

# It happend in Central Switzerland, The Valais and Geneva

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## IT HAPPENED IN CENTRAL SWITZERLAND, THE VALAIS AND GENEVA

### URI

The Uri people are extremely individualistic, and this mark goes back to the time of international traffic across the Gotthard. This famous pass is still of great importance. Unfortunately, modern motorised traffic has its drawbacks and dangers, too; in 1965, of the total 417 road accidents, 333 happened on the Gotthard road between Sisikon and Hospenthal, and "only" forty on the other pass roads (Klausen, Susten, Oberalp, Furka and Gotthard from Hospenthal).

For the first time in Switzerland, a railway company has constructed a fully biological water purification plant in the mountain side: Gurschenalp (2,200m.) is the site, and at the same time, a restaurant and inn have been built.

In January, there were several avalanches in the Urseren Valley, and a landslide happened above Isleten and another threatened Bauen.

An old lady left a legacy of Fr.166,000.— to the poorest of the twenty Communes in Uri, which had to be determined by the Uri Government. This is the little mountain village of Unterschaechen with only 630 inhabitants.

In 1962, precious Celtic ornaments were found near Erstfeld. It has now been arranged with the Department of the Interior that the rare valuable finds will remain the property of Uri, but will be lent to the "Landesmuseum".

When Daetwyler A.G., the largest private industry in the Canton, celebrated its Golden Jubilee, the Adolf Daetwyler-Gamma Foundation was created with a capital of a million francs. Half that sum will be at the disposal of the Canton for an additional section to the *Kollegium* for matriculation and commercial training, including facilities for girls. The firm also builds a kindergarden at Aldorf, to be given to the Commune.

The third part of the renovation of the Cantonal Hospital was completed in January. The administration of the Canton, which has been housed in thirteen different buildings, is to have a new centre, according to plans accepted by the electorate. The value of property (for tax purposes) has more than doubled in the Canton since 1949. The accounts for 1965 ended with a small deficit, but the budget for this year estimates a loss of 6.8 million francs, which caused considerable debate in the *Landrat*.

### SCHWYZ

The Schwyz accounts ended with a net surplus of 186 million francs, and the budget shows a deficit of nearly 4½% mio. The sum spent on administrative and teaching staff has gone up by 75% in six years.

The *Kantonschemiker* of Central Switzerland, Dr. Melchior Betschart, has retired, having served since 1935. His successor is Dr. Yvo Siegwart from Freiburg. Public spending in the Canton will amount to 13.5 million francs (water purification, four school buildings, civil defence). Road construction will cost 25½ million francs in 1966, of which the Confederation will bear 92%.

A reduction of 3.9% in foreign workers was registered over twelve months. A restaurant for every hundred inhabitants is the verdict for the Canton, with Einsiedeln

holding the record of 126, or one per 70 inhabitants!

The Male Choir "Frohsinn" of **Brunnen** celebrated its centenary. On 9th December, the *Ewige Bund von Brunnen* of 1315 was commemorated. The Manager of the Tourist Office absconded with over Fr.50,000.—.

Various welfare and religious institutions at **Kuessnacht** received a legacy of nearly half a million francs from Mrs. Babette Bregenzer-Ulrich. The civil defence emergency hospital of **Lachen** has been completed. The *Pfarrkirche* and the Chapel "Im Ried" are to be renovated. A new school for vocational training will be opened at **Pfaeffikon**. The Commune of **Schwyz**, too, has school problems: today, 72 school rooms are sufficient, but by 1975, 120 will be needed. Five more graves from the thirteenth or fourteenth century have been discovered during the renovation of the St. Martins Church, one of them a priest's tomb. The Commune of **Tuggen** have granted a 1½ million-franc credit for a centre to comprise a gymnasium, kindergarden, school rooms, military accommodation, stores and a flat.

### OBWALDEN

Shall the "Landsgemeinde" of Obwalden be abolished or improved? An Initiative for the former and a motion for the latter plan have been brought forward. Obwalden, too, estimates a loss for 1966. Foreign workers showed a marked increase over the past year, but this was mainly due to a strong influx after the earthquake, and new figures should be lower again.

Although the Canton is over 95% R.C., a Protestant has been elected into the Educational Council of five members.

In November, it was 150 years since **Engelberg** joined the Canton of Obwalden. In record time of fifteen minutes, the electoral assembly of **Kerns** voted 1½ million francs for enlarging the school building. A similar sum was voted by the R.C. Commune of **Sarnen** for a new church of Kaegiswil.

### NIDWALDEN

In October, an extraordinary "Landsgemeinde" was held at Wil/Stans to deal with the revision of the Cantonal Constitution. Other projects accepted concerned housing and afforestation. The budget for 1966 estimates 1½ million francs on the debit side in the ordinary and a loss of 2.4 mio in the extraordinary accounts (road improvements, new building for the Cantonal Hospital and waste water plants).

At the end of the year, Hergiswil voters granted over 8 million francs for waste water plants and water supplies.

### LUCERNE

Extension of the Cantonal Hospital of Lucerne, water protection, civil defence, housing, education and road construction will be responsible for an estimated deficit of over 24½ million francs in the special accounts, whereas ordinary income and expenditure should show a loss of 3½ mio.

A proposal has been submitted in the Cantonal Parliament for the introduction of votes for women. The new

President of the *Grosser Rat* is the Christian/Socialist Anton Vonwyl.

Over 4½ million francs have been voted for twelve purchases of land and property for the Canton. 300 million francs will be the final cost of national road construction on Lucerne territory, and an Initiative was launched to improve matters on a constitutional basis. Water protection and waste water plants are being constructed or planned in many Communes, and special measures have been taken to protect the lakes.

A 202 million-franc project has been submitted for a hospital building (*Kantonale Krankenanstalt*). The new Chief Surgeon at the Cantonal Hospital is Dr. med. Bruno Paul Vogt.

An Initiative has been lodged with more than enough signatures asking for a Protestant Church organisation in the Canton. A similar demand has been made to introduce a R.C. Church Synod. The Culture Prize of Central Switzerland has been awarded to the R.C. theologian Dr. Otto Karrer for his work, both religious and cultural, in the service of interdenominational understanding.

A serious land slide happened in the **Entlebuch** on 24th February. A new factory was opened at **Hochdorf**, manufacturing "Heliomalt", a well-known milk drink.

**Lucerne** celebrated its traditional carnival, beginning in January with the election of the new "Fritschivater", Rudolf Stocker. The Church of St. Peter (Kapellkirche), the oldest church still extant in the city, has been subjected to intensive renovation both of the interior and the exterior during 1965. The church, which was founded in 1178 and today stands as a decorative baroque edifice, provided up to 1798 the setting for parliamentary sessions including Federal Diets. It was in this church, too, that in 1476 the booty from the Burgundy Wars was laid out and divided among the members of the Confederacy.

The top classes of the Secondary School for Girls are to be extended and to be formed into the *Töchterchule* of Lucerne. The Swiss Transport Museum showed a record number of 330,000 visitors in 1965. The Co-operative Society celebrated its 75th anniversary.

**Marbach** inaugurated its new school building, and **St. Urban's** Abbey Church celebrated its 250th anniversary. The Chief Surgeon of the **Sursee** Hospital Dr. **Roman Burri**, will retire during 1966; he will be succeeded by Dr. Lukas Nietlisbach from Aarau.

## ZUG

The annual accounts of Zug, too, would be nearly balanced, were it not for heavy expenditure (road construction, hospital and school buildings, etc.) which caused a deficit in the extraordinary accounts of 1.8 million francs. The budget estimates a balanced picture in the ordinary accounts, but for the same reasons, a loss of 5.6 mio francs is predicted in the extraordinary accounts. Water protection, too, is a concern of the authorities. Foreign workers have decreased by 2.1% as compared with the previous year.

At the end of the year, the first ski lift in the Canton was opened at Raten-Gottschalkenberg. On 1st January, the "Zuger Volksblatt" became the "Zuger Tagblatt", with a daily issue instead of one three times a week.

A new traffic and road plan for Zug and district has been accepted.

## GLARUS

Half a million francs is the estimated deficit in the accounts for 1966. For years, a loss was forecast every

time, but since 1958, the cantonal accounts have always closed with a surplus. A project (2 million francs) for the renovation of the Glarus Court of Justice has been submitted to the Cantonal authorities to be dealt with at the next "Landsgemeinde". The new Police Commandant is Captain Linus Huber; hitherto, the Police Corps was commanded by a Lieutenant.

The new Clerk of the Council is Dr. iur. Jakob Brauchli in succession to Dr. Ernst Heer. The staff of the Cantonal Hospital are to have houses specially to be built.

The power works of Linth-Limmern A.G. were officially opened in the autumn. The "receptacle" for most of the Glarus waste water is the Walensee, and as this, too, is suffering more and more from pollution, several plants will have to be constructed in the Canton. 60 million francs will be needed, including refuse incineration.

The Synod of the Protestant Church decided to allow women ministers to take up positions in the Church. The late Albert Bremicker from Schwaendi who lived in Milan, left Fr.300,000.— to his Commune and Canton.

## VALAIS

The celebrations to mark the 150th anniversary of the Canton's entry into the Confederation which were postponed due to the catastrophe at Mattmark, will be held on 11th/12th June. In the meantime, carnival has been held in many parts, and even "The Times" carried pictures of the Pre-Lenten merrymaking in the Val d'Hérens. The formerly famous carnival festivities of Maritgny have had to be stopped due to lack of performers. The funds left over have recently been distributed to welfare organisations and the Red Cross.

A "Confrérie des Vignerons-Encaveurs" has been founded in the Valais. A record figure of 42 million litres of wines was reached in last year's production, 7.7 million kilograms of tomatoes, an average yield for apricots with 4,600 tons, 2,000 tons of strawberries, and a record of 3.6 million kilos of cauliflower.

The barrage for the powerworks of Gries in the Aegidental was completed in autumn. The thermic powerworks of Chavalon near Vouvy became part-operational in December. The Theodul cableway was officially inaugurated in February. After an avalanche destroyed part of Zermatt station, and caused considerable damage to property, a large landslide happened between St. Leonard and Sion in February. The Simplon line and the main road were completely blocked, and rock had to be blasted in order to shift the mass of earth and stone. The Loetschental, too, was cut off by an avalanche, and several earth tremors were registered in the last week of February.

The Valais Parliament agreed to buy an electronic calculator for the administration — the first proposal had been rejected by the electorate. A subsidy to the Technical College in Lucerne was again granted, so that Valais students would be able to study there at the same conditions as local youth. The new Manager of the Valais Cantonal Bank is National Councillor Adolphe Travelletti, lawyer in Sion.

The budget for 1966 estimates revenue at 236 and expenditure at 252 million francs, the latter being 11% more than in 1965. Proposals have been submitted to study the possibility of granting the vote to women in cantonal matters. A woman candidate was put up last year for the Cantonal Parliament, a descendant of the famous Stockalper, and in the little Commune of Unter-



baech, an enquiry was made some time ago trying to find out if the woman wanted the vote — the answer was in the affirmative, which was a surprise to many who consider the Upper Valais as somewhat reactionary.

On the occasion of the 150th anniversary of the Canton's entry into the Confederation, a partial amnesty is being granted to all prisoners. The "Walliser Bote" is 125 years old, the oldest of all the papers in the Valais, followed by the "Le Confédéré" of 105 years.

The town of **Brig** was 750 years old last summer, and special festivities took place. A month later, another Matthaues Schiner was born, the latest descendant of the famous statesman and Cardinal who lived five centuries ago. At **Chamoson**, a home for old people is being built at the initiative of private people, but the Canton has granted a subsidy. The citizens of **Fully** had to go to the poll again; some irregularities had been discovered after the elections in the previous year. The decision was made by the Federal Tribunal.

**Leuk** celebrated its 1,450th anniversary in December, and at **Leytron**, the old elm (500-700 years of age) was cut down in October, believed to be the oldest tree in Switzerland. At **Raron**, a group has been founded under the patronage of Federal Councillor Tschudi with the aim of conserving the castle. **St. Maurice**, too, can look back on 1,450 years, its Abbey was founded by King Sigismund of the Burgundians, though a church had been there since about 360 A.D. when the Bishop of Octodurum had it built at the grave of St. Mauritius.

**Sion** is to have a new stadium, and a large milk collection centre was opened in November. The Cantonal Parliament has agreed to make a contribution toward road construction in the **Zermatt** Valley. Zermatt has its problems regarding the finances of the annual international Gornergrat Ski Derby.

## GENEVA

The budget for 1966 of the Canton of Geneva estimates a loss of  $\frac{1}{2}$  million francs, revenue expected of 411 mio. The new Council of State consists of two Socialists (André Chavanne and Willy Donze), two Independent/Christian/Socialists (André Ruffieux and Jean Babel), two Radicals (Henri Schmitt and Gilbert Duboule) and one Liberal (François Peyrot). Messrs. Chavanne, Ruffieux and Peyrot have been re-elected. In the Cantonal Parliament, there are now 17 Indep./Chr./Socialists (-4), 22 Radicals (-5), 15 Liberals (-5), 20 Socialists (+2), 16 Workers' Party (+2), 10 "Vigilants" (new). The Liberal Louis Berguer was elected President in succession to the first woman President of a Cantonal Parliament Madame Emma Kammacher.

In 1965, 6,400 dwellings were built in the Canton of Geneva, as against 4,500 in 1964. Over the next few years, plans for public works are to cost over 116 million francs. Geneva students protested in November against lack of suitable rooms and amenities; they will be pleased to learn that the authorities are considering the matter. The newly created Schmidheiny Foundation will support scientific work and finance research activities of the various faculties.

"Geneva, Crossroads of the Nations" is the title of the latest in the "Swiss Cities and Landscapes" picture-book series published by *Editions Générales* in Geneva. This is certainly true, and the Cointrin Airport is being enlarged again; this time it is a new building for the technical

services. Nearly a million and a half used the Airport in 1965. The Foundation in charge of buildings for international organisations has allocated the 45 million francs received from the Federal Parliament to two new buildings, one for EFTA, the other for conference halls and a Press Centre. In December, celebrations took place when the United Nations Organisation reached its twentieth anniversary. New buildings have also been opened by the *Société des Ports Francs et Entrepôts de Genève S.A.*

*Radio Genève* celebrated its fortieth anniversary, and the "Messenger Social" its Golden Jubilee. The wine harvest, at 12,011,000 litres, showed an increase of 20% over the previous year.

The Commune Council of the town of Geneva decided to build blocks of flats with subterranean garages in Servette at the cost of 17.7 million francs. In October, the Rotary Club was forty years old, and the same week, the *Beau Séjour Hospital* was opened. The *Temple de la Fustérie* celebrated its 250th anniversary, and at the same time, Hungarian Weeks were held in Geneva. In November, the new organ of the Cathedral was inaugurated, and the Henry Dunant Institute was founded following the decision taken by the three main Red Cross institutions on the occasion of the centenary of the Red Cross. In December, the Hotel Beau Rivage was auctioned for over 14 million francs.

In February, "Motorola Semiconductor Products Inc." opened the European Centre for Customer Service. Early in March, the first international congress devoted to the science of manufacturing matter was opened, and Polish Gastronomic Weeks were held in Geneva.

*(Based on news received by courtesy of Agence Télégraphique Suisse.)*

## CATASTROPHE IN THE TICINO

In 1963, the Maggia Power Works Company began to build a power plant (pump reservoir) at Robiei (Basodino). The inside gallery which extends from the Bedretto Valley to Robiei, is 11 km. long. On account of wintery conditions, the site is at present closed, but in view of the impending return of the workmen, the management arranged, in Mid-February, for three experts to go into the tunnel in order to open the ventilation shafts, as bad air had been discovered. When they did not return, alarm was sounded, but the rescue party found them dead. At the same time, a working party at the Bedretto Valley end of the gallery were killed either by poisonous fumes which had developed or because of a vacuum caused by the air being pumped out of the tunnel.

Rescue operations by the *Festungswacht* Company 18 of Airolo resulted in the recovery of the seventeen bodies.

The funeral services took place in Locarno and at Airolo on 18th February. The authorities have expressed sympathy to the families of the victims, both Italians and Swiss. Money has been donated in many places to assist the bereaved relatives.

On 22nd February, the workmen on the highest sites in the Bavona Valley were recalled on account of heavy snowfall. They came down to Robiei where they were surprised by an avalanche. Fortunately, the five men could be rescued from under the deep snow by a team of sixty with a dog.

A third accident happened the same day at Robiei when two building huts were destroyed by fire.

[A.T.S.]