

It happened in the Canton of Berne

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IT HAPPENED IN THE CANTON OF BERNE

Towards the middle of September, the "Bernertag" took place at the EXPO in Lausanne, and that week-end brought staggering record figures of visitors to the National Exhibition. But everywhere in Switzerland, people had been looking forward to this day with mixed and even anxious feelings. For on 28th August, the commemoration service of 1914 and 1939 at Les Rangiers ended in complete chaos due to demonstrations by extremists of the separatist movement who want a Canton of their own with the Jura severed from the Canton of Berne. There was peace during the march-past of military detachments and flags of the Jura battalions, also during the laying of the wreath. It was when the crowd of some eight thousand moved towards La Cacerelle where the Protestant and Catholic services were to be held that the atmosphere became tense. When Federal Councillor Chaudet and a member of the Cantonal Government, Regierungsrat Moine, reached the rostrum, members of the Rassemblement Jurassien started to demonstrate noisily, and the two speakers were unable to deliver their addresses. They had to be protected by police, and their were nasty scenes. Proceedings against the troublemakers have been started. Protest against the irresponsible behaviour of a few fanatics was expressed all over the country by governmental bodies, Parties and organisations of all kinds, not least by other Jura patriots whose methods are those of reasonable negotiation and who condemn the many acts of terrorism by the extremists as much as anybody else. The problem is a grave one, but it looks as if the demonstrations at Les Rangiers had harmed the originators more than helped. After the events at Les Rangiers, it was not surprising that the governments of Berne and Vaud issued very strict regulations with regard to the "Bernertag" at the EXPO, and there was great relief when the day passed without any incidents.

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In June, the biggest volume containing the results of the census of 1960 appeared — 351 pages on the Canton of Berne. In 1960, the population of the 492 communes (thirty districts) was 889,523, which corresponds to an increase of nearly 11% in ten years, or over 94% in 110 years. Thus, for the first time, Berne dropped behind the Canton of Zurich (1960: 952,304). 234 communes showed a decrease of population in the years 1950/60, the biggest of these happened at Monible with 50.9%. The largest increase was registered by Port (122.2%), and the population of Montmelon remained stationary at 167. 93.9% were Swiss and 6.1% foreigners, of whom the Italians were the most prominent. During the past century, the number of Protestants has gone back from 86.8 to 79.7%, and the Roman Catholics have increased from 12.5 to 19.1%. The German language has gone back slightly to about 80%, French is much the same, and Italian has gone up to 4.3%. At the end of June, Berne's inhabitants numbered 170,447.

The Cantonal Government and Parliament have busy times behind them. The electorate, too, was called out on several occasions. At the end of June, it accepted the revision of the tax law and the revised law on sickness insurance. The "Gemeinderat" has submitted to the Municipal Council the plans for the re-introduction of air connections from Berne. There were several proposals, and the authorities decided that there were definite advantages in joining up with Swissair and Balair rather than with Globe Air, and Canton and Town will create a limited company together with Swissair. The latter will contribute 2.7 million and the former each one million

francs to purchase a Fokker F-27. This machine will be leased to Balair, and Swissair will charter it and use it on the route Zurich-Berne and Berne-London as from 1st June next year. The airfield of Belpmoos is to be enlarged and generally brought up-to-date, a job which the Municipality as owner of the airfield will have to undertake, though the Canton will also make a contribution. The inclusion of Berne in the international flight network will be of great advantage to the tourist trade. The number of nights spent in hotels in Berne has again gone back by 5,213. Only 57% of the hotel beds were occupied on average. Between 1946 and 1962, Zurich showed an increase of 200, Geneva of 170 and Basle of 102%, whereas Berne registered a mere 56%. In July, the first charter plane arrived at Interlaken, thus joining this favourite of holiday places to the charter network.

Progress is being made in the main station re-building project in Berne. In January, a new covered parking site was opened with facilities for five hundred cars. Road construction is going on everywhere — in February, the cantonal electorate accepted the new law regarding construction and maintenance of cantonal and communal roads (73,774:16,389). The number of accidents in 1963 went back very slightly. There was still an average of 4.7 accidents per day. The worst day was again Friday (296), the best Sunday (173). Driving licences were withdrawn in several hundred cases, and in a number of cases a psycho-technical test or a new driving test was ordered.

Water pollution and the correction and protection of river and lakesides made news, too. The "Stiftung Aaretal", "Vereinigung zum Schutz der Bielerseeufer", "Freunde der Jaegglihlunte (Brien)" are some of the movements which have been particularly active. Steps against water pollution range from voluntary campaigns by individual groups to clean up the shore of parts of the Lake of Thun to large schemes of constructing purification plants and new main water supplies. Brien will spend 1.2 million francs on water from the Gorgenquelle, and the following districts and communes are building plants to save their water: Oberhasli, Muensingen (7.4 mio), Langenthal (2.8 mio), Laupen and Sensetal (18 mio), Guerbetal, Rubigen, Urtenen (2 mio), Huttwil, Langenthal (2.8 mio), Reichenbach (2 mio), Bueren and Aarberg. After the hydro-electric power station of Simmenfluh was opened last autumn, a new electricity works was opened at Thun early in June. In August plans were published for a new atomic power station in the area of the present Aare power works at Muehleberg, and a further atomic station may be constructed on the Lake of Thun.

In Berne, the largest deep-freeze establishment was opened in June. The first part of the renovation and extension of the Inselspital is finished; 87.8 million francs are needed for the second stage. The University has added a new course for speech training, and has asked that its department of zoology should be extended. The "Bernische Kunstgesellschaft" celebrated its 150th anniversary in spring.

Many national and international organisations have chosen Berne as a meeting place. The Federation of Swiss Military Patients met in February, and in April, "Austrian Days" were held. The International Railway Conference, the Congress of the International Federation of Editors-in-Chief, and the world's geologists met before Berne held its "Geranium Market" in May. The International Union of Agrarian Journalists, the Swiss hairdressers, the transport undertakers and the Swiss Office for Development

and Trade (OSEC) met in Berne, and an UNESCO Seminar on training for international understanding took place in August. On 3rd August, Federal Councillor Tschudi opened the World Congress of the Medico-Psychological Association.

At the end of 1963, Bienne counted 65,346 inhabitants. A new teachers' training college has been opened, and pre-fabricated school buildings are to be used to expedite the extensive school building programme — by 1972, one hundred million francs will have been spent on schools. There are 8,425 foreign workers in Bienne, 6,495 of whom are Italian. Early in July, the 150,000th motor car was assembled in Bienne by the General Motors Suisse S.A. The first car left the factory on 5th February 1936, and due to the war, it took 21 years until the first 50,000 vehicles were completed. In June, a new riding school in Biel-Mett was opened, and a new boat "Berna" started service on the lake. The traditional "Braderie" took place in July, and the Federation of the Swiss Press met at the end of August.

And now a short news flash trip through the Canton (in alphabetical order). Aarberg had a large fire in the stores of the sugar factory in February. Aarwangen is to have an improved main road which necessitates a partial transfer of the existing railway track of the Langenthal-Niederbipp-Bahn. Early in September, the Tschentalalp near Adelboden was cleared of rocks to improve ski-ing facilities. At Beatenberg, three complete bear skeletons were found in a cave. The electorate of Biberist granted a million francs for the purchase of land. Boenigen is to have a second primary school and Bolligen a secondary school. The tobacco and cigarette factory at Boncourt celebrated its 150th anniversary. The technical college of Burgdorf is being considerably extended and renovated. Buetzberg is protesting against a decision of the SBB to have the goods station removed. The Commune Assembly of Court decided against having a secondary school. The Kollegium at Delsberg is over 150 years old, and now Delsberg is to have a college of music. The educational authorities have decided to introduce the five-day week in Delsberg's primary schools. Epsach is to spend nearly a million on a new school building. At the "Heimatschule" of the Swiss farmers, Moeschberg at Grosshochstetten, the annual farmwomen's working party took place in spring. Seventy Anglican clergy from North and Central Europe met at Gstaad, and in May there was a huge fire at Herzogenbuchsee's mill (Schael- und Futtermuehle Haeffiger) causing damage of several million francs. The citizens of Hindelbank accepted a 2.7 million-franc scheme for a new secondary school, and Huttwil is to have a new church organ. Jegenstorf is to have a new secondary school, too, and at Ins, the workers' home Tannenhof celebrated its 75th anniversary.

Interlaken will have a grammar school (Gymnasium) and a skyscraper hotel. On the eve of the Swiss National Day, a monument to General Guisan was unveiled in the Schlosspark, in memory of the General's stay at Interlaken where he had his headquarters from April 1941 to October 1944. The International Union of Democratic-Socialist Education Experts (IUDSE) met at Interlaken in July, and the Swiss dentists, postmasters and railway employees held their respective annual meetings there.

Koeniz now has 30,000 inhabitants. The Commune Council granted a sum of Fr.7.50 per child to enable the older school children to attend the Swiss National Exhibition in Lausanne. Krauchthal objects strongly to the establishment of a refuse utilisation plant on the grounds that it was not their own but the refuse of the villages in

the Worblental. Langenthal now has over 12,000 inhabitants. The International Dog Show was held there in May. Langnau i/E is to spend three million francs on the extension of the district hospital. Laufen is to have a new secondary school, a second water reservoir, and the new swimming baths have already been opened. Eight million francs are to be spent by Lauterbrunnen for the erection of avalanche barriers. Lengnau is building a day nursery, and Luetschental is enlarging the school building and extending the gymnastic grounds. Lyss has the first new telephone call boxes with "Zeitimpulszahlung". Its biggest advantage is that one can pay with any coin one likes and simply receives the change at the end of the conversation. It is also to have a new school for adult education "Volkshochschule Lyss und Umgebung". Magglingen is the Swiss Sports Centre where courses and meetings are held throughout the year. In August, Federal Councillor Tschudi opened the Swiss Invalids' Sports Days, at which over five hundred competitors took part. The mountaineering school of Rosenlauri at Meiringen was visited by ten Russian alpinists. Melchnau protested against having a depository of radio-active refuse in the Schmidwald (Oberegg). Moutier is to have new slaughterhouses, and Muensingen is to be the seat of another "Volkshochschule". Nidau which has grown by 250% since 1952, is to revise its antiquated administration and election regulations. Castle Oberhofen has been completely furnished, and the valuable Burgkirche of Ringgenberg has been renovated. The "Schweizerischer Club Kochender Männer" met at Roggwil. A new secondary school was inaugurated at Orvin, and at St. Imier, at the inauguration last winter, it was stated that the Canton of Berne had spent 417 million francs on school buildings in ten years. The church of St. Ursanne is to be renovated, and a new telephone exchange was opened at Spiez. Steffisburg is to have a further police station and a subterranean pedestrian crossing. Thun has over 33,000 inhabitants. The Chartreuse ruins at Huenibach-Thun is to be demolished. The former castle was badly spoilt about twenty years ago and has since been used as practice ground for the fire brigade. Wilderswil granted credits of 1.7 million francs for school buildings. Wynningen organised a competition for a new school project. Zollikofen has now a Commune Parliament with forty members.

(Compiled from news received by courtesy of the Agence Télégraphique Suisse.)

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