

# Random jottings in Switzerland

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## RANDOM JOTTINGS IN SWITZERLAND.

These last days have been a time of joy and festivals for many people in Switzerland. In Zurich, Lucerne and Basle and probably also in the smaller towns there was frenzied dancing by masked and unmasked folk. Reports from Zurich mention an incredible series of fancy-dress balls, and Basle enjoyed for the first time since the war has ended a thorough and genuine *Fastnacht*, the main feature of which was a score of highly spirited cortèges, satirizing by witty lantern-rhymes and couplets notable events of the past year.

Besides this merry Switzerland—there is also a serious Switzerland to be mentioned—stern discussion of important and grave matters has taken place this last fortnight. The National Council has after a long debate *ratified* by 88 against 66 votes the Act which enables the Federal Council to raise provisionally Customs Duties and restrict the import of certain articles. The Council of States confirmed this ratification by 29 against 9 votes. The opposition evidently grew in the course of the debate by the National Council, as 115 members of the Legislature had pronounced themselves in favour of the Bill being discussed. It must be considered also that the question of the "plein pouvoirs" influenced the decision highly, the Federal Council having obtained an instrument of formidable power by this new Act. It is to be hoped that it will use it with discretion.

This new Act is, after all, a thing nobody heartily agrees with because of its controversial and intricate character. It answers, however, the widespread feeling that Switzerland needs some measure to safeguard her endangered industries. It is due to that feeling if the Swiss people allow the Federal Council to be entrusted with new and extraordinary powers even without being consulted, the referendum for this issue having been excluded by the Council. We are, of course, as a people, more than any other, in principle in favour of *Free Trade*, for our whole industrial structure claims the utmost facilities for unimpeded import and export. If we have not yet fully reached this goal, it is not due to any fault of ours, but to the fact that neighbouring countries stick more or less to Protectionism, this tendency unfortunately having become even more accentuated since the war. Although she might be fully aware of the disastrous results that selfish policy must ultimately have, Switzerland, too, is to-day, though reluctantly, driven to adopt the same course by sheer force of circumstances.

If it remains matter of controversy, from a theoretical point of view, whether Protectionism should endeavour to strengthen every weak industry by law, there is, however, almost complete unanimity that Switzerland's agriculture should be fostered; that Switzerland should try to grow within her own borders more of the food she consumes than has been done hitherto. It was one of the discoveries of the war that there exists a very considerable area in our country, at present untilled, which with a certain amount of effort could be brought under cultivation. The *Swiss Society of Internal Colonisation* has recently published a pamphlet dealing with this question. It shows that more than 50,000 hectares of unproductive land could relatively easily be made useful for cultivation. This same pamphlet contains also most valuable statistics, showing that from 1860 to 1910 in no less than 1,260 Swiss boroughs the number of inhabitants was decreasing. The total decrease amounts to 110,000. All these people have

been driven to the towns. This indicates pretty clearly the *growing industrialisation* of our country.

It is no use to camouflage the fact that we are bound to deal in the near future more and more actively with *World politics*. Foreign politics will and must have a far greater share in our discussion henceforward than was the custom in those idyllic pre-war days. The decision of the Federal Council not to allow contingents of troops to pass through Switzerland on their way to *Vilna*, where they should stand for Law and Order, has created a delicate situation. A Havas dispatch, as well as a communiqué of the Secretariat of the League of Nations, deemed it necessary to denounce in a rather intemperate manner the declaration of our Federal Council, which merely conformed to our traditional policy of neutrality. It must be said, however, that the matter is not so simple as it looks at the first glance. The Federal Council was mainly inspired by a certain anxiety not to establish a dangerous precedent when it came to its decision. It is quite understandable, especially if one considers that the nearest way to Vilna for British and French detachments is surely not by passing through Swiss territory. The thorough-going friends of the League of Nations hold the decision perhaps as too strongly dictated by sheer captiousness and not at all by an enthusiastic readiness to face our new obligations of international solidarity. The most enthusiastic supporters of the League are, however, shocked by the tone adopted by the Secretariat of the League in commenting on the Federal Council's decision. There is some anxiety in Switzerland now that the Council of the League should reconsider the question of the seat of the League. The next meeting of the Council, at any rate, is to be held in Paris, where the Swiss Minister, M. *Dunant*, and Prof. *Max Huber* will explain the attitude of Switzerland on behalf of the Federal Council.

Our relations with France could be better, quite apart from that probably inspired Havas Communiqué. The question of the *Savoy Zone* is far from being settled. The last French counter-proposals, recently transmitted to the Federal Council, are such that Prof. *Borgeaud*, of Geneva, the well-known authority on Constitutional Law, utters in the "*Neue Schweizer Zeitung*" these impressive words: "The hour is so earnest that on both sides of the frontier, which hitherto did not mean separation, each and every man must do what he can to understand." As matters stand at present, it seems more and more probable that we shall not come to friendly terms with France unless we submit the matter to an independent court of arbitration.

International politics are a dangerous and often disagreeable thing for such a small nation as we are. Too often we are reminded that we are but a negligible dwarf in the society of nations. We can offer no great economic advantages, nor threaten with great military power, but we can excel in one field, always esteemed our finest asset: we can endeavour to be at the top of the roll of peoples in *education* and *idealism*. It is well when we boast that 12 per cent. of all the receivers of the Nobel prize for Literature and Science are born in Switzerland. It is a shame that only 1 per cent. of our fellow-countrymen are members of the Red Cross League, whereas 24 per cent. of the inhabitants of the United States of America belong to it. The International Red Cross, a creation of Genevese idealism, ever since managed by a board, composed exclusively of Genevans, is one of the finest things the last century produced. Switzerland should take more interest in its own creations. The International Committee of the Red Cross in Geneva, whose resources have been ex-

hausethd by its war activity, appeals for help. The war is over, but dangers remain. The struggle against epidemic diseases also absorbs the funds of the Red Cross. Many Swiss, we are sure, will respond to that appeal and prove that they entertain towards the Red Cross the same affection they are accustomed to show for the 'white one.'

P. L.

### Lieutenant PILLICHODY.

We beg to draw the attention of our readers to the Lecture on "Flying Above the Swiss Alps," which is arranged to take place on Wednesday, March 9th, at King George's Hall. (See special announcement on front page.)

A few biographical notes on the lecturer will serve as advance acquaintance with the personality of one of our foremost native airmen, with whom we shall shortly have the pleasure of "spending a few hours in the air" to witness a unique and magnificent survey of some of the most beautiful parts of our country.

Lieut. Henri Pillichody, born in 1893 at Yverdon, studied at the University of Lausanne, then, after gaining practical experience in the building of steam-turbines, joined the Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule. During mobilisation in 1914 he entered the Flying Corps, received the Pilot certificate while under the tutelage of his redoubtable comrade Bider. In 1917 Pillichody was promoted Lieutenant of the Flying Corps, acting as Aerial Instructor with Bider.

His prowess and proficiency in the air have earned for him appreciation and recognition as an airman far beyond the borders of Switzerland. Lieut. Pillichody was the first pilot to cross the Alps by flying boat which he piloted from Varese (Italy) to Zurich, and he was again the first to pilot a hydroplane, carrying passengers, over the Mont Blanc. Quite recently he conveyed passengers the same day from Geneva to Zurich and back, in record time.

Lieut. Pillichody has attained the rank of an expert air pilot and technologist, which attainments are most favourably reflected by the ease and ability with which he handles lectures on Aeronautics.

### NOTES & GLEANINGS.

#### TESTING SWISS CONCEPTION OF NEUTRALITY?

Seeing that more direct routes are available for the troop contingents of Britain, Belgium and Spain, destined for Lithuania, than a passage through Switzerland could offer, one may reasonably ask the question whether the ultimate object of the French Ambassador's Note was not for the purpose of putting to a practical test the interpretation of Switzerland's obligations under the League of Nations covenants by the Federal Council.

It is obvious that the conception of neutrality as practised hitherto by the Swiss will have to undergo fundamental changes, if collisions with the League of Nations Council have to be averted.

The position created is certainly a difficult one, the more so, as opinion on the subject at home is also divided; it may, however, be safely left to our Government to deal with the problem at issue in a just and correct manner.

What especially concerns us Swiss abroad and at home, however, is the danger that lies in those reports appearing in the English Press from Special Correspondents, which do not deal with the question from an unbiassed point of view, but rather with the purpose of furthering and serving

the movement which is still active, to deprive Geneva of its honour to be the seat of the League of Nations.

Under the circumstances it is gratifying to find, even though it be only in isolated cases, that some writers are doing justice to the attitude adopted by our Federal Council in this particular issue, as will be gathered from the following articles:—

*Glasgow Herald* (Feb. 14): "Some of the more ardent spirits who rushed to the defence of the League of Nations against the Swiss Federal Council—which, of course, does not represent a Great Allied Power—must be repenting of having elevated 'teacup storm into a European tempest.' The announcement that Switzerland had refused to permit the passage of Allied troops to superintend the Lithuanian plebiscite, caused a storm of indignation and a threat in certain very anti-League quarters that the Council in due season would refuse to meet at Geneva, but would hold its next session in Paris. That the Council ever seriously entertained so thoroughly inept an idea is, one hopes, completely unfounded, but the ascription of such an idea to it is very significant of those people who would permit the Great Powers to violate every provision of the Covenant, but would go any lengths, legal or otherwise, to avenge a fancied slight from an unfortunate minor State. In addition, these earnest champions did not trouble to read the report of M. Motta's declaration to the Swiss Federal Council, an elementary precaution which would have saved them from being ridiculous. The Swiss Government received on December 23 a Note from the French Government stating that it had been authorised to arrange for the despatch of troops to Vilna, and that it had laid down for the Belgian, British and Spanish troops a route via Switzerland and Czecho-Slovakia. It may occur to one at once on a glance at the map that this for the British and Belgians at least was a remarkably circuitous route, and one may wonder why it was ever suggested. The object of such a passage of troops was, of course, obviously pacific, but at the time of M. Motta's statement, which amounted to a refusal of an eventual demand, Lithuania had not accepted the policing of the plebiscite by League troops, and therefore to have permitted such a passage would have been virtually a breach, to the disfavour of Lithuania, of that neutrality to which Switzerland has invariably clung with almost fanatic tenacity. That was M. Motta's position, and it was as eminently sound as it was far from being final. Lithuania has now accepted the presence of League police-troops, and the whole question from the Swiss standpoint has radically changed. Consequently, whenever formal demand is made, the Swiss Government will approach the question from a new angle, and will decide, as we have no reason to doubt, as a loyal member of the League of Nations."

*Daily News* (Feb. 12): "The expected decision to hold the forthcoming meeting of the Council of the League of Nations at Paris instead of Geneva is now definitely announced. The suggestion that this is due to the refusal of the Swiss Federal Council to grant the contingents of the League Plebiscite Force (for Vilna) passage through Switzerland is entirely groundless. In point of fact, the change of venue to Paris was provisionally decided on ten days or more before the Swiss Government sent its communication to the League. The reason for the change is the inability of M. Léon Bourgeois, for reasons of health, to attend the Council if it is held at Geneva. In view of the importance of the subjects to be discussed, notably disarmaments and mandates, it was considered by