

Random jottings in Switzerland

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RANDOM JOTTINGS IN SWITZERLAND.

January 30th was the date of the Swiss vote on the Initiative concerning the *Abolition of the Military Courts* and on the Initiative about the *Referendum on Foreign Treaties*. The Swiss people has endorsed the latter with 383,696 against 158,098 votes, and rejected the former by 386,888 against 192,803. The propaganda for those votings was not strong in the beginning of the campaign. It bettered afterwards. The citizens' parties as well as the Socialist parties were nearly everywhere officially in favour of the Initiative about Foreign Treaties, whereas the vote on the Initiative for the Abolition of the Military Courts was fought strongly according to the divisions "Bourgeois" and "Socialist," although it must be recorded that a considerable number of "Bourgeois" in the Cantons Geneva, Neuchatel and Tessin seem to have voted in favour of the Initiative, these cantons having adopted it. Our people shall henceforward have an opportunity of expressing their opinion about treaties running for a shorter term than 15 years. This cannot but prepare the terrain for the complete and definite right to a voice in the ratification of *all* treaties. Surely this final goal of Democracy will be reached some day. Those who voted for the abolition of the military courts may become reconciled to the verdict in remembering that the new Code of Military Law is being discussed in committee. Most of the ill-feeling against the military courts, by which the initiants benefitted, was in fact not so much directed against the procedure in these courts—which was all that the text of the Initiative aimed at—but rather against the excessively severe punishments the courts pronounced according to the Military Law. It is to be hoped that the new Code now in committee will be promulgated without delay.

The struggle about the Initiative concerning Military Courts nearly everywhere having been fought according to the battle-cries "Socialism" and "Patriotism," the voting results seem to indicate pretty distinctly the real force of the two main parties. Another figure is very interesting, too, in this connection, namely, the number of the openly declared *Swiss Bolshevists*. One remembers that the delegates of the Swiss Social-Democratic Party at the recent Party Congress in Berne refused adhesion to the Third Internationale, and that the pronounced Bolshevik minority, consisting of those who were willing to join Lenin, constituted itself immediately afterwards as the Swiss Communist Party, with Dr. Welti, of Basel, as provisional head. The referendum of the Social Democratic Party on that question has now given the following results: 23,324 in favour of the policy of the Executive, 8,723 against. Those odd eight thousand probably will mostly join the Communist Party. The new Left Wing already owns two newspapers, the "Vorwärts" and a new paper, "Der Kämpfer."

It is obvious that the *Economic Crisis* which spreads more and more over Switzerland cannot but favour the tendencies of the extremists who consider the capitalistic system responsible for it. According to a recent statement of President Schulthess there are now in Switzerland some 30,000 working people totally and some 80,000 partly out of work. That is only one dark aspect of the case. Another shows that according to the Swiss Commercial Balance for 1920 the exports in the latter year were 1,000 millions of francs less than the imports, a proportion quite unusual and dangerous. Switzerland is realising more deeply every day the evil consequences of her abnormal rate of exchange, of being inundated with the goods of neighbouring countries who can produce cheaper, and of finding no market

for her own products. The Federal Council has now decided to take steps in the direction of protecting by legislative measures Swiss trade and industry in view of the numerous complaints from Swiss manufacturers. It will ask Parliament forthwith to pass an Act which shall give the Federal Council the power to raise provisionally the Customs Duties on goods entering the country and to restrict the import of certain articles, as may be deemed necessary in order to protect endangered national industries. This projected legislation arouses great interest and will probably lead to violent debates. The controversial creeds and dogmas of producers and consumers, of Free Traders and Protectionists, of Capital and Labour will undoubtedly come into violent collision. Labour leaders have already declared against the increase of Customs Duties—at any rate unless the total produce of that increase is devoted to the benefit of the unemployed. The League of Swiss Co-operative Societies also issued a manifesto as soon as the intention of the Federal Council was known, in order to express their disagreement with such a policy, which they held to be disastrous for the consumers. A compromise will no doubt be the result after due discussion *pro* and *con*. It must be reached because Industry as well as Labour obviously needs some kind of Government aid.

It was our *Hotel Industry* which always corrected in former years the too great difference between our export and import figures. It was for this reason that the decline in that industry was not only detrimental in regard to the industry itself, but also in its effect upon the whole economic situation. But now at last the hotellerie is beginning partly to recover. A very good winter sport season—at any rate when compared with that of last year—is reported from the Canton of Grisons. St. Moritz has nearly 2,300 guests, 600 of whom are Englishmen (last year about 300). P. L.

NOTES & GLEANINGS.

The SWISS REFERENDUM has roused very little comment in the English Press; on the other hand, the decision of the Socialist Party was a topic more to their liking. Nearly all the papers state that in spite of an active propaganda, backed by Russian gold, the extremists have suffered a heavy defeat; "Switzerland has thereby declined to act as an ante-chamber to the West for Bolshevism."

Under the title INTERNATIONAL LABOUR LAWS *The Yorkshire Post* (3-2-21) publishes letters which have been sent to the International Labour Office (established under the Versailles Peace Treaty) by the Presidents of both the Swiss Federal Council and the Swiss Peasants' Union. The correspondence lays stress on the impracticability of subjecting agricultural labour to international regulations and suggests that deliberations under this heading should be deleted from the agenda of the forthcoming conference in Geneva.

The Pall Mall Gazette (3-2-21) brings a contribution from its Geneva correspondent entitled NATIONALISATION—THE EXAMPLE OF SWITZERLAND. After a merciless reference to the Swiss Federal Railways he proceeds to lump together all the debts of the Confederation, Cantons and Municipalities and holds up the sum total as the outcome of an overdose of nationalisation. His