

It happened in the Canton of the Grisons

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IT HAPPENED IN THE CANTON OF THE GRISONS

On 20th February 1938, the Swiss people, with such a large majority as to make it nearly unanimous, accepted Raeto-Romansh as fourth national language. This was not only an expression of affinity and sympathy with the comparatively small group of Swiss nationals, their beautiful old culture and attractive idiom, but also a demonstration for the free order of the Swiss political system, which considered the mother tongue of all citizens. As Federal Councillor Tschudi expressed in his official address at the silver jubilee of this event in February last year, never in the whole history of Switzerland was the attempt made to interfere with the freedom of language. The fact that the Swiss electorate agreed to the idiom of a mere one percent of the population becoming a national language showed great appreciation of human and cultural values. The plebiscite took place at a time when the principle of equal rights was violated in some neighbouring countries, and the decision by the Swiss electorate made a deep impression above all with ethnical minorities.

The admission of Raeto-Romansh into the rank of national language greatly stimulated the "Quarta Lingua", and new literature was published, especially dictionaries and reference books. The "Lia Rumantscha", umbrella organisation of all Raeto-Romansh activities, continues to be active under its new President Dr. med.vet. Pierin Ratti (Maloja). The travelling exhibition "Veta-Cultura-Lingua" on life and culture in the Romansh Grisons went outside the Canton for the first time last November. Its first choice was Zurich. There is a new culture and art centre in Chur, where, on the occasion of re-opening the Hotel "Duc de Rohan", the Municipality exhibited drawings, paintings and mosaics by well-known Grisons artists, which had been purchased during the past three years. Davos showed water colours and drawings by Grisons artists (Cariget, Giacometti, Meisser, Pedretti, Pellegrini, etc.) until 6th May. In January, the season at the Chur Municipal Theatre opened with the *première* of "Santa Cruz" by Max Frisch. The citizens of Chur accepted a proposal by 1,979 to 1,307 votes to increase the present subsidy to the theatre (Fr.60,000.—) by a further Fr.20,000.— if necessary.

Earlier in the year, the town's citizens accepted the new tax proposals which provide for more liberal tax-free allowances. Davos accepted the budget for 1964 in December, and they agreed to the present rate of tax of 2.8%. At a Commune Assembly of St. Moritz the balanced budget for 1964 was accepted — just over five million francs income and expenditure each. At the same meeting it was stated that every sixth landowner in the St. Moritz area was domiciled abroad.

The Grisons electorate had to go to the poll three times within two months. On 26th April, the Canton had to vote on the new building and planning Bill which was accepted by 9,443 to 6,278 votes. The second subject was the proposed joining of the concordat for the erection of an agricultural technical college at Zollikofen (Berne) — also accepted by 9,951 to 5,935 votes. Finally, the Canton agreed (12,665: 3,420) to a contribution towards the building cost of the home for epileptics in Zurich.

On 24th May, the electors rejected the plans for a partial revision of the penal procedure by 7,797 to 7,061 votes. On 21st June, the electorate accepted the total revision of the cantonal tax laws by 10,512 to 4,615 votes. This revision realises the change from separate property and earned income taxes to a general income tax.

Chur citizens accepted the proposed revision of the municipal constitution and the credit for the project of the hydroelectric plant (Plessurwerk) Arosa. Last September, the new power plant Hinterrhein-Valle di Lei became operational. The whole project cost 620 million francs, shared by nine partners including an Italian company as the Valle di Lei is on Italian territory. The Malans Commune Assembly agreed unanimously to a half a million credit for the extension of the Landquart water works.

Building in the Grisons as elsewhere in Switzerland has been flourishing. In 1945, private and public building amounted to 22.05 million francs. By 1958 it had risen to 239,811 million, and in 1961 it reached 371,517 million francs. Building had thus developed into one of the most important pillars of Grisons economy. Amongst important projects of recent months are the extension of the Cantonal Hospital and the new building of the Cantonal School in Chur. Even a small commune like Cazis granted 1.9 million francs for a new school house.

Growing numbers of European mountain resorts are today building artificial ice rinks. These not only make skaters independent of the whims of the weather but also permit the season to be prolonged well into the spring. Davos has even gone a step further: by covering its ice rink with a sun net it has found a way of keeping the rink open in the summer season, and this in spite of the intense radiation for which the resort is noted. The refrigerating output of over one million kcal/h which is needed for operating the rink in all seasons was supplied by two Sulzer compressors. Other interesting features of this installation are its fully automatic operation, which ensures constant ice quality, and the use of piles to support the rink and stand.

Road construction in the Grisons will amount to 105 million francs in 1964, nearly half of it for national highways. The "Kleine Rat" has objected to the authorities in Berne that the three hundred million francs needed for the Gotthard road tunnel necessitated the construction of several roads on Grisons territory to be put back. St. Moritz it to have a by-pass. Celerina rejected the plan which proposes its own by-pass to lead through the green zone between the village and the hill of San Gian. A committee is studying the proposed road tunnel through the Splügen. It is interesting to note that traffic accidents in the Grisons went down in 1963 by 3.73%. Chur showed the largest number of accidents, followed by the route Landquart-Davos. The reduction in the total number of accidents may be attributed to the exceptionally cold winter and cool summer with the corresponding drop in visitors. Statistics for the year show that Grisons would be capable of housing nearly double the number of visitors there were in 1963.

The "Rhaetische Bahn", on the other hand, showed an increase of traffic receipts of 6.2% against 1962. In September, the new tunnel through the Klus (Prätigau) was opened. In January, the new aerial cableway from Lenzerheide/Valbella to the Parpaner Rothorn (9,550 feet) was inaugurated.

The cantonal accounts for 1963 show a deficit of over eight million francs (206,299 million expenditure and 198.18 million francs income), road construction in particular weighing heavily on the negative results. The government and cantonal Parliament dealt with problems ranging from water pollution and civil defence to increased subsidies to the Cantonal Hospital (whose financial position

is precarious) and other institutions. They also dealt with applications for citizenship and increased allowances to M.P.s.

There is now an evening technical college in Chur. It was opened on 23rd April. The need for such an institution had been felt for some time, and the "Vereinigung für ein Abendtechnikum Chur" was founded some ten months ago. Well over a hundred individual and collective members, together with interested organisations and communes, put up the necessary capital. One of the aims of the founders has already been reached — twenty young men decided not to emigrate, but to remain in the Grisons and to study at the college in the evenings while working in day time. The municipal Parliament of Chur decided to employ five more teachers in the primary school; they had become necessary on account of the increased number of school children. The Evangelical school of Schiers/Samedan is to be further enlarged. In April, the first training hotel of the Swiss association of hotel keepers was opened at the Hôtel du Midi at Davos. Over a hundred apprentices have six weeks' theoretical training before being assigned to various hotels. In the autumn they return for further theoretical training.

After the International Working Congress of Practical Medicine, organised by the German Chamber of Doctors, had held its meetings at Davos early in March, the same venue was used for a symposium on medicine a week later. Over a hundred doctors and scientists took part. The subject was "Spättypusüberempfindlichkeit" (The Editor hopes readers will forgive her for not attempting to translate!) Davos was also the place chosen for a meeting of international experts on agrarian meteorology. Of a less scientific and more every-day aspect was the eighth HIGA, the exhibition on commerce, industry and trade, which was held in Chur early in May. Chur, incidentally, showed a population of 26,743 inhabitants on 31st December last, 942 more than the previous year.

Two avalanches caused the loss of human lives, one in the Val Saluver where a film was being made, the other ten days later on the Lukmanier Pass. The avalanche experts of the International Commission for Alpine Rescue met at Scuol last September and decided to launch a campaign "Check to Avalanche Deaths" in all alpine countries (Germany, France, Italy, Austria, Yugoslavia and Switzerland). The Federal Institute for Snow and Avalanche Research made an appeal to people living in districts prone to hailstorms to collect large hailstones. These should be packed in plastic bags and kept in a refrigerator until the institute on the Weissfluhjoch above Davos could collect them, all expenses refunded.

On the Piz Corvatsch there is now a new TV relay transmitter. This made it possible for the first time in March to transmit a live show "Heute Abend in Celerina" to the North of the Alps.

News has just come of the film based on the well-known children's book "Schellen Urseli" by Selina Choenz. This is being made in the most beautiful parts of the Grisons by Swiss artists.

Finally some Church news: The Evangelical Grand Council of the Grisons has voted cost-of-living grants to clergy. The Protestant parish assembly of Schiers granted a contribution towards the building of a new Catholic church. The old school building of Praez (Thusis), which houses the vicarage, the kindergarten and the mill, was

gutted by fire at the end of April. The Anglican Church at Davos, founded in 1882, now has its own vicarage. This was inaugurated by the Lord Bishop of Fulham on 13th June.

(Based on news received by A.T.S. and Sulzer Technical Review)

RECENT DEATHS IN SWITZERLAND

The following deaths have been reported from Switzerland recently:

Max Lienert (61), director of music, Lucerne.

Madame Adeline Bonvin (83), Crans, mother of Federal Councillor Bonvin.

Marcel-Georges Pasche (68), Lausanne, one of the pioneers of aviation in the Canton of Vaud.

Marcel Berberat (42), La Chaux-de-Fonds, teacher, president of the Socialist Party of the Canton of Neuchâtel.

A. Keuerleber (84), Basle, journalist and publisher of the "Basler Anzeiger", "Basler Zeitung", "Basler Woche", and director of the printing works "Zum Hirzen".

Arthur Laubscher (85), Taeuffelen (Berne), politician.

Albert Marfurt (68), Lucerne, well-known magician known as Marfini.

Dr. Ernest Gloor (71), Renens, former President of the Commune of Renens, National Councillor; for several years Vice-President of the International Red Cross Committee.

Prof. Ernst Laur (93), Effingen (Aargau), often called the "Farmers' King"; he studied agronomy at the ETH in Zurich and in Leipzig and later developed the Swiss Farmers' Secretariat at Brugg, whose director he was from 1898 to 1939. He wrote many books on farming, a number of which have been translated into foreign languages. From 1903 to 1937 he was lecturer at the ETH in Zurich. He received seven honorary doctorates and was made an honorary member of forty-six scientific and economic institutions in Switzerland and abroad. A memorial service was held at Brugg (Stadtkirche). Apart from many personalities, Federal Councillor Wahlen spoke as former student, as friend and as representative of the government.

Eugen Meyer (70), Zurich, chairman of the board of the "Genossenschaftsdruckerei Zurich", publisher of the daily paper "Volksrecht".

Otto Bartel-Hefti (88), Glarus, historian, owner of the printing firm of the same name and publisher of the Liberal "Neuer Glarner Zeitung".

Dr. iur. Alphons Iten (66), Zug, trade union leader and politician; Councillor of States from 1935 to 1950.

Dr. Willy Tuerler (70), Basle, former teacher and co-headmaster of the "Mädchengymnasium"; colonel in the Swiss Army, commanding the Basle Territorial Regiment 73 during the second world war.

André Renaud (60), Lausanne, explorer, well-known glacier expert, teacher of physics and chemistry at the "Collège de la Mercerie".

Emil Bodenmann (46), Herisau; editor of the "Appenzeller Zeitung" and correspondent for many years of the Agence Télégraphique Suisse.

Othmar Fretz (63), Geneva, director of an important transport firm; in charge of imports through Spain and France during the war.

[A.T.S.]