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# The Swiss Observer

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## HOME NEWS

In the elections for members of the Grosse Rat of the canton Grisons the Liberals retained their majority though losing three seats to the Democrats; out of 92 seats their party controls 49 mandates.

In the elections for the Grosse Rat of the canton Lucerne the Liberals slightly increased their strength, gaining two seats from the Conservatives and three from the Socialists. The majority of the Council are still on the side of the Conservatives, the different parties being represented as follows: Catholic Conservatives 91 (93), Liberals 63 (58) and Socialists 14 (17). Of the seven members of the Regierungsrat only the five Conservative candidates obtained the necessary majority. A fierce political controversy preceded the polls, which attracted over 90 per cent. of the registered voters.

In order to ensure adequate protection for the members of the Russian delegation at the International Economic Conference now sitting at Geneva, the local police are being reinforced by gendarmes from other cantons.

The States Council of the canton Fribourg has addressed a letter to the Federal Council vigorously protesting against the expression of official regrets contained in the memorandum leading to the Russian understanding. Feeling in the canton on this matter runs very high, and with reference to the rumoured appointment of M. Litvinoff as head of the Russian delegation at Geneva *La Liberté* points out that he was the commissaire who originally ordered the sack of the Swiss Legation at Petrograd with the result that one of the officials was killed and 120 Swiss thrown into prison. In its reply the Federal Council states that the Russian delegates are bound to limit their activities to the accomplishment of the diplomatic mission entrusted to them and that any direct or indirect participation in Swiss internal affairs would not be tolerated.

In the Zurich Stadtrat a Communist member proposed the dispatch of a petition to the Federal Council congratulating the latter on the understanding with Russia and recommending the *de jure* recognition of the Soviet Republic.

The Federal Tribunal has absolved an insurance company of any liability in the case of a car which, whilst admittedly worth but 6,000 Frs., was covered for Frs. 14,000; the car, soon after completion of policy, met with an accident and was burnt out.

A monument to the memory of the poet Carl Spitteler is to be erected at Liestal (Basel-Land); the cost is expected to be in the neighbourhood of Frs. 100,000.

The international jury examining the 377 plans which have been submitted in connection with the proposed new League of Nations building has not been able to make a definite selection; the matter will now be referred to a small League committee which, it is hoped, will be able to recommend one of the plans for adoption. In the meantime the prize-money of Frs. 165,000 is being distributed among the 27 best projects.

The demand for better pay and decreased working hours is the cause of a conflict which has broken out in the building trade at Solothurn: at present 59 hours are being worked and the workers are insisting on a standard week of 52 hours.

A trial run of a car with the prospective buyer ended in the death of the latter, the driver and agent of the particular make, Mr. Charles Maurer, from Basle, suffering serious injuries. The accident happened on the road between Berne and Thun in the middle of the night near Allmendingen, whilst the car was negotiating a corner at an excessive speed. The victim is the Bernese lawyer L. Wylser.

## NOTES AND GLEANINGS.

### Bringing Swords to Parliament.

Under this title the *Leicester Daily Mercury* (May 2nd) publishes an excellent description of the Appenzeller Landsgemeinde:—

On the last day of April there takes place in the little Swiss town of Appenzell, the capital of the canton of the same name, the first of the annual Landsgemeinden, or People's Parliaments.

These peasant gatherings, direct survivals from five hundred years ago, when the people of a free race met in the open amid their native mountains to ratify their constitution, amend their laws and elect their officers for the ensuing year, have strangely escaped the attention of visitors to Switzerland. Historically, they are the most interesting examples of a true democracy to be met with in the world to-day, and as events in themselves they are full of colour, pageantry, and a peculiarly naive charm.

Landsgemeinden survive in five of the Eastern cantons of Switzerland. All of them are held between the last days of April and the middle of May.

The franchise age for a vote at the Landsgemeinde is 20, but "flappers" are not included in it. From dawn onwards on the day of the gathering little bands of electors come tramping down mountainsides from remote chalets to assemble in their local capital. Some are bent old men who have seen seventy snows melt and return to the Alpine peaks; and some, slender, callow youths, who not long ago, bare-footed, were herding goats on the summer pastures. But in the eyes of the youngest elector there is a depth and seriousness on this day. For the Landsgemeinde is no mere picturesque, empty ceremony, but something alive and actual. Local laws and finances are thoroughly discussed, and all issues voted upon by a show of hands.

The dress of an elector is his best Sunday black broadcloth and a sword. The sword is an insignia of the Landsgemeinde dating back to the year 1400, when the wicked Abbot Cuno, of St. Gall, tyrannised over the peasantry of Appenzell. Five years later the peasants revolted, and overthrew the Abbot and his army of Austrian mercenaries. Since when, as a reminder to any intending tyrants, the free-men of the canton have brought their swords to the Parliament.

And such swords they are! Many of the older men carry rapiers that are heirlooms from the 16th century, others carry broad-bladed cutlasses or the short, straight swords of the Napoleonic period. The young men, as a rule have to be content with a modern army bayonet.

Before the Assembly Mass is sung in the church. Then, headed by a band, the free-men march to the meeting place in the square. At one end a rostrum has been erected, and within a roped enclosure the electors stand. Outside of it the unfranchised enviously look on.

All the business of the meeting is conducted under the leadership of a President, and it is, as a rule, late in the afternoon before the last item on the agenda has been decided. Only then is there any relaxation of the curious atmosphere of stolid tension, and the electors separate to assuage their thirst.

No law-giving body quite like the Swiss Landsgemeinde exists in the world to-day. It is unique in its undimmed echo from the past.

### Milk Production in Switzerland.

The anomaly of our large butter imports in spite of the comparatively huge milk production is dwelt upon in the following article from the *Times* (May 2nd):—

It is curious to note that Switzerland—an important milk-producing country—does not produce enough butter to meet the needs of the population, and is compelled to import large quantities of Danish, Italian, Argentine and Dutch butter. In 1911 Switzerland produced 14,000 tons of butter and imported 5,200 tons; in 1921 home production reached 12,200 tons and importation 7,240 tons; in 1923 the figures were respectively 13,000 and 6,659; and in 1925 12,500 and 8,050. Home production slightly increased in 1926, while imports consequently decreased.

This abnormal situation is due, in the first place, to the fact that cheese-making is much more profitable to Swiss agriculturists than butter-making. The cheese-making industry has very considerably developed during recent years

## ANNIVERSARIES OF SWISS EVENTS.

May 16th, 1318.—The citizens of Solothurn save their enemies from being drowned. Frederick (called 'the Beautiful') whom Solothurn would not recognise as German King, sent his brother Leopold to inflict punishment on the citizens. Leopold surrounded the town and tried to starve it to submission. The bridge across the river Aare (which had risen on account of floods) was weighted, and the number of men who acted in its defence caused the bridge to collapse, many of the soldiers falling into the river. The citizens of Solothurn, forgetting their own trouble and seeing their enemies in danger of drowning, went out in boats, and some jumped into the raging waters to save the lives of the soldiers. After nursing and attending to them they were sent back to the Austrian camp. This act of generosity caused Leopold to at once raise the siege, and to the citizens of Solothurn he sent a banner in commemoration of this deed.

May 17th, 1800.—Napoleon Bonaparte crosses the St. Bernhard.

May 18th, 1884.—Unveiling of the memorial on the Rütli.

May 19th, 1815.—Neuenburg and Geneva join the Confederation.

May 21st, 1526.—Religious controversy at Baden. Luzern and Freiburg resisted the Reformed Religion which Zurich had adopted. The failure of Zwingli to go to Baden has been unfavourably compared with Luther's braving of death in his visit to Worms, but unjustly, for the conditions of Baden for Zwingli were very different from those at Worms for Luther. Moreover, Zwingli's request for the meeting to take place at some neutral place was not considered. Thus in the eyes of the Catholics at Baden, Zwingli was triply conquered and condemned.

May 22nd, 1882.—Opening of the St. Gotthard Railway.

and its products—mainly Gruyère and Emmenthal cheese—are exported to all countries, where they fetch high prices owing to their special flavour and good quality. The greater part of Swiss milk is used in cheese-making. In 1926 the gross income of Swiss agriculture was nearly £57,456,000, 38.5 % of which, or £22,132,000, was derived from milk and its by-products. Switzerland has nearly 875,000 milk cows, producing some 2,500,000 tons of milk a year, about 45 per cent. of which are transformed into cheese, condensed milk and chocolate, and nearly 10 per cent. into butter. Cheese exports were lower during the last two years, while cheese production increased, and great quantities remained unsold. It was decided, therefore, to reduce the cheese production and to make more butter, which explains the higher butter production in 1926.

Important quantities of milk are used for making condensed milk and chocolate, the export of which is more profitable than butter-making. Finally, the making of butter has not been improved very much in Switzerland. Swiss butter is not as good and does not keep as long as the Danish article, with which it cannot compete. For this reason Swiss agriculturists are now taking a great interest in the Danish methods of preparing butter, which methods are being progressively introduced into all the more important butter-making factories. It is, therefore, probable that in the near future Switzerland will produce more butter and will depend on a smaller quantity of the imported article.

### Communism in Switzerland.

As the large Russian delegation (19 members) now attending the International Economic Conference at Geneva is likely to make contact with the Communist Party in Switzerland and live up their activities, the following long survey from the *Times* (May 4th) may be of interest:—

The Swiss Communist Party, though small in numbers, is very active. It recently held its fourth congress at Basle, where 88 delegates met to examine the present position of the Party. They found that Communism had lost many members at Zurich, one of the great industrial