

The presidents of the Swiss Confederation

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THE PRESIDENTS OF THE SWISS CONFEDERATION.

Last November, 85 years have elapsed since, according to the new constitution, the two Federal Chambers, sitting as one body, have elected the first President, in the person of Dr. Jonas Furrer. Since then 42 Federal Councillors have occupied this post, so that up to date Switzerland numbers altogether 42 Presidents.

In accordance with the Constitution, the President is elected for 1 year only, and is chosen from the Federal Council (Bundesrat), numbering 7 members.

Amongst the 42 Presidents, 2 have occupied this post six times: Schenk and Welti; 4 held the Presidency 4 times: Furrer, Dencher, Motta and Schulthess; another 4 acted in this capacity 3 times: Stämpfli, Fornerod, Dubs and Müller; 14 members each twice: Fr. Frey-Horosé, Knüsel, Hammer, Droz, Ruchonnet, Hauser, Zemp, Brenner, Comtesse, Ruchet, Forrer, Haab, Musy, Häberlin; the 18 remaining ones were once at the head of the Confederation: Druey, Munzinger, Näff, Cérésolé, Scherer, Heer, Bavier, Hertenstein, Frey Emil, Lachenal, Ruffi Eugén, Hoffmann, Decoppet, Calonder, Ador, Scheurer, Chuard and Pilet-Golaz.

It is the custom, that the Federal-Councillors follow each other in rotation to the Presidency, and in very few cases it happened that a member of the Federal Council has not occupied the post of President.

Up to 1934, eleven Federal Councillors have not yet occupied this post. — (Switzerland numbers therefore up to the present 53 Federal Councillors): Ochsenbein (Berne) who was a member from 1848-1854; Franscini (Ticino); Federal Councillor from 1848-1857; Pioda (Ticino) from 1857-1864, who was appointed Minister in Rome in 1864; Challet-Venel (Geneva, Federal Councillor from 1864-72, not re-elected; Ruffi J. Victor (Vaud), Federal Councillor from 1867-69, died previous to his appointment as President; Borel (Neuchâtel) Federal Councillor from 1872-1875, was elected in 1875 Director of the newly founded International Post Office; Anderwert (Thurgau) Federal Councillor from 1876-1880, was President elect for 1881 but committed suicide owing to a nasty Press campaign against him; Schobinger (Lucerne) Federal Councillor from 1908-1911, died in November 1911; Perrier (Neuchâtel) Federal Councillor from 1912-1913, died in May 1913; and Minger (Berne) and Meyer (Zurich), who have been elected Federal Councillors in December 1929 only. M. Minger will occupy the Presidency next year and M. Meyer in 1936.

In the history of the Federal Council it only happened once, that one of its members was the son of a former Federal Councillor, namely the two Ruffy's.

Here is a complete list of the Presidents of the Swiss Confederation from 1848-1934.

Name	Born	Canton	Federal-Counc. from...to...	President
1. Furrer, Jonas	1805	Zurich	1848-1861	1848/49, 52, 55, 58
2. Druey, D. H.	1798	Vaud	1848-1855	1850
3. Munzinger, M.	1794	Solothurn	1848-1855	1851
4. Näff, W. H.	1802	St. Gall	1848-1875	1853
5. Frey-Horosé, F.	1801	Aargau	1848-1866	1854, 1860
6. Stämpfli, J.	1820	Berne	1855-1863	1856, 59, 62
7. Fornerod, Ch.	1821	Vaud	1855-1867	1857, 63, 67
8. Knüsel, M.	1812	Lucerne	1855-1875	1861, 1866
9. Dubs, J.	1822	Zurich	1861-1872	1864, 68, 70
10. Schenk, K.	1823	Berne	1863-1895	1865, 71, 74, 78, 85, 1893
11. Welti, E.	1825	Aargau	1867-1891	1869, 72, 76, 80, 84, 1891
12. Cérésolé, P.	1832	Vaud	1870-1875	1873
13. Scherer, J.	1825	Zurich	1872-1875	1875
14. Heer, J.	1825	Glarus	1875-1878	1877
15. Hammer, B.	1822	Solothurn	1875-1890	1879, 1889
16. Droz, N.	1844	Neuchâtel	1875-1892	1881, 1887
17. Bavier, S.	1825	Grisons	1878-1883	1882
18. Ruchonnet, L.	1834	Vaud	1881-1893	1883, 1890
19. Dencher, A.	1831	Thurgau	1883-1912	1886, 1897, 1903, 1909
20. Hertenstein, W.	1825	Zurich	1879-1888	1888
21. Hauser, W.	1837	Zurich	1888-1902	1900
22. Frey, Emil	1838	Basle-Country	1889-1897	1894
23. Zemp, J.	1834	Lucerne	1891-1908	1895, 1902
24. Lachenal, A.	1849	Geneva	1892-1899	1896
25. Ruffi, E.	1854	Vaud	1893-1899	1898
26. Müller, E.	1848	Berne	1895-1919	1899, 1907, 1913
27. Brenner, E.	1856	Basle	1897-1911	1901, 1908
28. Comtesse, R.	1847	Neuchâtel	1899-1912	1904, 1910
29. Ruchet, M.	1853	Vaud	1899-1912	1905, 1911
30. Forrer, L.	1845	Zurich	1902-1917	1906, 1912
31. Hoffmann, A.	1857	St. Gall	1911-1917	1914
32. Motta, G.	1871	Ticino	1911-	1915, 20, 27, 32
33. Decoppet, C.	1862	Vaud	1912-1919	1916
34. Schulthess, E.	1868	Aargau	1912-	1917, 21, 28, 33
35. Calonder, F.	1863	Grisons	1913-1920	1918
36. Ador, G.	1845	Geneva	1917-1919	1919
37. Haab, R.	1865	Zurich	1918-1929	1922, 1929
38. Scheurer, K.	1872	Berne	1919-1929	1923
39. Chuard, E.	1857	Vaud	1919-1929	1924
40. Musy, J.	1876	Fribourg	1919-	1925, 1930
41. Häberlin, H.	1868	Thurgau	1920-	1926, 1931
42. Pilet-Golaz, M.	1889	Vaud	1929-	1934

take a motor car through either way. The Swiss authorities do not encourage private motor cars on the road at their side of the mountain, and I believe special permission has to be obtained to use one. That, however, is a matter of indifference to me, and perhaps to you. You have to get your papers for it cleared in the little office nearby. You pass him, but you are still in Switzerland and will be until you reach a point in the road opposite a statue of St. Bernard, which you see about a quarter of a mile in front. That marks the actual frontier. Having reached the statue you can place a foot in each country.

The Italian Customs and police post is more than half a mile further on. If you care to pass through you must show your passport, and if you have an obvious camera they will civilly warn you that it is not permitted to take photographs there. A reason for this prohibition I cannot understand, for any efficient spy or intelligence officer could see all there is to see. The Swiss don't mind if you photograph every square inch of their little country — mountains, roads, fortresses, barracks, frontier posts, soldiers, policemen, and everything else. In fact, they encourage you, for there is an advantage in selling you plates or films. The Italians get nervous if you produce a camera on a mountain road or near

a military post about whose disposition every intelligence department in Europe knows as much as the Italians themselves.

The monastery has entertained many hundreds of notable visitors — kings, queens, emperors, soldiers, ecclesiastics, pilgrims and wanderers. The great Napoleon passed through when the last century was young. Queen Victoria of England stayed for a night there. — She presented her portrait and an expression of thanks to the monks. She was a frugal woman in the expenditure of money, and never emptied her purse very much. Her son, Albert Edward, Prince of Wales, was more generous and prodigal. He spent a night there when he was doing "the Grand Tour" at the age of eighteen. When he returned to England he sent the monks a grand piano to help them to get through the winter loneliness. Over forty years later, when he became King, he sent them another, to show that he had not forgotten their hospitality.

But time has brought changes. Nowadays most people travelling from Italy to Switzerland or Switzerland to Italy go under the mountains instead of over them. Visits to the passes are now mostly performed as excursions. No one can say what the future may be of the Hospices, of which the St. Bernard is the best known.

GEORGE FORRER.

We are extending our heartiest congratulations to Mr. George Forrer, the Doyen of the Swiss Colony, who is celebrating next Thursday, January 18th, his 90th birthday anniversary.

We feel sure that the whole Colony will join us in wishing him many happy returns of the day. We hear that Mr. Forrer is enjoying good health, and we hope to be able to yet report his 100th birthday in the Swiss Observer, what an event this will be. —

Mr. Forrer has been uninterruptedly in London since 1868. —

Born the 18th of January, 1844, he settled in London as a young man of 24, the five years previously spent in France and Italy having given him a widened outlook on life. He entered an Anglo-Swiss firm, one of whose partners was Monsieur H. Vernet, the Consul for Switzerland, and already then, everything seemed to point to ever-growing consular work. Forrer filled the post of Honorary Vice-Consul for 7 years, i.e., until 1883, when further considerable obligations demanded the services of a specialist in such matters.

Meanwhile the "Fonds de Secours" had been established, its activity and benevolent work growing from week to week and much beyond the head of the then existing Consulate. Forrer became Honorary Treasurer, and during 33 years unceasingly and with the greatest concern kept things moving until his retirement from City life.

In 1878 he joined the "Société de Secours Mutuels" and a few years later was elected President, a post which he held for two decades; many are still living who can well remember his wisdom and moderation in all matters and his proud acceptance in 1902 from our late Minister, Dr. Carlin, at the bicentenary festival held during his term of office, of the embroidered banner presented by the ladies of the Colony. That is no doubt one of his finest recollections, when 332 guests sat down to dinner at the Cecil, alas! some have disappeared for ever and so has the famous hotel, but the 90 years' old veteran and "Président honoraire" still enjoys wonderful health.

SWISS OBSERVER 10 YEARS AGO.

The Swiss Colony in New York is stated, in our issue of January 12th, 1924, as having collected a sum of 100,000 Dollars for the purpose of producing in Switzerland a historic film commemorating the foundation of the Confederation. As nothing further has transpired we must surmise that the learned men at Berne have so far not arrived at a settlement as to when and where the "foundation" commenced and came to a close. Perhaps it might have been more expedient if our compatriots on the other side of the herring pond had confided this stupendous task to the masters at Hollywood who no doubt could, in the course of a decade, have shot off a film justifying that title.

The resignation is announced of Dr. Paul Lang, the secretary of the London group of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique. During his three years' stay in London Dr. Lang has been one of our collaborators and the literary page which he edited personally has been a valuable and much appreciated feature of the Swiss Observer.

PERSONAL.

We deeply regret to report the death of M. Auguste de Trey, which occurred on Thursday, January 4th, at Farnham Court, Farnham Royal (Bucks), at the age of 60. M. de Trey was a member of the City Swiss Club since 1910.

Mr. R. Wild, son of Mr. A. Wild, of the Royal Court Hotel, Sloane Square, S.W.1, is acting as Secretary this winter to the St. Moritz Ski and Sport Club, which has its headquarters at the Kulm Hotel, St. Moritz.

We extend heartiest congratulations to Mr. J. Obrist, on the occasion of his appointment, as Manager of Messrs. R. Schwarzenbach and Co., Ltd., 66, Aldermanbury, E.C.1.

1934.

Das alt Jahr ist verflosse,
Und d'Akte si scho gschlosse;
Mir wei's nid z'hert verchlage.
Es het üs frank und offe
Gä guete Grund zum Hoffe,
Das chöme besser Tage.
Mir hei glernt, mir Bejahrte,
Weni uf's Mal z'erwarte,
Und uf kei Fall z'verzage.
Wird es em neue glinge,
Was's alt erstrebt het, z'bringe?
Das chöi mir all nur frage.
Doch sötten es paar Fläsche
Fendant ihm d'Auge wäsche,
So tüe mir's mit Belage.

Mutz.