

The "Swiss Observer" thirty years ago

Objektyp: **Group**

Zeitschrift: **The Swiss observer : the journal of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK**

Band (Jahr): - **(1965)**

Heft 1480

PDF erstellt am: **26.09.2024**

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THE "SWISS OBSERVER" THIRTY YEARS AGO

On 4th May 1935, we read in the S.O. that Lord Beaverbrook had travelled by Swissair for a ten-day trip to France and Spain, using a Douglas aircraft piloted by the famous Swiss airman Walter Mittelholzer. In the same issue we learned that the Swiss accounts for the previous year had shown a deficit of 26 million francs. The news of the London Colony included a report on the "Old Friends" Dinner at the Union Helvetia.

On 11th May, we read that the President of the Swiss Confederation had sent a congratulatory telegram to Their Majesties King George V and Queen Mary on their Silver Jubilee. Special services were held at the Swiss Churches in London in honour of Their Majesties. News in that issue was published of the Swiss electorate rejecting the proposal that long distance haulage of freight should be confined to the railways. The Swiss Bank Rate had been raised from $\frac{1}{2}$ to $2\frac{1}{2}$ %. Federal Councillor Obrecht had taken up his post. At a meeting of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique in London, the so-called Crisis Initiative had been discussed. And there was an eye-witness account (in German) by Mr. Gottfried Keller on the Silver Jubilee Thanksgiving Service at St. Paul's Cathedral.

On 18th May, a report appeared on a meeting at which the financial and economic position of Switzerland was discussed by the Government, representatives from all Cantons, banking and financial circles; it had been decided that the currency based on gold should be maintained. Diplomatic news was of Monsieur B. de Fischer's appointment as Attaché at the Hague, of Monsieur W. Ruefenacht's transfer from London to Berne and of Monsieur Rezzonico's return to London. An English view on the "Kriseninitiative" was reproduced from the "Statist", called "a dangerous experiment".

The last issue in May brought news of improvement in the watch industry and a further instalment on "Auslandschweizer in Gefahr" by Dr. G. Schuerch, and more about the campaign against the Crisis Initiative, this time in French.

The issue of 1st June carried a page and a third (twice today's size) about the Swiss Sports at Herne Hill, which had once again been a great success. Another report was of the Swiss Colony in Dublin.

The second issue of June 1935 had the results of the Swiss Referendum on the Crisis Initiative: 425,673 yes and 567,624 no, with a participation of 84%, and with this the proposed temporary amendment to the Constitution was rejected. Two Swiss citizens had been arrested by the Nazis in Germany.

The issue of 15th June was the sixteenth anniversary number. It had a birthday message by "Kyburg", one of the S.O.'s loyal contributors. And there were several Swiss folk songs translated into English by "Gallus", our late Mr. Willy Deutsch. An article was published on Swissair's "New High Speed Liners" by their Flight Captain Walther Ackermann. It also had an article in German by Walter Mittelholzer "Morgenflug ueber die Alpen" and one by the Editor on "Swissair Machines over London". The issue was richly illustrated on art paper and was twice its usual size, including some giant advertisements.

The news from Switzerland in the issue of 22nd June was not so good: Unemployment at the end of May 1935 had risen by nearly 23,000; Swiss exports were down. On the other hand, Switzerland was to take part in the Olympic Games in Berlin that summer, the Council of States having overruled the negative decision of the National Council,

and the credit for Fr.38,000.— was re-introduced into the federal budget. A new law had been passed by Parliament and come into force immediately, providing for penalties for the betrayal of official secrets.

There was also an article on "A famous Swiss bookshop" (A. Francke, Berne), and a report with photograph of a Civic Reception by the Mayor of Cambridge to staff and students of the College of the Swiss Mercantile Society. At the latter's Monthly Meeting, the President Mr. A. Steinmann, on behalf of the Society, "presented Mr. W. Meier, Chairman of the Education Committee, and Mrs. Meier, with a beautiful wedding gift in the form of a cut glass liqueur service. The newly wed were cordially received by the meeting, and suitable words were spoken." (*The Editor would like to say that not one of the glasses has as yet been broken, and she remembers the "suitable" words almost verbatim!*)

The last issue in June thirty years ago brought news of an increase in the Swiss gold reserve and a rise in import duties on various goods. The American company General Motors had decided to establish a car assembling plant in Bienne. The University of Basle had offered Prof. Karl Barth an appointment on his retirement from Bonn University decreed by the German Government.

In an advertisement by the City Swiss Club announcing their *Réunion d'Eté* at Brent Bridge Hotel, tickets were 6/6 including dinner and dance and could be had from the S.O. Publisher, Mr. P. F. Boehringer. The summer outing of the Unione Ticinese was reported as a great success, three score and more going on a coach trip to Essex on the hottest day of the year. Mr. Gottfried Keller reviewed a Swiss film called "Abyssinia" shown in London, and there was a report on "Sir Arnold Theiler honoured by his compatriots in South Africa". In a letter to the Editor, the President of the N.S.H. in London, Mr. A. F. Suter commented on the special issue of 15th June. He thought that the Colony at times underrated the value of the S.O. and should give it more support. (*Times have not really changed — these words might be uttered today.*)

A 1200th ANNIVERSARY

The village of Mels is, in area, the largest community in Canton St. Gallen — nearly as large as the entire Canton Zug. During this Year of the Alps, 1965, Mels is celebrating its 120th birthday! The village was mentioned for the first time in history in the will and testament of Bishop Tello of Coire on 15th December 765; in that document, the ownership of "Maile" (Mels) was transferred to the Disentis Monastery. The community, which now numbers some 6,000 inhabitants, has been preparing for its unusual jubilee for more than a year, by making ready a production of the jubilee-play "The Legacy", written by Mels citizen Alexander Good. Some 450 local players will take part in this dramatization of the twelfth-century history of the village. The first performance will be held on Sunday, 27th June, at 9 p.m., and six repeat performances are planned during June and July. The outdoor theatre has 3,500 seats, and parking facilities for more than 1,000 cars. Mels is located close to the important railway junction of Sargans, on the international Zurich-Vienna line. It serves as the gateway to the wild, romantic Weisstannen Valley.

[S.N.T.O.]