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The Swiss Observer

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The Official Organ of the Swiss Colony in Great Britain

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Engelberg
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1964

Twelve months ago, the last weeks of the year brought relief of tension, and it was with gratitude that we approached Christmas. The Cuban crisis which had taken the world dangerously near the abyss of war was over. We could celebrate the birth of Christ with a lighter heart and easier mind.

The man who played such a vital part in averting the danger of war at that time has now been basely murdered, and men and women all over the globe mourn him. The lessening of tension which had been felt throughout the year has come to a halt and we once again face uncertainty and suspense. We don't feel in the mood for lighthearted merrymaking, our sorrow at the loss of a great friend makes us loath to think of Yule Tide revelry. We are aghast that such a crime should be possible in our civilised (question mark) world, and we feel uncomfortably compelled to take stock of our own consciences. Hardly the

right requirements for celebrating Christmas and for looking forward to the new year!

Much has been spoken and written about John Fitzgerald Kennedy. But, recalling his great predecessor Abraham Lincoln's famous speech on the occasion of the inauguration of the National Cemetery at Gettysburg one hundred years ago, we know that of what we say the world will take little heed and hardly remember for long, but what Kennedy *did* it can never forget. And perhaps even less what he *was*. As a young politician he wrote a book on courage, "the most admirable of all human virtues". This was both typical and prophetic — he was to show the world what real courage was, courage built on faith in God and trust in mankind.

There is a vacuum at the moment, bridged by much speculation of what will happen as a consequence of the Dallas Crime. We look to America, to Russia, to China, and we sit back uneasily and wait.

But Kennedy has left a spiritual legacy which concerns us all, and every one of us has a moral obligation to see that it is not dissipated. If anything good is to come at all of this tragedy, something must be done and not only in the world at large or in America. We are far from the New Europe President Kennedy visualised when he visited the Old Continent last July — “Dynamic, Diverse, Democratic”. Much is far from perfect in our homeland, there is considerable scope for improvement in our Colony here, much is left to be desired in our own personal environment and within ourselves.

The year ahead will not be an easy one, not for the world, not for Europe, Switzerland, the Colony, you, me. We shall all need faith and courage to carry on. Few of us can achieve great deeds, but wherever we have been put according to God's wise and eternal plan we have our part to play, and He will guide us if we let Him. Often it is in little things, in daily drudgery, in frustration and defeat that it is most difficult to remember this and to muster courage. But the example of the great man whose untimely death we mourn should spur us on. Did he not say on the threshold of his presidency well nigh three

years ago “*In the long history of the world, only a few generations have been granted the role of defending freedom in its hour of maximum danger. I do not shrink from this responsibility; I welcome it. I do not believe that any of us would exchange places with any other people or any other generation. The energy, the faith, the devotion which we bring to this endeavour will light our country and all who serve it, and the glow from that fire can truly light the world*”?

Each of us can bring energy, faith and devotion to his or her own individual endeavour, and with God's help the glow may be strong enough to light up a corner, a patch, a place somewhere for the common good. We may, after all, spend Christmas in a happier frame of mind and truly rejoice in the birth of Christ. John Kennedy never pronounced his last speech which he had intended to make in Dallas and in which he was going to counsel the combination of strength with wisdom and restraint so that we could in our time and for all times fulfil the old vision of PEACE ON EARTH AND GOODWILL AMONG MANKIND.

That, after all, is the Christmas message of old which holds good for all times to come.

IT HAPPENED IN THE CANTON OF FRIBOURG

The thought of the Canton of Fribourg immediately conjures up picturesque costumes, bearded herdsmen, the historic town of Murten, the Castle of Gruyères and the modern Roman Catholic University. Indeed, all this is part of it, but it is not all. The Canton has its financial and political problems like any other. The Cantonal Parliament had busy sessions in February, May and November. As in other Cantons, the building of the national highway makes heavy demands on the treasury. The Canton has to contribute ten per cent of the cost of purchasing land for the construction of the “Route Nationale” on Fribourg ground. Early in the year, water pollution was on the agenda, and a further grant towards the thirteen million franc project of a water purification plant was made. An interesting aspect of Fribourg is the vast number of very small Communes. Out of 284 political units, only 29 have more than one thousand inhabitants; 219 have fewer than five hundred, and of these 46 have not even one hundred. This means that many are unable to afford undertakings necessary to a flourishing community life. This is why federations of Communes have been created, which will enable better provision.

The Canton's accounts for 1962 showed a small surplus, whilst the budget for the coming year envisages a deficit of about two and a half million francs (income nearly 90m., expenditure 92½m.).

As President of the Government for 1964, the Director of Finances, Mr. Théo Ayer was elected.

In the field of communications, it may be interesting to learn that La Gruyère has now an airfield, and that the Schiffenen Bridge which was built about a hundred years ago, has been blown up by Army units. This exercise was watched by several high officers and the chief of the Military Department, Federal Councillor Chaudet. The bridge had been damaged and would in any case have disappeared in the damming up of the Sarine near Schiffenen. The new road leads across the dam, which connects the Sense Valley with the Lake District.

The new highway at Murten will bypass the quaint townlet in future to the delight of all its friends. The Fribourg trams have proved that favourably priced season

tickets could increase the number of tram and trolley bus users as well as improve the balance sheet.

The “Freiburger Nachrichten” have celebrated their centenary, and in May there was a meeting in Fribourg of representatives of Poles living in Switzerland, prior to celebrating the millennium of the Christianisation of Poland.

October was a busy month for special events in Fribourg. The second *Comptoir* of Fribourg, which had been opened by the former Federal Councillor Bourgnicht on 27th September, closed its doors on 7th October after having admitted 51,800 visitors. The *Comptoir* is a representative show of Fribourg arts, crafts and trades. A week later the “Fédération Romande des Employées” met for their annual delegates' assembly, and the following week-end Fribourg University was host to the Swiss Press Association. Finally, it was the Swiss Federation for Forestry which chose Fribourg as venue for its A.G.M.

Folklore is very much alive in that part of the country, and 650 members of the Cantonal Costume Association met at Bulle as well as 25,000 onlookers. There were striking costumes from all seven districts of the Canton, and folkdancing and singing played a prominent part in the rally. Earlier in the summer, Murten held its traditional youth festival and shooting contest, and Swiss fife-players and drummers congregated in Fribourg for their contest.

A “Pro Gruyère” foundation has been started which aims at renovating the beautiful old townlet and the Castle. The “Heimatschutz” organisation, the equivalent to the National Trust in Great Britain, is supporting the venture financially, and the whole of Switzerland contributed through the “Talerspende”, the sale of chocolate coins in aid of a particular object which is to be preserved.

The Wistenlach has been declared a protected zone. It is believed to be the continuation of the Vaudois Jura range which has become detached through the erosion of the Broye Valley. Moraine deposits give an indication of glacier movements, and in 1907 one of these erratic blocks was named “Agassiz Block” after the well-known natural scientist who grew up in the vicarage of Môtier