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IT HAPPENED IN CENTRAL SWITZERLAND

URI

The affairs of state in the Canton of Uri are being dealt with by very modest machinery; yet a large amount of work is done thanks to the devotion of officials and office holders. This was stated by the chairman of the commission which annually renders account on business transacted.

One of the great worries of the cantonal government at the moment are the roads which the Canton has to construct and for which there are insufficient or no federal subsidies. So, for instance, the improvement of the Gotthard-road between Erstfeld and Amsteg, which will cost 2.6 million francs. It is hoped that the Confederation will yet agree to a subsidy as the road will be very necessary until the planned national highway will relieve it. This may not be before the 'eighties.

Another disappointment to the Uri authorities was the decision that the projected hydro-electric works Amsteg 2 are now no longer possible on account of capital having become much too expensive to realise such a project. An alternative solution is now being studied to give the Canton additional water rates.

In December, the "Landrat", the cantonal parliament, agreed to the largest school building project ever undertaken in Uri. Erstfeld's new school will cost well over five and a half million francs. The Communes of Unterschächen and Wassen are to have financial help with the improvements planned for two alpine pastures which are vital for the Canton's agriculture. Andermatt is to have a new railway station, and in October the first waste water plant in Central Switzerland was opened at Altdorf. Parliament also agreed to subsidise the renovations of several historic monuments, viz. the church of the Convent St. Lazarus at Seedorf (1699), the Convent of St. Carl at Altdorf (1696), the parish church of St. Albin at Silenen (1754) and that of St. Gallus at Wassen (1734).

Uri has also increased its contribution towards the running of the teachers' training college of Rickenbach (Schwyz) which accepts students from Uri. Well over two years ago, the electorate of Altdorf rejected two proposals to purchase land. These have now been accepted.

The tourist industry in 1964 showed a slight downward trend. A more agreeable reduction is that in traffic accidents in Uri, in spite of a steadily increasing number of motor vehicles.

At the end of November, the traditional "Rütlischliessen" took place when 1,085 marksmen met on the Rütli for a friendly contest.

The town of Lausanne has presented Uri with the metal figure "Rütlischwur" which was for sale after the EXPO. For financial reasons Uri could not make the purchase. On Christmas Eve it was made known that Lausanne had bought the figure and would present it to Uri. This was hailed everywhere as a symbol of friendship between Central and Western Switzerland.

The Tell pageant will again take place at Altdorf from 3rd July onward.

SCHWYZ

The "White Book" of Sarnen tells of a number of Swedes who came to Central Switzerland in 1470 and settled near Schwyz. Research has not yet proved how far there is any connection with the people of Sweden. What is certain is that Emperor Otto the Great presented the Kloster Einsiedeln with the Island of Ufenau (Lake

of Zurich) on 23rd January 965. The parchment document with the signature of the greatest representative of the Saxon Imperial House — he lived 712-973 — is preserved at Pfäffikon where a simple ceremony was held to commemorate the anniversary. The Ufenau is administered from Pfäffikon. It is a place of peace and quiet, and a rigorous bathing prohibition protects the island from some less attractive aspects of modern civilisation. The grave of the great humanist Ulrich von Hutten (1488-1523) is there, and two churches dating from 950 are of great historic interest.

Gersau has celebrated the fact that it figured in the records of the Aargau Benedictine Abbey of Muri for the first time in 1064. The small village has only 1,750 inhabitants and twelve citizen families. (One of them is the Camenzind family, a member of which is the chief architect of the EXPO.). Already in 1315, Gersau took part in the battle of Morgarten as independent confederate. The battle anniversary was commemorated on 15th November at Sattel and Schornen. For the eighth time, a pistol contest was held, organised by the non-commissioned officers' association of Schwyz. A week earlier, the "Swiss "Schützenrat" had held a meeting at Schwyz.

Another festive occasion was the "Schwyzer Sennenchilbi" which was organised after an interval of four years on 25th January. The Schwyz cattle show took place in the autumn. It has an international reputation, and a lot of cattle were again sold. Also in the autumn, the members of the government of the Canton of Appenzell-Innerrhoden paid a return visit to the Canton of Schwyz. This is a tradition which is upheld in many parts of the country, friendly courtesy visits by one cantonal government to another.

At the end of December, the Schwyz Cantonal Bank celebrated its seventy-fifth anniversary. It published a brochure "Münz-und Geldgeschichte des Standes Schwyz" and donated Fr.10,000.— towards the renovation of the parish church of St. Jakob at Steinen. Another renovation which is in progress is that of the Convent of Ingenbohl, which is to take seven or eight years to complete.

Road construction is under way in Schwyz as in other Cantons. The cost of the present project Oberarth and Goldau will cost 2.2 million francs. The electorate accepted the proposal for the construction of a vocational training college at Goldau, but the electors of the Commune of Schwyz did not agree to the plans for a new school "Muota" at Ibach. The electors of the whole Canton rejected the proposed legislation regarding the re-organisation of the Communes and Districts and consequent change in the cantonal constitution. In January, the new tax proposals became law following the acceptance by the cantonal electorate. This will mean sizeable tax reliefs. There will be increased teachers' salaries, and the cantonal parliament agreed to an additional credit of Fr.33,000.— for the scholarship fund. Alpine pastures are to be improved, agricultural machinery for mountain farmers will be purchased, as well as an electronic data computer for the cantonal tax authorities.

The new Treasurer of the Canton is Walter Braschler, Freienbach, and the new Cantonal Medical Officer is Dr. Karl Henggeler. The "Krankenhaus" Schwyz has its first full-time doctor in the person of Dr. Werner Baerlocher of Thal/SG.

In contrast to Uri, traffic accidents were up in 1964. A second "traffic training week" was organised by the cantonal police in September.

There was a course for avalanche rescue dogs on the Stoos in January, with dogs and their owners from many parts of the country taking part, including police dogs. There were delegates from Yugoslavia and the Netherlands.

Over New Year there was a research expedition at the Hoelloc. This cave is now 80 km. long and has been the longest cave in the world for the last ten years.

In December, there was a large theft of jewelry at the Herrengasse at Schwyz. In January, the "Escape King" Rolf Waeckerlin, who had once again managed to escape from prison, was arrested by the cantonal police. Finally, early in February, there was a serious accident at Freienbach, in which Argentine travellers in an Italian coach were badly injured.

OBWALDEN

In 1964, Obwalden was in the news on account of the bad earthquake. Not all the damage has yet been assessed, but the Federal Council has decided to give its share of the proceeds from the gaming halls of the Swiss "Kursäle" (a quarter of a million francs) to the "Swiss fund for non-insurable elementary damages", to be earmarked exclusively for Obwalden citizens hit by the earthquake. The Obwalden Cantonal Bank has also donated Fr.50,000.— for the same purpose. For the repairs to monuments and churches, it is hoped to get a contribution from the Federal Monument Commission. The Swiss Conference of Bishops have agreed to a collection in favour of the church buildings. The Council Hall and Council Chamber at Sarnen, which have suffered damage, will be renovated at the same time.

Obwalden has decided to start the scholastic year in the autumn. The cantonal parliament has also agreed to an increase in the subsidy to the teachers' training college at Rickenbach.

The accounts for 1963 of the power works were accepted in November. They show a surplus of Fr.114,285.—. A decree has been issued for the protection of the Sarnersee, and the regulations are most stringent. Engelberg's voters gave permission for the erection of the first Obwalden waste water plant at a cost of four and a half million francs. It should be sufficient up to 1995. The same assembly voted for a new rifle range.

In December, there was a course for avalanche rescue dogs at Truebsee, organised by the Swiss Alpine Club. Sarnen has joined the ranks of holiday resorts officially, in as much as a "Kurtaxe" is to be levied. Tourist trade shows a sizeable increase. The supra-national hunting order "Der Silberne Bruch" met for its Hubertus festival at Engelberg in the autumn. 250 delegates took part. The aim is to protect countryside and animals and to do all hunting and shooting in the correct manner.

Following its Golden Jubilee in 1963, the Engelberg-Gerschnialp cable railway transported its ten-millionth passenger last September.

NIDWALDEN

At the "Landsgemeinde" 1964, the Nidwalden citizens voted for a total revision of the cantonal constitution. A commission of 33 members has just been appointed under the chairmanship of director of police Dr. Eduard Amstad (Stans). The cantonal government is now engaged in preparing the business for the "Landsgemeinde" in the spring. After 47 years, the present Notary Ferdinand Niderberger (Stans) is retiring. In his place Hans Rudolf Wunderle (Lucerne) was elected.

Credits have been granted the village of Hergiswil for the purchase of a fire engine and a new water duct;

money has also been allocated for the production of a propaganda film on Central Switzerland, but by far the largest sums have been voted for road construction: alpine road to Engelberg at Oberdorf (1.65 million francs), upper parts of the Buergenstock road at Ennetbuergen, correction of the Kehrsiten road at Stansstaad including the alteration of the village square. On 10th December, part of the Lopper motorway was inaugurated with its tunnel (800 m. long) through the Lopper, a foothill of the Pilatus. It is hoped that the second part across the Acheregg bridge will be ready in about eighteen months. It is part of the North-South connection through Switzerland, and this sector alone will cost about 21 million francs. The village centre of Beckenried is to be kept free. This rescinded the decision by the electors to have the square built over, taken over a year ago.

Traffic accidents in 1964 went up from 156 to 182, but deaths went down from 10 to 3 (all children). The corresponding increase in motor vehicles was from 4,504 to 5,003.

After the landslide last August when nearly two million cubic feet of rock crashed 400 ft. from the Buergenstock into the lake, the Kreuzhütte in the Briesen region burnt down in November.

The Nidwalden government paid a return visit to the Basle government in September. It included a trip on the Rhine and a tour of the harbour as well as a visit to the Zoo. In December, the Historic Association of Nidwalden celebrated its centenary. Before Christmas, the "Art Market" of Stans was held. Twenty-five artists from Central Switzerland exhibited their works for sale, and the show was a great success. There was a celebration when the new direct line Lucerne-Stans-Engelberg was opened in December, and the schoolchildren took part in it. Instead of the usual composition, the teaching staff asked them to retain their impressions in drawing. An exhibition of 400 drawings was held at Stans in February. Incidentally Engelberg can now be reached in fifty-five minutes from Lucerne by a most up-to-date electric train.

LUCERNE

The twentieth volume of results of the federal census in 1960 deals with Lucerne. Between 1950 and 1960, the population of the 107 Communes increased by 13½% to 253,446. As many as forty-five Communes, however, show a decrease which was as much as 18.7% at Kottwil. Eight Communes, mostly in the vicinity of Lucerne, show an increase of well over a quarter: Horw now has 7,638 inhabitants (+65.3%) and Ebikon 4,956 (+64.8%). The town of Lucerne registered a population of 67,433 (+11.4%). The Entlebuch shows a decrease, but the other four districts (Hochdorf, Lucerne, Sursee and Willisau) a considerable increase. 93.8% were Swiss. Roman Catholics numbered 85.1%, the same as ten years previously, though in 1860 their numbers had still made up 98%.

Business transacted by cantonal government and parliament resulted in various decisions: to contribute towards the cost of civil defence in the Communes; to purchase 415 beds for the Cantonal Hospital; to sell land to the SBB at Gisikon (needed for the new double track); to help the mountain farmers and to buy them agricultural machinery; to make a cost-of-living grant to officials, state employees and teachers; to acquire an oil-burner to dispose of the ever increasing amounts of oil waste; to create a home for students; to build a Lucerne-Obwalden mountain farmers' school; to restrict the number of public houses; to alter the poor law to legislate on "Administrative Versorgung" aimed at protecting the community from

slovenly, dissolute and immoral people; to increase the price of salt; to alter the tax law in favour of the tax payer.

The medical profession in the Canton has asked for an extension of the Cantonal Hospital and of the nursing staff homes, and a speedy realisation of the children's hospital project, as well as of a third hospital as the second one planned for Wolhusen would not be sufficient.

An initiative was launched, asking the Confederation not only for financial help in the construction of the national roads, but also for their maintenance and running costs.

The number of traffic accidents in the Canton in 1964 has gone down from 2,408 to 2,383. Nearly ninety people were killed and 556 badly injured.

The last postal service on the Lake of Lucerne (between Hergiswil and Stansstaad) came to an end on 18th December in view of the opening of the railway line Lucerne-Stans-Engelberg. Before the Axen route was built in the 'sixties of the last century, the whole passenger and goods traffic between Schwyz and Uri/Gotthard went by boat across the Urnersee.

The council of the cultural trust of Central Switzerland decided to award its prize to Michael Speck from Oberwil (Zug) for his work in the field of early historic research in Central Switzerland. The Lucerne Festival Strings have successfully toured foreign towns. A co-operative "Reiterzentrum Luzern" was founded in February.

A famous (infamous?) international pick-pocket, "Max of Paris" was tried at the Lucerne Criminal Court. Since 1925, he has spent no fewer than 288 months behind bars.

The organisation Moral Re-armament has moved its headquarters from Caux (Vaud) to Lucerne. This follows the decision by the Vaudois Council of State not to consider M.R. as a charity organisation any more. This meant that tax would have to be paid on legacies (which during the past ten years had amounted to 25.3 million francs, 14% of it from Vaud). There was an appeal by 34,980 signatories, but the Council of State did not reconsider its decision, and Lucerne has now granted M.R. the status of a charitable organisation.

News from the town of Lucerne includes various decisions by the municipal authorities. Police, teachers and civil servants are to have increases as well as higher pensions. Considerable sums have been granted towards new schools and road construction. Schiltwald is to have a waste paper plant which Lucerne wants to join. A communal refuse incinerating plant is also to be built. There is a shortage of school rooms, and Wuerzenbach, and the art and craft college are amongst the schools to be enlarged. The new Tribschen school was already inaugurated in September. The same district is to have the new beach near the Richard Wagner Museum.

The beautiful Rhyn-Haus, a Renaissance palace in the old town of Lucerne has been renovated and will henceforth serve as reception rooms on special occasions. The creation of a municipal museum is being studied.

There will be escalators from the Hirschenplatz to the Loewengraben, and the Adligenswilerstrasse, and the Dorfstrasse Geissenstein will be enlarged. Following a citizens' Initiative, the area between Paulusplatz and Luzernerhof will have to be improved, and parking facility schemes could cost as much as seventy million francs.

The Lucerne arts prize was awarded to Dr. h.c. Kuno Mueller for his literary work, especially his essays on Central Switzerland.

In October, the Brockenhau-Gesellschaft celebrated its Golden Jubilee, and a month later, the Municipal Theatre was 125 years old. There were the usual art exhibitions around Christmas, and the renovated Sennkirche was reconsecrated. Carnival time arrived early in January, and the new "Fritschivater" is Walter Ruckli.

The Lucerne Branch of the "Schweizerische Volksbank" has started a special children's counter which is open on school-free afternoons. Suitably decorated and accessible by a small platform with steps, the counter is to encourage youthful savers.

A rare achievement was made known at the end of December, when Xaver Hochstrasser retired after 45½ years of *outside* work at the Lucerne main railway station. By way of recreation, he and his wife went for a twenty-kilometre march *every Sunday*.

News from other Lucerne Communes (in alphabetical order): the 19 year old Commune Clerk Erwin Galliker from **Beromuenster** was declared of age by the government. Beromuenster may soon have a civil aerodrome. The **Eigenthal** (Pilatus) has been declared a protected zone. The von Moos'schen Eisenwerke Lucerne have donated a site to the R.C. parish of **Emmen** for the building of a church. There was an enteritis epidemic at **Horw** last October, due to infected meat and milk. The home of A. J. Cronin at **Kastanienbaum** was broken into in December — the burglar behaved like a vandal. **Kriens** voters granted a credit of well over 5½ million francs for the Feldmühle school building which will also house an emergency hospital for civil defence. **Pfaffnau** has been the scene of promising oil prospecting. For certain reasons it was not possible for the **Root** theatre company to celebrate its centenary in 1963; this has now been done with a special pageant under the direction of Dr. med. Franz Annen, the village G.P. The theatre company of **Reiden**, too, looks back on one hundred years. **Sempach** has been chosen for the new pig breeding research station — Lucerne is responsible for 12% of the total pig breeding in Switzerland. In December, the steamer "Winkelried" ran aground between **Vitznau** and Gersau. The boat, the latest on Lake Lucerne, was hardly damaged, however. From **Wolhusen** came the news that the mountain village of Romoos was able to inaugurate its new school building in November, the old one having been destroyed by fire in 1962.

(Mainly by courtesy of A.T.S.)

SWISS WINSTON CHURCHILL FUND

Under the patronage of former Federal Councillor Max Petitpierre, a committee has been set up in memory of Sir Winston Churchill, the defender of the free world. The idea came from members of the Swiss-British Society in Switzerland and aims at creating some memorial to Sir Winston. It is also hoped to make a central collection of all publications by and on the great Englishman, with a view to further works which are concerned with the spiritual basis of the unification of Europe and the general understanding among nations. The committee consists of a dozen well-known personalities from all parts of the country.

The British Ambassador in Berne thanked the Swiss people for their messages of condolence on the death of Sir Winston, for the many letters, calls and visits. He also thanked those who attended memorial services.

On 21st February, Swiss Television repeated the film on Churchill's life, which had already been shown on the day of his death.

[A.T.S.]