

Parliamentary spring session

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In many parts of the world where Easter is celebrated, old customs are adhered to which have little if anything to do with Christian beliefs. The Easter egg has a special place. In Switzerland it is generally believed that the Easter rabbit brings the coloured eggs. But from the "Atlas der Schweizerischen Volkskunde" founded by Paul Geiger and Richard Weiss in 1950 (Eugen Rentsch Verlag) may be seen that the cuckoo is bunny's great rival in Central Switzerland. A strange belief is upheld in a few districts in the North-West where the church bells are supposed to bring the eggs. As they don't ring from Maundy Thursday to Easter Sunday in the R.C. churches, the children think that they have gone to Rome whence they return on Easter Day and shower eggs on the youngsters. This belief is adhered to in many parts of France, and in Switzerland it is in the Ajoie where the last remainder of this myth exists.

Apart from sweets and chocolate goodies specially shaped for Easter, there is baker's ware in many places. In Central and North-Western Switzerland, the *flan*, the *Osterflade* abounds, whereas in the Grisons, it is the *Pitte* or *petta* in Romansh, the ingredients for which are often taken to be blessed in church on Palm Sunday. In the Ticino, bird-like creatures are formed from sweet *panettone* dough into *columbe* or *columbine*.

Many are the traditions, not only with regard to food,

but especially to various rites with water and fire, both important in the symbolism of fertility. Most Easter customs express the joy in the arrival of light and life, the victory of spring over the demons of winter. Some of it may appear as old superstition to the sophisticated world of today. But much of it is valuable folklore well worth preserving.

The great Christian feast days compel one by spirit, law and custom, by history and tradition, upbringing and memory to take part in one way or another. Easter is no exception; one greets the spring eats, gaily decorated eggs and bunny-shaped sweets, fills the rooms with daffodils and palm. One may make use of the Easter holiday for a trip to the country or the seaside, one may even go to church. This is not scepticism — why should one not enjoy the re-appearance of spring and delight in a few days off and take part in the traditional Easter pleasures of the children? The ability to consciously enjoy simple things is already something in this materialistic world. For many it is all. But where one is confronted with the Cross and is able and willing to accept the consequences, the true Easter Message of the Risen Christ is still the greatest experience which, though it may transcend human reason, endows all customs and traditions with a different meaning. It is the light of the Resurrection, the hope of Eternal Life.

MAY YOUR EASTER BE A HAPPY ONE

PARLIAMENTARY SPRING SESSION

The Federal Parliament assembled on 4th March. The first week was devoted to the discussion of whether the Swiss Radio Orchestra should in future be in Basle or in Zurich. Result: a draw. The new *Bodenrecht* caused big discussion in the National Council, as did the improvement of dairy production in Switzerland, following the "*Milchschwemme*" and the "*Butterberg*". In the Council of States, the debate on the Government's report on economic policy gave Federal Councillor Schaffner a chance to draw a balance sheet regarding European integration.

In the second week, the Council of States had to deal with three important items: Dairy policy, the problem of foreign workers, brought up through the *Ueberfremdungsinitiative* of the Zurich Democrats and the proposed promotion by the Confederation of university education. The Second Chamber supported the Government and the National Council unanimously in rejecting the Initiative regarding foreigners. The National Council discussed the revision of the federal law on service conditions for federal functionaries. An increase of 7% (since 1964) is proposed, also increased family allowances and other benefits. 26 speakers took part in the debate. The Council of States will have to vote on it in the summer session. The proposal to increase the annual contribution to the International Red Cross Committee from one to 2.5 million was accepted. The seventh report on the acquisition of the "Mirage" planes was agreed to, also Federal Councillor Celio's answer to a provocative question that he would adhere to Parliament's decision and not order any more "Mirage" IIIs and 3Rs aircraft.

(Based on reports in "Schweiz. Kaufmännisches Zentralblatt".)

ANGLO-SWISS NEWS ITEMS

The Foundation Council of the World Wild Life Fund at Morges, appointed the British banker Mr. Ernest G. Kleinwort to the Council, bringing the number up to twenty-three members representing five continents and ten different countries. The President is the Prince of the Netherlands.

Switzerland will contribute 903,000 francs towards the OECD reactor project "Dragon" at Winfrith, in 1968. The agreement ended on 31st December, and as a temporary solution, Denmark, Norway, Austria, Sweden and Switzerland will continue their normal contributions, whilst Great Britain will be responsible for the rest. It is hoped that a definite agreement to continue the project will be concluded by the end of the year.

Prof. Dr. August Guyer retired after 36 years of teaching at the Federal Institute of Technology (ETH) in Zurich. His successor is an Englishman, Dr. J. R. Bourne, Lecturer at Nottingham University. The subject: *Chemische Verfahrenstechnik*.

The "British Bank of the Middle East", London, is to open a branch in Geneva. The management will be British, but some 15 to 20 Swiss nationals will be employed.

A British Export Centre was opened at the Lavaterstrasse in Zurich in February.

The HACO A.G. at Guemligen near Berne has concluded an agreement with Messrs. J. Lyons & Co. Ltd., according to which the HACO soups will be distributed to the trade in the U.K. by "Catering Sales Ltd.", a subsidiary of Lyons.

Brown Boveri & Co. Ltd. installed and commissioned at Stewarts & Lloyds, Bellshill, Lanarkshire, a 3,000 h.p. D.C. tube mill drive fed from thyristors, which incor-