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# The Swiss Observer

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## HOME NEWS

At the joint session of the National and States Councils held on Thursday morning, Dr. Giuseppe Motta was elected President of the Swiss Confederation for the year 1927.

Mr. Rudolf Minger (Berne), belonging to the Farmers' Party, has been elected Vice-President of the National Council.

The Latin Monetary Union—an international convention between France, Belgium, Italy, Greece and Switzerland allowing their respective silver tokens to have legal currency in these countries—has been officially dissolved as from January 1st, 1927; it was concluded in 1885.

Up-to-date taxation is to be introduced in the canton Uri if the Church synod which met in Altdorf is to have its way; ladies and girls showing a "bubikopf" (possibly the equivalent of Eton crop, or bobbing or shingling) are to become liable to a special tax of 50 centimes per head.

For under-declaring the fortune during lifetime (Fr. 32,000 instead of Fr. 400,000) the estate of a recently deceased Locarno resident has been surcharged Fr. 103,000 in fines.

In connection with the recent disaster in the Ricken tunnel the Swiss Carnegie Commission has, in addition to the usual medals, distributed the sum of Frs. 3,250 to those of the local railway staff who participated in the relief action.

A donation of Frs. 150,000 has been made by an anonymous benefactor to the commune of Balgach (St. Gall) as an initial contribution to a fund for assisting old residents in need.

The late Mr. Suter of Mönchaldorf (Zurich), a local magistrate, bequeathed Frs. 500 to a special fund for enabling poor school-children to participate in their annual outing. He stated that 60 years ago he was the only one of his class left behind at the annual school excursion as he was unable to obtain the money for the fixed contributions towards the expenses, which was 80 centimes.

A building in Chiasso used by the Swiss Federal Railways for storing documents was burnt down last week.

During a ski practice run by ten monks and novices of the great St. Bernard hospice, five were overtaken by an avalanche descending on the Italian side of the Col de Fenêtre; two were able to extricate themselves, whilst three of the novices perished.

Damage to the amount of about Frs. 400,000 was caused by the total destruction of Ziegelei Roggwil; arson is suspected.

The 84 year old widow Eschmann, of Delémont, was robbed and murdered in her bedroom by an out-of-work decorator, who was arrested next day in Bienne after he had unsuccessfully endeavoured to withdraw at a local bank the savings of his victim.

## EXTRACTS FROM SWISS PAPERS.

**La colonie suisse de Milan.**—La ville de Milan est actuellement non seulement la plus industrielle et la plus active de toute la péninsule, mais elle est aussi la plus peuplée puisqu'elle vient de dépasser les 800,000 habitants. La Métropole lombarde compte aussi une colonie suisse fort nombreuse. Elle se compose d'environ 3,200 membres, dont 1,400 Tessinois, autant de Suisses allemands et 300 à 400 Suisses français. La plupart des Suisses allemands sont employés de commerce ou de banque; il en est de même des Suisses français. Les Tessinois sont plutôt commerçants; depuis des siècles, ils jouissent d'une considération spéciale dans diverses branches de l'activité commerciale, dans l'hôtellerie par exemple, ainsi que dans le commerce et la vente des fruits et des primeurs.

La colonie suisse de Milan ne compte pas moins de cinq sociétés différentes: tout d'abord la "Société suisse" qui a déjà plus de 50 ans d'existence et qui compte à l'heure actuelle près de 500

membres. Elle possède un magnifique local et a en outre plusieurs sections spéciales, telles par exemple les tireurs et la gymnaste. Outre cela, on compte à Milan, dans la colonie suisse, une section de la Société suisse des commerçants, une Société libérale tessinoise, une section de Pro Ticino et enfin une Société suisse de bienfaisance. L'école suisse est fréquentée par plus de 250 élèves. L'asile évangélique, fondé en 1875, dispose d'une clinique, qui jouit d'une excellente renommée. A la tête de la colonie suisse de Milan se trouve un consul honoraire, M. Hüni, assisté par un vice-consul de carrière. Le grand éditeur Ulrich Hoeppli, dont la renommée n'est pas seulement européenne mais mondiale, fait partie, ainsi qu'on le sait, de la colonie suisse de Milan. *F. d'Avis de Lausanne.*

**La catastrophe au Grand-Saint-Bernard.**—Une dizaine de jeunes chanoines de l'hospice du Grand-Saint-Bernard étaient partis, mardi matin, pour une excursion en ski au val Ferret. Près du col Fenêtre, ils furent surpris par une avalanche qui ensevelit trois d'entre eux, Jules Luisier, Bonvin et Crétaz, âgés de 22 à 25 ans. Leurs camarades et des religieux s'employèrent à les dégager. Lorsqu'ils y parvinrent, dans l'après-midi, les trois malheureux avaient cessé de vivre.

Rapportés à ce propos que pendant des siècles, chaque matin, une ou deux équipes, formées d'un domestique des religieux, seul ou en cas de tempête accompagné de quelques religieux, avec deux paires de chiens, se rendaient d'une côté vers le sud, dans la direction de la cantine italienne, de l'autre, vers le nord, vers la cantine de Proz, à la rencontre des voyageurs. Maintenant, les équipes de secours ne se mettent en route que lorsqu'un appel au téléphone signale le passage de voyageurs à l'une ou l'autre de ces cantines. L'exercice par les religieux de cette mission est grosse de périls; les annales de l'hospice ont enregistré de nombreux cas de mort dus surtout aux avalanches. Les trois victimes surprises mardi par l'avalanche n'ont pas été frappées en secourant leur prochain; leur sort n'en est pas moins tragique.

*Gazette de Lausanne.*

**Todesopfer im Zürcher Strassenverkehr.**—Das Statistische Amt der Stadt Zürich teilt mit, dass von Anfang 1926 bis Mitte November in der Stadt Zürich bei Verkehrsunfällen 18 Menschen ums Leben kamen, an denen der Automobilverkehr in 14 Fällen beteiligt ist. Die höchste Zahl betrug 13 im Jahre 1916. Damals standen in der Stadt Zürich rund 500 Automobile, während es heute gegen 4,000 sind. Im Bezirk Zürich sind im Jahre 1926 bis heute 26 Verkehrstodesopfer zu beklagen; davon entfallen, wie bereits erwähnt, 18 auf die Stadt und acht auf die Landgemeinden. Diese Statistik enthält eine ernste Warnung an Fahrzeugführer und Fussgängern, im modernen Grossstadtverkehr äusserste Vorsicht und Aufmerksamkeit walten zu lassen. *Morgen, Olten.*

## NOTES AND GLEANINGS.

### The Corn Monopoly.

Many and varied have been the references in the English Press to the recent plebiscite, and the underlying tone makes the result to appear a rebuff to Swiss Socialists. Even an old reader of the Swiss Observer writes to give expression to his jubilation over "the defeat of the Socialists."

This, of course, is not so, and he, in common with public opinion here, entirely ignores the advantages which would have followed in its wake if the Government Bill had been passed. *Inter alia* the state would have obtained control over wheat supplies and stocks and thus have been able to counteract in good time the adverse influences of contracting from hand to mouth in war-time, and other similar emergencies; the price of bread would have been stabilised and regulated on the basis of the margin necessary for distributing and storing the cereals; the home production of wheat would have been encouraged by guaranteeing the farmer a fair and regular return, thus bringing about a healthy development of our agricultural resources and stemming the rising tide of over-production of dairy produce. Probably the best reference appeared in the *Manchester Guardian* (Dec. 7th), which I reprint below:—

The Swiss people have shown once again the conservative tendency of the institution of

the referendum. Although the Swiss Parliament had adopted by a great majority a new article in the Swiss Constitution creating a State monopoly for the import of grain, and although the four biggest political parties—the Socialists, Radicals, Catholics and Peasants—all recommended an affirmative answer in the referendum, the result was, nevertheless, the rejection of the proposed revision of the Constitution.

The warmest adherents of the grain import monopoly for the State had been the Socialists and the Peasants, but for very different reasons. The peasants expected that the State monopoly would safeguard them against the import of too large quantities of foreign grain, which import might force the peasants to lower the prices of their own Swiss grain. The Socialists were in favour of a State monopoly as a new step in the direction of the nationalisation of industries. Aversion from such nationalisation may have been the chief cause of the rejection of this innovation.

### The President of the National Council.

More amusing than informative have been the articles in the English dailies about this event, the importance of which, owing to the agitated controversy at home, has been much exaggerated. In fact, some of the papers boldly talked about the "Swiss President." Even the solemn *Daily Telegraph* (Dec. 7th) went astray; so did the *Morning Post*, though in its subsequent issue (Dec. 2nd) it promptly put matters right. That some of the less important scribes in the provinces reverently took their cue from the London Press is only natural, and the result is the following parody broadcast to the Scots by the *Glasgow Bulletin and Scots Pictorial* (Dec. 6th):—

Switzerland does not make a fuss about her President, and the name of the new holder of that office, who is to be elected to-day, may be very little heard of outside of his own country. His importance has been somewhat enhanced since the war, and recent holders of the office have even broken through tradition and paid official visits abroad, but the democratic Swiss prefer their chief citizen to be a working man, and the emoluments are so small that some Presidents have been compelled to follow their usual occupation while in power. The man who has done most to increase the influence of the office recently is M. Giuseppe Motta, who has twice held office (in 1915 and 1920), and gained international fame as President of the Assembly of the League of Nations in 1924. He is a favourite candidate for to-day's election, and so may have a third term of office next year.

Perhaps I ought to compliment the *Scots Pictorial* on its intelligent anticipation. To place things in their proper light I reprint the report which appeared in *The Times* (Dec. 8th):—

The winter Session of the Swiss Parliament was opened on Monday at Berne. The first meeting was awaited with the greatest interest, and also with some anxiety, by the whole population as the National Council—the Second Chamber—had to choose its President.

It was feared that, in conformity with Parliamentary tradition, the former Vice-President, M. Grimm, a Socialist, would be elected as President. A strong campaign has been directed against M. Grimm by the *bourgeois* parties and by military and patriotic associations, not because of his membership of the Socialist Party, of which he is one of the extremist leaders, but because he was personally responsible for the general strike which took place in 1918 after the Armistice. It was then necessary to mobilize the whole of the Army, serious riots occurred in the big towns, and over 1,000 officers and soldiers died in consequence of an influenza epidemic which rapidly spread among the troops.

Public opinion was therefore very much excited when the question came up of electing M. Grimm as President of the National Council. Fortunately, the Deputies responded to the general expression of public feeling and elected, in the place of M. Grimm, another Socialist leader, M. Gros-pierre, who at once refused the position. A second vote was then taken and the Chamber elected M. Maillfer, of Canton Vaud, a Radical, whereupon the whole of the Socialists withdrew. The Parliament Houses were guarded by strong forces of police, as it was feared that the Berne Socialists might seek to approach them and create disorder, but, happily, no untoward incidents have so far happened.

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