

Home news

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The Swiss Observer

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HOME NEWS

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FEDERAL.

THE SOCIALIST PARTY.

The Socialist Party has made a declaration wherein it protests against the deflationary policy and its consequences, against the curtailment of the rights of the people and against the policy of "urgency decrees." The socialist party will oppose with all its might a return to inconsiderate class politics of the capitalist, who not only refuse to give up for the common good a part of the many hundreds of millions gained by the devaluation of the franc, but plans in addition to put further burdens on the poor victims of that devaluation.

It lends its support to the Federal employees in their demands and calls for a new financial policy for the Confederation. The latter is to tackle in particular the large capitals and incomes, to prevent tax evasion and to introduce an effective Federal death duty. Only in this way is it possible for the Confederation to get its dues without crippling the finances of cantons and communes.

The declaration further protests against the foreign policy of the Federal Council and demands a genuine and decided policy of neutrality. Under no circumstances must even a semblance of attachment to some imperialistic axis or furtherance of a policy based on might, not right, be allowed to gain credence.

And finally an appeal is made to the people and their parliamentary representatives to do everything in their power to maintain and assure for our home and foreign policy the tradition of free and democratic development.

(It reads very much like official party support being lent to the present unwarranted attacks on our minister for foreign affairs.)

INITIATIVE GIVING FEDERAL TRIBUNAL JUDICIAL RIGHTS OVER FEDERAL DECREES.

The initiative calling for a revision of art. 113 of the constitution in the sense that the Federal Tribunal should submit all Federal laws, decrees, etc., to a test as to their constitutionality before their coming into force, has been considered by the Federal Council. The department of Justice recommends its submission to the vote of the people and cantons with a recommendation for rejection and without making a counter proposal.

The Federal Council is of opinion that such a measure would be contrary to our democratic conceptions and contravene the principle of strict separation of legislative, executive and judicative power. The latter shall merely apply and safeguard the laws passed and promulgated by the other two bodies, but is not to give an opinion as to the said laws being juridically in order or not, e.g., as to their conforming to the constitution. The decision thereon must rest with the legislative power, which in turn is subject to a vote by the people (referendum). Therefore the last word must and does rest with the people and not with the Federal Tribunal.

THE TRAFFIC OF THE BASLE HARBOUR.

In the course of this year the traffic development of the harbour of Basle has been particularly satisfactory. This may be accounted for by the general business recovery, on the one hand, and by the progress resulting from the regularisation of the course of the Rhine between Strasbourg and Basle, on the other. For the first 7 months of 1937, the volume of goods transported totalled 1.8 million tons against 1.2 million during the same period of 1936. There has thus been an increase of 50 per cent.

WATCH INDUSTRY.

The chief of the Federal department of economics, Federal Councillor Obrecht, presided over a meeting between representatives of the governments of the cantons of Berne, Soleure and Neuchâtel, the Watch-Chamber of La Chaux-de-Fonds and the General Swiss Watch Industry of Bienne, held at the Federal Palace, when the situation of the watch industry was fully discussed. A pleasing increase in exports as well as

in employment was generally admitted. At the end of the conference the following statements were unanimously agreed upon:

That the present regulations in force in the industry and their application by the Federal Authorities and the various organisations were necessary and proper.

That the measures taken by state and organisations, to put in force and assure the realisation of the reorganisation plan of the year 1931, have stood the test, have contributed in a large measure to steer the watch industry safely through the times of crisis and have effectively counteracted threatened emigration.

That they are the principal cause of the rapid recovery in the fortunes of the industry.

Previous experience proves that the basic principles involved, as well as the measures taken under that plan must be maintained and upheld. It would be a mistake to scrap same at the first signs of a revival.

As regards the complaints raised by the outsiders, the conference makes an urgent appeal to these firms to join the convention. The various groups are directed to grant any such applications for membership freely and willingly. The trust companies of the four so-called key industries are to be invited to renew their efforts to take over outside firms. This applies particularly to three works which would not agree at the time of reorganisation.

Last month the exports of the dissident factories amounted to a mere 5.1 per cent. of the industry's total export value.

HOTEL INDUSTRY.

The Swiss Union of Hotel Proprietors met at Lucerne. Their report on the summer season dampens somewhat the exaggerated opinions so far published. The attendance of visitors is termed "moderate to good." Some districts showed practically no improvement, while others could record exceptionally large numbers. Noticeable was an almost total absence of Italians. The number of German guests was also disappointing and in many places the Swiss too were less numerously represented. Everywhere the prices were much depressed and did not leave a margin for any material improvement in the financial position of the hotel industry. All in all, one may reckon with an increase in turnover of from 30 to 40 per cent. as against the summer 1936; but it must be remembered that last year's summer season yielded on an average no more than one quarter to one third of the turnover of normal years. At the same time, a rise in costs of about 10% has to be registered.

These figures are rather disappointing and produce a sobering effect after all the glowing accounts heard previously.

HEAVY AIR TRAFFIC DURING SUMMER MONTHS.

The results of Switzerland's air traffic during the first three months of the summer 1937 are extremely favourable as compared with those of the same period last year. The "Swissair" Company transported 36,992 kg. of goods against 20,658 during the corresponding period of 1936. A regular night service between Basle and Frankfurt contributed, in a large measure, to this increase. The number of passengers rose during the same period from 3,213 to 7,588, and the volume of luggage transported attained 118,462 kg., which represents an increase of about 50 per cent. The airplanes flew with a regularity of 99.5 per cent.

CITY SWISS CLUB.

Messieurs les membres sont avisés que

L'ASSEMBLÉE MENSUELLE

aura lieu Mardi 5 Octobre au Restaurant PAGANI-42, Great Portland Street, W.1. et sera précédée d'un souper à 7h. 15 précises (prix 5/-).

ORDRE DU JOUR:

Procès-verbal. Démissions.
Admissions. Banquet Annuel
Divers.

Pour faciliter les arrangements, les participants sont priés de bien vouloir s'inscrire au plus tôt auprès de Monsieur P. F. Boehringer, 23, Leonard Street, E.C.2. (Téléphone: Clerkenwell 9595).

Le Comité.

ACTIVITIES OF A SWISS BRIDGE ENGINEER.

Dr. h.c. Ammann, a Swiss national, has recently been appointed Director of Engineering to the Port Authority of New York. In the course of his career, he collaborated in the construction of many famous bridges, both in Europe and in America. It was he who built, among other things, the world's biggest suspension bridge connecting New York with New Jersey. He is at present occupied in the capacity of chief engineer, in the construction of the Bronx-Whitestone bridge.

ONE MILLION KILOMETRES BY AIR.

The well-known "Swissair" flight-captain Walter Ackermann is the fourth Swiss pilot to achieve the distinction to have flown one million kilometres on ordinary service routes and without mishap. This feat was accomplished on 16th September, while on a flight from Milan to Basle. We congratulate the famous pilot on his achievement.

W. Ackermann joined "Ad Astra Aero" in 1927, flew for a time on the first European express route "Zurich-Berlin non-stop." Later he transferred to "Swissair." He therefore has lived through the entire evolution of our national air services, from the old single engine machines without wireless to the present up-to-date three-engine Douglas machines, seating 21 passengers, or the Junker machines equipped with Diesel engines, all replete with wireless, automatic pilot, blind flying instruments, a dash board filled with gadgets of all kinds imaginable.

A NEW OLD-AGE INSURANCE PLAN.

Some years ago a Federal pension scheme for old people and dependents of deceased persons was emphatically turned down by the votes of the people.

A group of private individuals, including well-known experts in insurance matters, have worked out a new plan for a Swiss old-age insurance scheme, on a voluntary basis. It is chiefly intended for those parts of the population which are not included in the existing group assurance policies and pension funds.

ARMY EQUIPMENT.

From an account rendered by the chief of the Federal military department concerning the credits granted for the equipment of the army with up-to-date weapons, defensive armaments and so on, it appears that the credit of the year 1935 to the value of 82 million francs has been fully disposed of. By the end of this year quite 120 million francs of the 235 million originating from the defence loan will be booked for work in hand. Thus there remains at the department's disposal after 1st January next a balance of 115 million.

It may here be mentioned that the large volume of orders placed on the home market has greatly contributed to a revival of the industries concerned.

NEW FIGHTING PLANES ON TRIAL.

At Thun, various fighting planes of foreign construction are undergoing trials, with a view to choosing a suitable type for our air force. Two German monoplane, manufactured at Rostock, crossed from Dübendorf to Thun at the fantastic speed of 500 km. per hour. Other models of French and Italian design are also on test. No decision has so far been arrived at.

THE 55TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE FIRST HYDRO-ELECTRIC PLANT IN EUROPE

It is exactly 55 years ago that the first European hydro-electric plant, operated on an industrial and commercial basis, was constructed at Lausanne, Switzerland. Edison's first incandescent lamp had been exhibited at Paris in 1881. Conclusive tests had been carried out by Swiss engineers before the Lausanne authorities since the beginning of 1882, and in April of that year the first electric plant was constructed, Edison's famous invention having, until then, received no industrial application.

COMPTOIR SUISSE, LAUSANNE.

President Motta made an important speech on the occasion of the "official day" of the Comptoir Suisse at Lausanne. He referred at length to the Federal Councils proposals to the Chambers concerning new economic regulations. Freedom for trade and industry shall remain the basic principle. Certain exceptions must, however, be permitted. Yet individuality shall remain the main spring, in contra distinction to state monopolies and state interference.

Federal Councillor Motta also took the opportunity to deal a blow at the recent attacks made

upon him and his foreign policy. He solemnly declared that in all questions of foreign policy as well as military matters, the Federal Council had at all times but one heart and one soul.

DEFENCE LOAN "FUENFLIBER."

To commemorate that emphatic, patriotic demonstration of the will of the Swiss people to defend the country against all-comers, the issue and over-subscription of the defence loan, a special five franc piece has been struck. It shows a kneeling female figure, holding in one hand the dove of peace, while the other rests on a sword, pointing to earth. On the reverse appear the Swiss Cross, a steel helmet, the year 1936 and the inscription: "Pro patria armis tueda." All who subscribed to the loan may, on proof, purchase a coin. Any surplus will eventually be put in circulation. The coin is, of course, legal tender, value 5 francs.

NOUVELLE SOCIETE HELVETIQUE.

The 22nd annual general and delegates meeting of the N.S.H. will be held at Romanshorn on the 25th and 26th September.

BETTER RAILWAY RECEIPTS.

For the month of August the receipts of the Federal Railways with 29.37 million francs show an increase against last August of 3.79 million. Passenger receipts improved by 0.82 and goods by 2.9 million, the latter due to a sharp increase in international traffic. The percentage betterment of 14.8% falls below the July figure of 21.7%.

Expenses were but 30,000 francs higher than in August last, so that the month provided an excess in receipts of 11 million, or, for the first 8 months, of 78.4 million francs. Thereby a net improvement of over 35 million has been achieved, in comparison with the same period of the previous year.

THE SHARE INDEX OF THE NATIONAL BANK.

On 10th September this index stood at 182% as against 185% on 25th August and 110% a year ago. For industrial shares alone the respective figures are: 225, 257 and 178%.

The average return of 12 Federal Bonds and Federal Railways Bonds (again on the above mentioned dates) amounted to 3.37, 3.36 and 4.59% respectively.

LOCAL.

ZURICH.

The well-known novelist, John Knittel, (at one time a member of the City Swiss Club), within the short space of 14 years has written and published 3 dramatic plays and, what is perhaps more, has succeeded in getting same produced on the stage. The first performance of "Via Mala" (after his somewhat lurid novel of the same name) has just been staged at Zurich and was enthusiastically received. An ovation was accorded to the author and actors.

* * *

3,700 boys took part at this year's "Knabenschiesse" in Zurich. In the end three tied with 34 points each, only 1 point below a possible, a result that had never before been achieved. This year again the boys shot with the ordinary army rifle.

URI.

The Association of former members of the Swiss Papal Guards held a meeting in Altdorf, when 60 old comrades took part. A wreath was laid at the grave of the founder of the association, Landammann Alois Huber.

SOLOTHURN.

From the 18th September to the 3rd October Grenchen will stage an exhibition in 6 halls. Chief interest centres in the exhibits of the watch industry. Other features are provided by agriculture and artistic gardening. And to cover expenses there is the attraction of a mild gamble by the sale of lottery tickets.

BASEL.

The question of a new air port at Basel has entered an advanced stage of discussion. The present ground cannot be extended and is rapidly becoming inadequate to deal with the ever growing traffic. Of the alternative projects for an up-to-date civil air port those of the Bruderholz and the Hard have been abandoned in favour of Allschwil-Burgfelden. To render this site adequate for all modern requirements, it appears to be necessary to take in some ground beyond the French frontier. Certain objections from the military point of view seem to have been satisfactorily refuted. Basel now expects a definite decision on the part of the Federal Council, followed by prompt measures to get the project realised.

* * *

At the end of August the population of the town of Basel stood at 169,100.

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The Swiss Mercantile Society of Basel celebrates this year the 75th anniversary of its foundation. 16 young, budding sons of Mercury founded the K.V.B. in the year 1862.

APPENZEL.

Inner- and Ausserrhoden are jointly holding an exhibition in Teufen where the canton's repre-

sentative trades, industries and agriculture are displayed by 300 exhibitors. The textile industry, in particular the world famous embroideries deserve special mention. Well represented are cattle and poultry, not forgetting the "schütülig bravi Houndli."

A special feature is provided by a Festival Play "s Appzelelerland," from the well-known pen of August Steinmann, editor at the St. Galler Tagblatt, with music by Director Juon of Teufen. At the opening performance the play was received with great applause from an enthusiastic audience.

ST. GALL.

During the last three years cultivation of tobacco plants has been taken up in the St. Gall-Oberland, more especially in Vilters, Sargans and Mels. This year particularly the new venture has met with a good deal of success. The quality of the leaf is said to be one of the best in Switzerland.

FOOTBALL.

19th September, 1937.

INTERNATIONAL MATCH.

AUSTRIA 4 SWITZERLAND 3

This season's first international engagement led our Eleven to Vienna where their appearance did not exactly prove a great draw. 25,000 spectators who, notwithstanding our poor reputation on the football field, had ventured their money, were about as agreeably surprised at what they saw, as the writer was at what he read. But our space is precious, so we have to be short. Austria fielded a strong eleven who quickly got into their stride. We had only one "Bernese" in the team, and that a forward (at any rate he plays for a Bern-club, but where he hails from may be a very different matter) and yet, we were completely overrun. In the first minute the famous Sindelar had the ball in the net, another followed his example in the seventh and a third disaster fell in the 20th minute. 3:0 for Austria. And now our lads woke up. Wallace (does not sound very Swiss, but he is naturalised and, well, we cannot be too particular) scored, only to see his point promptly washed out by a fourth goal for the Austrians. Two minutes remained till half-time; but believe me or believe me not, that was time enough for our "Bernese" afore mentioned, named Paul Aebi from the Young Boys, to place the ball in the net to make the half-time score 4:2.

Both camps were surprised; the Swiss defence was never expected to give away four goals in 45 minutes, nor were the forwards credited with serving up two goals so promptly. But better was to come. For quite half an hour the Swiss penned their foes in their half and after 30 minutes play of several missed chances, G. Aebi of Servette netted to make the score 4:3. The Austrians now began to play with somewhat unnecessary vigour. A wonderful back like Sesta ought to know better, but it always seems to be him. Anyhow, nothing more in the scoring line happened and Switzerland has come out of their first international test of the season 1937, 38 with credit.

Team: Huber; Minelli, W. Weiler; Springer, Vernati (so far all Grasshoppers) Loertscher (Servette); Bickel (Grasshoppers), P. Aebi (Young Boys), Ruff (Grasshoppers), Wallace and G. Aebi (both Servette).

7 Grasshoppers, 3 Servettiers and 1 Young Boys!!

M.G.

ALBERT HEIM IN ENGLAND.

In 1907 the Geological Society of London celebrated its Centenary. Heim's work was so well-known and appreciated, that he received in a succession of years the distinction of being made a Foreign Member and this was followed by the highest award the Society can confer, the Wollaston Medal in Palladium, a rare mineral obtained from gold. He was therefore one of our honoured guests on this notable jubilee.

There were many from all over the world.

Sir Archibald Geikie, O.M., presided over the numerous functions. One of these was a Soirée at the Natural History Museum. It simply snowed with decorated personalities amongst whom the Germans were the most resplendent. But there were a few in ordinary evening dress. Heim was one of these. I addressed him in "Schwizerdütsch" and he was highly astonished. Ja wer sind Sie? Chômet Sie, mer wänd die Sach bespreche. He was then the special guest of the first Lord Avebury, but it did not matter. He spared the time for a lengthy talk with a perfectly unknown countryman of his. He was like that.

At the official dinner he was placed at the top table and given the task of replying to the toast of the Geological Surveys of the world. A rare compliment to the Survey which achieved great work with small means. He did it with a directness and character admired by all. We all felt "le style c'est l'homme lui-même." After that he journeyed to Oxford to receive the degree of Dr. Sc. Honoris Causa. The public Orator of the University of Oxford addressed him as follows: "Hic ille est Alpium Sinarum investigator, etc."

A few years later he was the guest of the British Association in Scotland and he studied the problem of the Highlands with the twin stars of Scottish Geology, Peach and Home. He thoroughly enjoyed himself and drew a picture skillful as he was in the art of drawing, of these two noted brothers of the hammer, while he indicated what he thought was the structure of the Highlands by superimposing on them a diagram of the Säntis.

Heim lived long enough to see most of his contemporaries pass away. When he was eighty he told me "lang chas nümme so witer ga" but I playfully reminded him that it was usual for distinguished geologists to live till ninety and cited the example of Sir Archibald Geikie. He has nearly rivaled the age of his friend.

Professor L. Kober of Vienna in his book "Das Alpine Europa" pays him a handsome tribute. The reference is to the "Geologie der Schweiz." Heim's great achievement:

"In dieser Arbeit erkennen wir nicht nur die Wissenschaft auf dem Gipfel der Zusammenfassung, wir bewundern auch die Kultur dieser Wissenschaft, die Vollendung der Darstellung in Wort und Bild." — Kellers Verse: "Lasse strahlen deinen schönsten Stern nieder auf mein irdisch Heimatland."

assuredly is capable of a spiritual interpretation.

May Providence provide us always with stars of light illuminating our homeland and casting a kindly glow far beyond our narrow frontiers.

Albert Heim was such a gift.

Liverpool, 20th September, 1937.

E.M.

M. LE PASTEUR

RENE HOFFMANN-DE VISME.

We are indebted to a Correspondent for the following article which unfortunately we received too late to be inserted in last week's issue.

Profondément ému et affecté par les douloureux événements qui viennent de semer le deuil et l'affliction dans tous les rangs de la Colonie suisse de Londres, ainsi que dans les nombreux milieux en Suisse et à l'étranger où M. le pasteur Hoffmann-de Visme avait su acquérir un si haut degré d'estime et de sympathie, permettez-vous à un vieux Suisse de Londres d'emprunter un petit espace dans l'"Observer" comme tribut à la mémoire de celui qui occupa pendant de longues années une place si grande et honorée?

Les paroles émouvantes de M.M. les pasteurs Emery, Christol et Hahn à l'occasion du Culte Commémoratif célébré dans le temple d'Endell Street lundi dernier — rendant un si vivant témoignage de ce que fut M. Hoffmann-de Visme pour sa famille et pour la communauté religieuse de Londres en particulier — auront déjà trouvé leur écho dans la presse. Ce que je désire ici souligner plus spécialement, c'est ce que fut l'homme, le patriote actif et dévoué dont nous déplorons aujourd'hui le brusque départ. Au risque de me voir devancé par d'autres rapporteurs, je ne pourrais mieux le faire qu'en rappelant les phrases éloquentes prononcées dans la même circonstance par M. Ch. de Jenner, Conseiller de la Légation, au nom de M. le Ministre, malheureusement absent, et de ses collègues.

M. Paravicini, a-t-il dit, qui a pu suivre la carrière du défunt depuis son début, serait certainement mieux placé pour parler de ses grands et innombrables mérites. Cependant dès sa première rencontre avec lui, l'orateur avait eu l'impression qu'il se trouvait en présence d'un Suisse en qui brûlait un ardent amour pour sa patrie, un désir de se vouer à son pays et à ses compatriotes, et bien vite avait-il pu se rendre compte des bienfaits de son infatigable activité au sein de notre Colonie et apprécier toutes ses bonnes actions. Tous ceux qui l'ont connu savaient, comme lui, qu'il n'avait qu'un but, celui de servir son Dieu, sa patrie et son prochain! Sans jamais recourir aux moyens plus faciles qui lui étaient offerts pour atteindre son idéal, il devait toujours rester fidèle à sa grande œuvre qui était celle de travailler parmi les Suisses de l'étranger, dans l'immense métropole, qui exigeait tant d'efforts et devenait une tâche presque insurmontable. A côté de son activité pastorale, il trouvait encore le temps de s'occuper, avec la verve qui le caractérisait, de toutes les questions intéressant notre pays, prenant une part active à ses œuvres sociales et même aux discussions sur les questions politiques suisses que soulevait la Nouvelle Société Helvétique, et c'est avec émotion que M. de Jenner pensait maintenant à cette bouche à jamais close, à cette voix qu'on n'entendra plus! — La légation elle-même, disait-il, perdait en M. Hoffmann-de Visme un des plus nobles collaborateurs de son activité sociale qui jamais ne refusa un service, même des plus ingrats.

Nous n'oublierons pas, a-t-il ajouté en terminant, celui qu'il a plu à Dieu de reprendre et en qui nous aurons toujours l'exemple d'un Suisse vaillant et d'un fidèle serviteur de la Patrie.

Bd.