

# Home news

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# The Swiss Observer

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## HOME NEWS

The Federal Council has endorsed a decision of the Swiss telegraph office in Geneva which refused to transmit a despatch from a reporter to his paper in Brussels on the ground that this despatch contained insulting references to the members of the Russian delegation attending the League of Nations sittings.

With reference to the increase of emoluments to the members of the Regierungsrat, which was refused by the people at the recent votation, it was stated in the Basle Grosse Rat that the councillors in question considered this refusal as an unmerited censure; all the party leaders (including the Socialists) thereupon expressed their regret and the hope that at the next votation this popular *faux pas* might be rectified.

The accounts of the canton Berne for the year 1926 close with a deficit of 1.6 million francs, about double this amount having originally been budgeted for.

Dr. Friedrich Hegar, a prominent musician and distinguished composer, died in Zurich at the age of 86, after a prolonged illness. He was the founder and director of the Conservatoire of Music in Zurich and was closely identified with the musical life of that town.

The 103rd anniversary of his birth was celebrated last Wednesday week by Jakob Schaffner, a farmer of Ormalingen (Basel-Land), who enjoys the best of health.

Plenty of rain was experienced in Switzerland during Whitsun, and snow has fallen down to altitudes of about 1,300 metres, especially in the Säntis and Jungfrau regions.

The traditional Whitsun excursion of the Basle Rhine Club was responsible for one of the participants, Ernst Flüchiger, age 18, from Basle, losing his life. The Club had started in a large open boat (pontoon) from Rapperswil; near the gas works at Baden the crew tried to pass through one of the lock bye-passes, but owing to the strong current missed the entry, with the result that the boat was dashed against the bridge pillar and cut in two. Of the 21 rowers, five were carried down the Limmat for about 2,000 metres, four of them being pulled to the shore with the help of lines thrown out, whilst the fifth disappeared in the water and was drowned.

In returning from Constance, a car took the level crossing at Kradolf at too great a speed with the result that two of the five passengers were thrown out and remained unconscious on the ground near the track. Their names are Wendelin Kunzelmann and Emil Troesch, both from Herisau, and they are lying in a critical condition at the local hospital. The driver and owner of the car, Hermann Schoch, from Herisau, has been arrested, it being stated that the whole of the party were the worse for drink.

When exercising on the horizontal bar Emile Wehrli, age 25, from Erstfeld (Uri), fell so badly that he subsequently died in hospital from his injuries.

## NOTES AND GLEANINGS.

### Swiss Trade and Industry.

An interesting survey of the economic position and the prospects for the immediate future were given in the presidential address at the recent annual meeting of the British Chamber of Commerce in Switzerland; the following extracts were published in the *Times* (May 28th):—

The British Chamber of Commerce in Switzerland recently held its seventh annual general meeting at Basel, under the chairmanship of Mr. A. C. Sparling, H.M., Minister at Berne. Mr. Crowe, the president, in speaking of Anglo-Swiss commercial relations, stated that Switzerland had not yet been affected by the new British import duties as severely as was expected twelve months ago. Swiss exports to Great Britain were three times the value of British

exports to Switzerland. Great Britain remained one of Switzerland's best customers, and could, with a little effort on her part, become a more prominent supplier.

In this connection a contrast may be drawn between British indifference to the Swiss market and the energy displayed for a long time by numbers of other countries.

The new French tariff holds out a serious menace to Swiss exports, particularly watches. At the same time there are signs that French trade in Switzerland is increasing to the detriment of that of competitors. The opening of the Rove tunnel has provided a link between Marseilles and the Rhône, and in a short time the work of regularising the French Upper Rhône as far as the frontier at Geneva will be started. Later it is proposed to create a free Swiss port at Villefranche, near Nice. Further, an accelerated rail service has just been organised between Switzerland and Marseilles, cutting out Lyons.

Germany is also displaying considerable activity. The increase in her trade has induced her to establish a new international railway station. She is preparing to sell considerable quantities of coal in Switzerland, and negotiations have taken place with a view to sending gas from the Ruhr, thus obviating the transport of coal and the manufacture of gas in Switzerland. If this project is realised, exports of certain descriptions of British coal to Switzerland will be seriously affected. A German Silk Congress has been held at Zurich for the purpose of arranging with the Swiss producers for a scheme of rationalisation and a joint purchasing organisation.

Switzerland does not expect great things from the raising of the boycott on its goods in Russia. Only Swiss watches and Russian grain—if there is any—are likely to be affected.

Industrial depression still prevails, and is prejudicing the purchasing power of the country. For example, imports from Great Britain during the first four months of the year declined in value by 31,000,000*l.* The export of watches, which is the barometer of Swiss activity, declined by 11 per cent. during the first quarter of the year, and the Swiss Union of Technicians, in view of the prevalence of unemployment, is suggesting to the youth of the country that they choose some other profession. Owing to the fear of a crisis the authorities have decided to agree to the joint request of several groups of manufacturers to permit 52 hours a week to be worked in their factories until the middle of October. One favourable feature has been the decline of one point in the index number of the cost of living which is now 158. At the same time applications for employment at the Labour Bureaux have slightly diminished.

### One-Man Trains.

The experiments made as regards this promising innovation have now led to the adoption of this principle on a small part of the Swiss railway system. We doubt whether the bulk of the travelling public will be enamoured with this new departure for the purpose of reducing working expenses. We quote *Modern Transport* (May 28th):

Eleven electric trains, each driven and conducted by one man, are to be introduced on the Swiss Federal railway system this summer. Exhaustive trials have been carried out during the past year with these one-man trains over the principal lines in Switzerland, and satisfactory results have been obtained. Ingenious automatic and safety devices eliminate the risk of accident and enable the driver to act also as conductor and ticket-collector. By the introduction of this system it is expected that substantial economies will be made and the benefits passed on to the travelling public in better services and, eventually, cheaper fares. The Swiss Federal Railway system is now almost completely electrified, and is regarded as a model for the rest of Europe in comfort, cleanliness and efficiency. By the end of 1928 the work of electrifying the whole Swiss railway system, it is expected, will have been completed.

### International Studies.

A new Institute—Institut Universitaire de Hautes Etudes Internationales—has recently been founded in Geneva for the study of contemporary questions in politics, law, and political economy. The executive council includes M. Chuard, Federal Councillor for Home Affairs, and M. William Rappard, Rector of the Geneva University. Among the lecturers is Prof. Eugene Borel, for many years President of the Arbitral Mixed Anglo-German

## ANNIVERSARIES OF SWISS EVENTS.

June 13th, 1285.—Opening of Bridge across the Rhine at Basle.

June 14th, 1891.—Railway accident near Münchenstein, where over one hundred persons lost their lives.

June 15th, 1847.—Running of first steam train in Switzerland, between Zurich and Baden.

June 16th, 1798.—Storming of Sion by the French.

June 17th, 1405.—Battle of Stoss. Victory of Appenzell over the Austrian Duke Friedrich. In the narrow pass of the Letzimauer the retreating Austrian army was hemmed in and several hundred lost their lives.

June 18th, 1476.—Storming of Murten, which was repulsed by the beleaguers, under the leadership of Adrian von Bubenberg.

June 19th, 1620.—Valtelline Massacre. "Armed masses of the people arose under the leadership of enthusiastic Protestant preachers, such as George Jenatton, pastor at Scharans, a man twenty-two years of age; and at Tisus they set up a noisy criminal court to deal with the "Spanish traitors." The brothers Pompeius and Rudolf Planta, the leaders of the Spanish-Catholic party, were outlawed, and a price was set upon their heads. Even death sentences were passed: Ruca, arch-priest of the Valtelline, was put to death upon the rack, on the accusation of having handed over a Protestant pastor to the Inquisition; and a number of persons were heavily fined. Vainly did the Spanish faction endeavour to make a rejoinder by means of an armed rising and a criminal court in Chur; the other side proved to be the stronger...

"Consequently, a plan was matured for the forcible extirpation of the Protestants and for the shaking off of the Grisons rule. The knight Robustelli, a nephew of Rudolf Planta, was the leader of the conspiracy. He found zealous assistants among the principal families of the Valtelline, the Venosti, Guicciardi, Schenardi, etc., but above all among the clergy. The massacre began in Tirano at dawn on July 20th, 1620. To the sound of the tocsin and spurred on by the priests the fanatical population fell upon the Protestants. Men, women and children were slaughtered without mercy, even the Catholics who attempted to protest sharing their fate. From Tirano, Robustelli hastened down the valley, for fresh massacres. In all, 600 persons were slain."—*Oechsli*.

Tribunal in London (and *inter alia* President of the City Swiss Club). The objects of the Institute are given in the *Times* (May 28th) as follows:—

The Institute offers facilities for advanced study of international problems to students who have already been prepared by previous studies in law, history and political economy. Courses are also held for young students who have not matriculated at the university and who intend to take up international questions. Geneva is a particularly favourable centre for the observation of international institutions. With the help and direction of the institute students will be able to see and hear what elsewhere may only be gleaned from books, they will come into contact with people who are directly concerned with public affairs, and will be able to attend the annual assembly of the League of Nations and of its grand council, as well as most of the Council meetings of the League, the International Labour Conference, the meetings of the International Labour Organisation, and the frequent special international conferences, such as the Economic Conference of this year.

The *personnel* of the institute consists of a director, two professors and an assistant professor who will give twelve-monthly or six-monthly courses, allowing ample time to the students for personal study or for attending the university lectures. There is no intention of exhausting the whole teaching in one year or in a cycle of years. The aim will be rather for a student to study thoroughly some subject chosen with a view to elucidating some general problem, making as much use as possible of the documents and direct information available at the League of Nations.

During the coming year (1927-28) courses will be given on recent peace treaties and par-