

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: - (1940)
Heft: 971

Artikel: The death of the League of Nations [the end]
Autor: [s.n.]
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-693351>

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: 10.07.2025

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

für *kondensierte Milch*. Der Export hat sich stark vermindert und kann nur mit erheblichen, staatlichen Zuschüssen einigermaßen aufrecht erhalten werden.

Diese *Umkehrung der Verhältnisse auf dem Milchmarkt* bringt es mit sich, dass der Milchproduzentenverband für absehbare Zeit auf jede direkte Zuwendung von Bundesmitteln verzichten kann, es sei denn, es kämen neue Störungen. In diesem Verband hat sich innert Jahresfrist die finanzielle Situation um 23 Millionen Franken verbessert. An Stelle des jährlichen Defizites von 9 Mill.Fr. steht ein Aktivsaldo von über 14 Millionen Franken.

Für das Milchjahr 1940/41 sind die *Preise* jetzt endgültig geregelt. Ab 1. April 1940 ist mit Zustimmung des Bundesrates der Grundpreis, also der Produzentenpreis für die Milch auf 22 Rp. für den Liter erhöht worden. Einen Aufschlag des Konsummilchpreises um 2 Rp. lehnten das EVD und der Bundesrat ab. Die Preise für Butter und Käse bleiben auch nach der Erhöhung des Milchpreises unverändert. Die *Indexziffer der Nahrungskosten* ist für den April um 7,4% gegenüber dem Monat August 1939 und um 1,6% gegenüber dem Monat März gestiegen, wozu die Preiserhöhung von Milch und Brot die wesentliche Ursache war.

Nach diesen Streiflichtern auf die gegenwärtigen Verhältnisse in der schweiz. Landwirtschaft möge ihrem ersten Vertreter, dem früheren *Bauernsekretär* Herrn Prof. Dr. Laur das Wort gegeben werden. Bei Eröffnung der 15. Generalversammlung des *Internat. Institutes für Ackerbau*, welche in Gegenwart des Königs von Italien und der Delegationen von 59 Mitgliedstaaten stattfand, hob Prof. Laur hervor, dass es alle Völker der Erde begrüßen würden, ihren Boden in einer *Atmosphäre des Friedens* bebauen zu können und er erwähnte die Schweiz, die es der Bevölkerung verschiedener Sprachen, Religionen und Lebensgewohnheiten gestattet, auf einem kleinen Territorium zusammenzuleben. Aber die Bewohner sind eng verbunden durch den Willen, über die Prosperität und Unabhängigkeit ihres Landes zu wachen. Die Schweiz zählt auf die Freundschaft aller Völker!

SWISS ELECTRIFICATION.

(“*Railway Gazette*,” 21.6.40.)

The extraordinary efficiency and capacity of the electrified sections of the Swiss Federal Railways are very apparent to the traveller in Switzerland. Electrification of the Federal system was begun about 35 years ago, and received a great impetus after the last war. A great deal of experimental work had to be done before conversion became a practical proposition, but, particularly in view of the abundance of water power which could render the railway system almost independent of foreign fuel, certain leading officials were strong in supporting continued conversion, until now approximately 90 per cent. of the traffic is hauled electrically. In the 1939 report of the Swiss Federal Railways the Administrative Board says that it would not have been possible for the Federal Railways to have dealt with the exceptional requirements of traffic during the last eight months, and consequently to achieve the resulting increase in receipts, had not the highly developed electrification of the system enabled the whole traffic to be handled without having to

worry about lack and increased cost of fuel. The board felt it a duty to express thanks to the men who, with unfailing energy, had devoted a considerable part of their careers to the electrification of the Federal Railways, undeterred by the many attacks to which they were subjected. Reference was made particularly to Mr. Anton Schrafl, for many years President of the general management, who might contemplate his life-work with legitimate satisfaction, and to three other men, who died last year, and to whom gratitude was due for their efforts on behalf of electrification, namely Federal Councillor Robert Haab, who both in the general management of the Federal Railways and later as Chief of the Federal Department of the Post Office and Railways, placed the whole force of his personality at the service of a cause which he felt from the first to be of paramount importance; Mr. E. Tissot, of Basle, who presided over the commission of enquiry into the question of railway electrification; and finally, Mr. Emile Huber-Stockar, who as Chief Engineer and Technical Adviser to the general management largely contributed to the success of the great electrification undertaking.

THE DEATH OF THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS.

(“*The New Statesman and Nation*,” June.)

(Continuation)

This is not a moment for an assessment of the direct responsibility for the final breakdown. It is a truism so say that the State Members of the League destroyed it by their progressive disregard of the Covenant and a powerful argument can be built up against each of the great Powers as mainly responsible. Or put it another way and say that the failure is due to a social system in which States were organised in the interests of those who desired not a new world, but the retention of the *status quo*. One day the full story will be written. Among other factors it will be shown how the weariness and exhaustion of the world after 1918 led, as one of its after-effects, to the occupation in nearly every country of all outstanding positions by frankly second-rate men. With few exceptions and apart from a few episodes like Locarno, international affairs were handled by men without vision and courage, by yes-men who owed their careers to those very qualities or lack of qualities which made them unable to act, by diplomatists and civil servants without imagination and with an instinctive fear of taking responsibility. The men who would perhaps have been able to lift the world out of its progressive decay were either in opposition to the powers of the day or lay rotting in the fields of Flanders and the plains of Poland and Russia. To watch the diplomatists at close range during a crisis at Geneva was to know despair and impending doom.

The League organisation was not itself responsible for this spirit of timidity, but there was something intangible in the Geneva atmosphere which encouraged such an attitude. Truly the *esprit de Genève* was first and foremost a spirit of good will and international co-operation, but it was also a spirit of self-deception and make-believe. Nowhere outside Geneva — not even in the Imperial and Royal Chancelleries of the eighteenth century — could be found such a belief in *taboos*, in the magic value of the mere formula, such readiness to get over difficulties by

ambiguous phrases, such a conviction that it was more important to compromise — to compromise on everything and in all circumstances — than to face issues.

Behind this attitude lay the belief that all difficulties were only due to misunderstandings; that there was essential good will on all sides and that if it were possible just to go on, everything would finally be for the best. This inability to face facts, to take small risks to avoid bigger ones, will long remain a puzzle for future historians who will be in a position to gauge the relative sacrifices necessary to pacify the world from 1930-35 and the sacrifices necessary to win the present war.

It is impossible not to mention in this connection certain personal responsibilities incumbent on those in charge of the Geneva International Administration. Sir Eric Drummond, whatever his shortcomings might have been, left his successor a first-class international civil service. To visit Geneva in those far-away days of 1930 and see the League machinery in action was to recognise a remarkable and efficient organisation. In this administration, composed of nationals of about forty countries, all brought together by the same ideal, the impossible seemed to have become reality. There were no quarrels between individuals because of their nationality, no difficulties in having Germans serving under a French chief, or Englishmen directed by a Greek. There was never even a suggestion of corruption. No doubt this civil service would have been equal to any task of international administration, to any executive responsibility with which it might have been entrusted in the course of progressive development of international co-operation. From the moment he took over Sir Eric's heritage M. Avenol, the new French Secretary General, succumbed to the growing nationalism in Europe and took steps which broke the *esprit de corps* of this administration; he discouraged the tendency of the Secretariat itself to be a positive factor in international co-operation and degraded it into a civil service in which bureaucratic qualities only counted. Any tendency to take responsibility was discouraged; everything was centralised in the typical French manner, in the hands of the head of the administration. M. Avenol is a man of great administrative abilities but without a vestige of inspired leadership.

Whilst this was going on a new opportunity was unexpectedly offered to the League. Parallel with the decline of the political role of Geneva, there was a tendency amongst the States to compensate the political failures of the League by their readiness to intensify their co-operation in what was commonly called the technical work of the League. A man with vision could and would have seized this opportunity. He could have built up certain non-political executive bodies in the economic, social, humanitarian and health fields for which certain patterns already existed in the League's Singapore Health office and in the Central Opium Board. Such work would have given the League a new radiation and perhaps would have even reacted favourably on the sphere of international politics. Instead of this, those responsible for the Geneva work went out of their way to restrict the range of existing technical activities, to discourage the creation of new ones, even in the face of the expressed unanimous wish of the League Assembly. Thus the last chance for the League to do practical work was neglected.

Were it only the dissolution of an administration whose work had become obsolete, there would be no justification in dwelling upon it. What happened, however, is very much more serious. The disappearance of the League Secretariat means that a body of men and women, who, for more than twenty years, had been trained in international work on a super-national basis, has been dispersed. Unique experience acquired at great cost to members of the League has thus been forfeited. Exceptional knowledge of international psychology, of the habit of working with the representatives of dozens of nations, of the faculty of understanding widely different national points of view, of the experience of International Conferences, of the drafting of documents in different languages — all this has now gone beyond repair. An international civil service cannot be improvised. Here, one had been built up with infinite pains and has been abandoned by its proper chief.

Weakened by resignations and dismissals, but potentially useful, this instrument still existed three weeks ago, ready to be called upon to undertake at a moment's notice the manifold tasks which, after the Allied victory, will undoubtedly be vested in an infinitely more powerful machinery for international co-operation. This instrument has now been disbanded through lack of foresight, vision, courage and, perhaps, a few hundred thousand pounds. The staff being dispersed it will indeed be a difficult task to reassemble it again. What remains is a luxurious *palais* in the Park Ariana at Geneva. This palace, a monument of self-complacency and megalomania, has cost the Members about a million and a quarter pounds sterling. Had this sum been invested in a reserve fund instead of being squandered on the material shell of the League, the best of the machinery could have been preserved for the future.

THE END.

SWISS RELIEF CENTRE.

In conjunction with the Swiss Benevolent Society.

The Committee appointed by the Swiss Minister has made splendid progress with the organisation of Swiss House, which is now fully equipped with 30 new beds and all other essentials.

We are now ready to receive compatriots who may be deprived of their homes or become stranded in London owing to Air Raid action.

The financial need is great, and we earnestly appeal to all firms with Swiss connections, and to all our compatriots, to send their donations at once to:—

The Treasurer,

Swiss Benevolent Society,

Swiss House,

34, Fitzroy Square, W.1.

(marked "Swiss Relief Centre.")

In addition to funds, the House Committee appeals for the following articles to supplement what has been purchased:—

Sheets for single beds — blankets — quilts — rugs — pillow cases — hand towels and bath towels — these should be sent at once to the Swiss Relief Centre, Swiss House, as above.

Every Swiss can help and should help.

The Committee.