

Switzerland mourns the pope

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SWITZERLAND MOURNS THE POPE

The death of Pope John XXIII caused genuine grief the world over, not only in Roman Catholic Communities. The World Reformed Churches in Geneva, the Swiss Protestant Churches and the Swiss Jewry all expressed grief and appreciation of the late Pope's great qualities.

In Geneva the flag at the European Headquarters of the United Nations was at half mast, as was that on the West Wing of the Federal Palace in Berne, where the Federal Political Department (Swiss Foreign Office) is housed.

The President of the Confederation, Federal Councillor Spuehler, sent a telegram of condolence to the Vatican, and the Swiss Foreign Minister, Federal Councillor Wahlen, paid an official visit of condolence to the Papal Nuncio.

In the two Chambers, the National Council and the Council of States, eloquent tribute was paid to Pope John by the two Presidents, National Councillor Guinaud and Councillor of States Fauquex.

In many Swiss towns and villages Memorial Masses were sung, attended by personalities from all spheres of life. In all the Roman Catholic churches in Berne Memorial Services were held at 8.15 p.m. on 5th June.

Two days later a Pontifical Requiem was celebrated in the basilica of the Dreifaltigkeitskirche (Holy Trinity Church) in Berne, at which the Apostolic Nuncio in Switzerland, Titular Archbishop Mgr. Pacini, officiated, supported by the dignitaries of the Church, the Swiss Bishops and Abbots.

The President of the Confederation, Vice-President Federal Councillor von Moos and Federal Councillors Wahlen and Bonvin were present, as well as a number of officials and M.P.s. The Government of the Canton of Berne, the Swiss Army General Staff and the Federal Railways were represented. The Diplomatic and Consular Corps as well as representatives of the Maltese Order attended.

At the main entrance was a guard of honour in the uniform of former Swiss guardsmen. The Church Choir sang the Requiem, accompanied by the organ and a trumpeter.

The address (in French) was given by the Bishop of Lausanne, Geneva and Fribourg. In moving words Mgr. Charrière paid tribute to the man who would have been so much needed for the conclusion of the Ecumenical Council. He painted a vivid picture of a man who had been so close both to man and to God.

At the funeral in Rome on 17th June, Switzerland was represented by the former Federal Councillor Enrico Celio and the Swiss Ambassador in Italy, Monsieur Phillip Zutter.

REQUIESCAT IN PACE [A.T.S.]

A BRIDGE DISMANTLED

Over 50 feet of snow can still be found on the Furka Pass (7,990 feet). Thanks to the modern equipment, such as rotary snow hoes and ploughs, the Furka-Oberalp Railway was able to start summer operations on the stretch Brigue-Gletsch-Andermatt-Disentis as scheduled. One essential job was the reconstruction of the bridge across the Steffenbach, the only railway bridge in the world which is dismantled in the autumn so as to save it from the avalanches and has to be put back in place every spring. [S.N.T.O.]

INTELLECTUALS FIGHT SENSATIONAL JOURNALISM

The responsible Swiss Press and indeed large sections of the public have for some time strongly objected to the daily paper "Blick", which was founded a few years ago and which has introduced a cheap, sensational manner of presenting news, often libellous, hitherto alien to the Swiss Press.

In September last year Parliament heard complaints from an M.P. regarding the "Blick" and its irresponsible way of sensational reporting, copying bad foreign examples. The Federal Council was requested to study the matter, which it was felt was urgent as "the reputation and dignity of the Swiss Press was being brought into discredit".

In its answer the Federal Council declared on 19th November that it had already unmistakably expressed agreement that the methods of this paper put an entirely different stress on human and moral values, which was causing alarm. But, according to article 55 of the Federal Constitution regarding the freedom of the Press, the Federal Council had no powers to stop it. It was left to the healthy good sense of the public to reject such a paper. Nevertheless, the Federal Council stated, "As long as a paper disregards the rules of journalism hitherto customary in Switzerland, the Federal authorities refuse to keep up contact with it".

The latest "Blick" affair is connected with the death of the Pope. On Saturday, 1st June, it announced prematurely by several days and in a not very dignified way that His Holiness had died. This caused not only indignation but roused a wave of disgust. Protest was expressed all over Switzerland at this, what the Swiss Catholic "Volksverein" called, "irresponsible sensational journalism".

Young intellectuals in Lucerne arranged a protest action by printing a satirical leaflet entitled "The 'Blick' has ceased to exist". Twelve thousand copies were handed out, and spontaneous sympathy was accorded the distributors, who also opened a "First of June Blick Account" into which could be paid donations in aid of the Tibetan Children's Fund — with great success, too.

The Editors of the "Blick" appealed to the Lucerne Cantonal Police to confiscate the leaflet, but their request was refused. [A.T.S.]

ASSEMBLY OF THE SWISS ABROAD

For this year's gathering of the Swiss abroad St. Moritz has been chosen. On Friday, 16th August, a meeting of the Commission of the Swiss Abroad will take place, and in the evening, after the official opening of the Assembly, there will be several group meetings, including a delegates' meeting of the Solidarity Fund of the Swiss Abroad. On Saturday the business meeting will be held, when the main theme of this year's conference will be discussed: the spiritual defence of Switzerland's existence in the world of today and tomorrow (Selbstbehauptung der Schweiz in der Welt von heute und morgen). It is hoped to have one of the Federal Councillors present, who will address us. On Saturday evening there will be a banquet and entertainment. For Sunday an outing by coach will be arranged. This will take us to Piz Corvatsch and there will be a picnic lunch on the Alp Surlej. Further details may be had from the Secretariat of the Swiss Abroad, Alpenstrasse 26, Berne.

All Swiss abroad are invited to take part in the Assembly at St. Moritz and should apply as soon as possible in order to secure accommodation.