of the war, his firm was evacuated to Buckinghamshire, and later, being an American citizen, Mr. Kern was appointed teacher of French and German to the American troops in England who were to use their acquired new languages during the Invasion.

Next, Mr. Kern became food purchasing officer for the American Army of Occupation. In September 1944, he crossed over to the Continent. First he was in Paris and then in Luxembourg. At the end of the war, he went once more to America by a highly complicated, but interesting route which took him to even more new countries.

Tales of the many new places Mr. Kern was yet to see fill the next part of the book — Pakistan, Irak, Somaliland, the mysterious kingdoms of the Arab world, China and many countries of the Far East.

In 1946, he visited Germany for the first time after the war and called it "a country without a future", depressed and devastated. In 1958 he returned to the "world of the economic miracle". In 1959, he retired on his sixty-fifth birthday, and he began to write "50 Jahre Weltenbummler".

No two people agree on what a good travel book should be like. The reader wanting to find the country

rather than the people, may not find full satisfaction from August Kern's book. But I for one, being more interested in the people, find his memoirs fascinating, and through the eyes of this intelligent, highly observant man, I have learnt a lot about the countries he visited. The reviewer of the Swiss Broadcasting Company said he believed the book would please the globe-trotter as well as the stay-at-home. The reader can certainly be assured of many an hour's entertaining reading as one fascinating episode after another is told in Mr. Kern's original way.

The book also contains pertinent comments on the character of the English, their tolerance and their cooking. But in no less objective manner does the author comment on the Swiss, and his experiences on his return to his native land are not exactly a recommendation of Switzerland as a country to retire in for us Swiss abroad. But Mr. Kern has found that if one is willing to rediscover the Swiss soul under the hard outer shell of materialistic complacency and hard-headed efficiency, the result is highly rewarding and certainly worth the effort.

The book may be ordered from the "Swiss Observer" (please see advertisement). It has had an excellent press, and I should like to quote the above mentioned reviewer again who recommends August Kern's memoirs thus: "His book is the book of a much-travelled, able and competent man whose life in foreign parts has made him strong, but also tolerant and generous. One would like to pass the book on to as many young men as possible; the author's rich experiences could be of great use to them".

Mariann.

P.S. August Kern has by no means finished travelling — he has just returned from a visit to Berlin. So we may be looking forward to a second volume!

AUGUST KERN

50 JAHRE WELTEN-BUMMLER



Mit 19 Illustrationen von James Cliffe

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