

The economic situation of Switzerland

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HOME NEWS

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FEDERAL.

DEATH OF A FEDERAL JUDGE.

The death is reported of Dr. Paul Rambert, Federal Judge, at the age of 66.

The deceased was born on the 14th of July 1866 in Zurich, where his father was Professor of French literature at the University. Early in the Eighties he received an appointment at the cantonal Tribunal of Vaud, over which he later on presided. Previous to his appointment as a Judge of the Supreme Court, he was Professor at the University of Lausanne, and since 1919 he was a member of the Federal Tribunal.

STATE HELP FOR THE HOTEL INDUSTRY.

The States Council (Ständerat) has voted a credit of 3½ million francs to come to the aid of the Hotel Industry.

INCREASE OF UNEMPLOYED IN SWITZERLAND.

The number of Unemployed at the end of August amount to 47,064 or more than twice as many as at the same period of last year.

EXPENSES OF THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS.

There has been a disposition in some quarters recently to magnify out of all proportion of its importance the cost of the League of Nations Secretariat. The question is under review. In May, the British delegation at Geneva approached the matter. There was a proposal for an enquiry concerning expenditure. This was referred to a supervisory committee within whose province such questions lie. A report from this committee is expected in this session. The sums involved are not very large. In 1923 the expenditure was approximately £1,000,000. Last year it was rather less than £1,500,000 — an increase largely due to extra work and conferences imposed on the League. These totals, divided among more than fifty nations members of the League, do not represent large individual contributions. But expenditure has tended to grow, and the British view is that it has involved increasing commitments to Governments that have been compelled to cut down their own budgets, even for expenditure on much-needed things. This is a consideration distinct from the failure of a number of Governments to meet dues that will have to receive attention.

SWISS-ITALIAN FRONTIER INCIDENTS.

A further irruption of ugly feeling between Swiss and Italian border-dwellers has been engendered by several incidents which have recently occurred on the Swiss-Italian frontier. These incidents are now the subject of intervention on the part of the Swiss Federal Government.

A few days ago the inhabitants of a Swiss frontier village were alarmed by shots being fired down their main street. They promptly took cover, and fortunately nobody was injured and no lives lost.

According to local newspapers, the shots were fired by the Italian frontier guards, who were taking action against a smuggler. In another case an Italian patrol are reported to have penetrated over two hundred yards into Swiss territory, where they arrested a Swiss shepherd, who was subsequently released.

The high-handed action of the Italian guards at another point is regarded as still more serious. A party of excursionists who had crossed the frontier returned into Switzerland, where they were followed by some Italian guards, who demanded to see their passports. Being on Swiss soil, these people refused to recognise the right of the Italians to make such a demand, whereupon the Italian guards are reported to have drawn their revolvers and to have threatened them with arrest.

This occurred just outside the village of Santa Maria, the inhabitants of which, hearing the commotion, rushed up in a body and prevented the

arrest, eventually compelling the Italian guards to beat a retreat to their own side of the frontier line. The Swiss Government have asked Rome for an explanation of these and similar incidents.

This ill-feeling on the Swiss-Italian frontier seems to be of a lasting character and finds from time to time violent expression. At the present moment it is aggravated, it seems, by the activities of professional smugglers, who make periodical expeditions into Italy with highly-taxed commodities, of which sugar is one of the chief.

Owing to the difficulty of patrolling the whole frontier, and also, it is alleged, to the conniving assistance of Swiss shop-keepers in the frontier villages, the Italian guards have little success in preventing this illicit trade.

LOCAL.

ZURICH.

The firm of Emil Landolt, Wine Merchants at Zurich, has celebrated the 100th Anniversary of their existence.

BERNE.

M. Oscar Schneberger, Commissioner of Police since 1917, has resigned from his post, for reasons of health.

BASLE.

The death is reported from Basle of Professor Dr. Leopold Rüttimeyer at the age of 77. Dr. Rüttimeyer was a well-known specialist for internal maladies.

SCHAFFHAUSEN.

A fire broke out at the historic Schwabentor Tower at Schaffhausen. Before the fire brigade could get it under control the whole of the upper part was burnt out. The brigade had great difficulty in combating the flames owing to the great height of the tower, which runs up to 85 ft.

URI.

Flames are steadily sweeping through the forest at the Arnibergen, the fire being the fiercest known in the district for many years.

The forest guards are powerless to check the progress of the flames, and two companies of the battalion 87 are being rushed to the scene.

TICINO.

The Grand Council has accepted the budget which anticipates a deficit of 400,000fr. The salaries of the members of the cantonal Government have been increased from 12 to 14,000 francs.

THE ECONOMIC SITUATION OF SWITZERLAND.

In spite of certain partial improvements, the Swiss economic situation remains, as a whole, under the influence of the crisis. Nevertheless, the endurance of the financial and industrial apparatus remains remarkable.

The money and capital market remains extremely fluid. The gold supply of the National Bank remains at about 2600 million francs, which would allow the placing in circulation of 5 milliards more of bank notes, without going below the covering limit prescribed by the law. The wholesale prices index-figure has again fallen, (94.5 against 100 in 1914). The drop, compared to the last year, reaches more than 14%. The cost of living also shows a decrease, the index figure being 138 against 150 in 1931.

The results of foreign trade during the first half of 1932 reflect the abnormal situation of the foreign exchanges. Exports only reached 416 million francs, a falling off of 293 millions as compared with the first half of 1931, and of 500 millions as compared with the first six months of 1930. Naturally, in examining these figures, account must be taken of the considerable drop in prices. Imports, which reached a sum of 905 millions, have decreased very much less, thus proving the resistance of the home market. If the value of imports has diminished by 200 millions as compared with 1931, the quantities imported have increased by nearly 200,000 tons. The Swiss commercial debit balance for the half year has reached the considerable total of 490 million francs against 400 millions last year. In addition to this, the international economic crisis, aggravated by the restrictions imposed by different States in matters of payment, is exercising a depressing influence on the Swiss tourist industry.

The building trade has remained active, the number of dwellings constructed having reached 6,800 against 5,200 during the corresponding period of 1931. On the other hand, new construction permits have fallen off considerably. They only concern about 4,600 dwellings as compared with 7,600 for the first six months of 1931.

S. I. & T.

20th GORDON-BENNETT BALLOON RACE.

Basle, September, 25th, 1932.

Those of our readers who minutely scanned the English Daily Press for news about the International Gordon-Bennett Race, which took place last Sunday at Basle, must have met with great disappointment. The large London Daily papers have almost *in toto* ignored this great International Sporting event, which on the Continent and in America is followed with the greatest interest. True enough, England has not, — and if we are rightly informed, — has never competed, but we would have thought, that a sporting event of such magnitude would have been of sufficient interest to the British Public, to devote at least half a column to it, considering that often news of trifling importance from abroad receive an unwarranted publicity. England has always been known, and rightly so, as a Nation of Sportsmen, and it is the least said, regrettable, that the otherwise well informed English Press has not found it necessary to send their reporters to a Meeting, which ranks as one of the most important ones in the sporting world; we loath to think that the reason for such an omission is due to the fact, that no British entrants could be found to participate in this race, it would be contrary to the sporting instinct and spirit of this great Empire. Curiously enough some of the smaller provincial papers have deemed it important enough to devote a small column to it, whilst London papers, as mentioned above, have either ignored it entirely or given it a few lines only.

It was a red letter day for Basle; it is estimated that nearly 50,000 excursionists came from all parts of Switzerland, a large contingent arrived from the neighbouring Alsace. The Swiss Federal Railways provided 12 special excursion trains, in addition to the ordinary service, all of which entered the Central Station exact to scheduled time. At the official parking place altogether 1,200 cars passed the gates; the municipal tramways carried 180,000 passengers for which the receipts amounted to 45,900fr., a record which has only once previously been exceeded. (Mustermesse: 48,200fr. on the second Sunday).

The filling of the 16 balloons (requiring 33,200 cubic meters of gas) passed without a hitch and the arrangements made by the authorities met with universal approval. The start took exactly 1 hour and six minutes and took place as follows:

1. "Deutschland" (Pilots: Erich Leimkugel, Richard Schütze); 2. "L'Aventure" (France, Maurice Marquant, N. G. Renoulaud); 3. "Polonia" (Poland, W. Pomaski, A. Janusz); 4. "Belgica" (Ernest Demuyter, Coeckelberg); 5. "14 de Abril" (Spain, Capt. A. Nunez, Lt. S. Carrasco); 6. "Petite Mousse" (France, Georges Ravaine, P. Spiess); 7. "Zurich" (Switzerland, Lt.-Col. Walo Gerber, Dr. Tilgenkamp); 8. "Barmen" (Germany, Otto Bertram, Alex. Dahl); 9. "Stadt Essen" (Germany, F. Eimermacher, Dr. Hugo Keulen); 10. "Victor de Beauchclair" (Switzerland, Captain Huber, Lt. Lochinger); 11. No start; 12. "U.S. Navy" (America, Lt. Settle, Bushnell); 13. "Good Year VIII" (America, Van Orman, R. J. Blair); 14. "Basel" (Switzerland, Dr. A. van Baelje, Dr. E. Dietsch); 15. "Ernst Brandenburg" (Austria, Frh. von Ethhofen, Lt.-Col. F. Mannsbarth); 16. "Gdynia" (Poland, F. Hynek, Z. Burzinski); 17. "Lafayette" (France, Georges Blanchet, Jaccard).

The balloons departed in a South-Westerly direction towards the Black Forest. The starting of the 1st Swiss balloon, "Zurich," gave occasion to great enthusiasm, thousands of spectators sang, with uncovered heads the Swiss National Anthem.

RESULTS.

(We intend to publish in our next issue a complete list, giving the landing place and exact distance flown by each competitor.)

1. Balloon "U.S. Navy" (America, Pilots: Lt. Settle and Bushnell) Landed at Wasjule near Vilna. Exact distance not yet available. America thus wins for the second time the Gordon-Bennett Cup outright.
2. Balloon "Good Year VII" (America, Pilots: Van Orman and R. J. Blair) Landed at Kowno, Litauen. Distance about 1400 km. Van Orman was the winner of the 1926, 1929 and 1930 races.
3. Balloon "Petit Mousse" (France, pilots: George Ravaine and P. Spiess) landed at Tokary near Wysokie, Poland. Distance 1233km.