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In many parts of the world where Easter is celebrated, old customs are adhered to which have little if anything to do with Christian beliefs. The Easter egg has a special place. In Switzerland it is generally believed that the Easter rabbit brings the coloured eggs. But from the "Atlas der Schweizerischen Volkskunde" founded by Paul Geiger and Richard Weiss in 1950 (Eugen Rentsch Verlag) may be seen that the cuckoo is bunny's great rival in Central Switzerland. A strange belief is upheld in a few districts in the North-West where the church bells are supposed to bring the eggs. As they don't ring from Maundy Thursday to Easter Sunday in the R.C. churches, the children think that they have gone to Rome whence they return on Easter Day and shower eggs on the youngsters. This belief is adhered to in many parts of France, and in Switzerland it is in the Ajoie where the last remainder of this myth exists.

Apart from sweets and chocolate goodies specially shaped for Easter, there is baker's ware in many places. In Central and North-Western Switzerland, the *flan*, the *Osterflade* abounds, whereas in the Grisons, it is the *Pitte* or *petta* in Romansch, the ingredients for which are often taken to be blessed in church on Palm Sunday. In the Ticino, bird-like creatures are formed from sweet *panettone* dough into *columbe* or *columbine*.

Many are the traditions, not only with regard to food,

but especially to various rites with water and fire, both important in the symbolism of fertility. Most Easter customs express the joy in the arrival of light and life, the victory of spring over the demons of winter. Some of it may appear as old superstition to the sophisticated world of today. But much of it is valuable folklore well worth preserving.

The great Christian feast days compel one by spirit, law and custom, by history and tradition, upbringing and memory to take part in one way or another. Easter is no exception; one greets the spring eats, gaily decorated eggs and bunny-shaped sweets, fills the rooms with daffodils and palm. One may make use of the Easter holiday for a trip to the country or the seaside, one may even go to church. This is not scepticism — why should one not enjoy the re-appearance of spring and delight in a few days off and take part in the traditional Easter pleasures of the children? The ability to consciously enjoy simple things is already something in this materialistic world. For many it is all. But where one is confronted with the Cross and is able and willing to accept the consequences, the true Easter Message of the Risen Christ is still the greatest experience which, though it may transcend human reason, endows all customs and traditions with a different meaning. It is the light of the Resurrection, the hope of Eternal Life.

MAY YOUR EASTER BE A HAPPY ONE

PARLIAMENTARY SPRING SESSION

The Federal Parliament assembled on 4th March. The first week was devoted to the discussion of whether the Swiss Radio Orchestra should in future be in Basle or in Zurich. Result: a draw. The new *Bodenrecht* caused big discussion in the National Council, as did the improvement of dairy production in Switzerland, following the "*Milchschwemme*" and the "*Butterberg*". In the Council of States, the debate on the Government's report on economic policy gave Federal Councillor Schaffner a chance to draw a balance sheet regarding European integration.

In the second week, the Council of States had to deal with three important items: Dairy policy, the problem of foreign workers, brought up through the *Ueberfremdungsinitiative* of the Zurich Democrats and the proposed promotion by the Confederation of university education. The Second Chamber supported the Government and the National Council unanimously in rejecting the Initiative regarding foreigners. The National Council discussed the revision of the federal law on service conditions for federal functionaries. An increase of 7% (since 1964) is proposed, also increased family allowances and other benefits. 26 speakers took part in the debate. The Council of States will have to vote on it in the summer session. The proposal to increase the annual contribution to the International Red Cross Committee from one to 2.5 million was accepted. The seventh report on the acquisition of the "Mirage" planes was agreed to, also Federal Councillor Celio's answer to a provocative question that he would adhere to Parliament's decision and not order any more "Mirage" IIIs and 3Rs aircraft.

(Based on reports in "*Schweiz. Kaufmännisches Zentralblatt*".)

ANGLO-SWISS NEWS ITEMS

The Foundation Council of the World Wild Life Fund at Morges, appointed the British banker Mr. Ernest G. Kleinwort to the Council, bringing the number up to twenty-three members representing five continents and ten different countries. The President is the Prince of the Netherlands.

Switzerland will contribute 903,000 francs towards the OECD reactor project "Dragon" at Winfrith, in 1968. The agreement ended on 31st December, and as a temporary solution, Denmark, Norway, Austria, Sweden and Switzerland will continue their normal contributions, whilst Great Britain will be responsible for the rest. It is hoped that a definite agreement to continue the project will be concluded by the end of the year.

Prof. Dr. August Guyer retired after 36 years of teaching at the Federal Institute of Technology (ETH) in Zurich. His successor is an Englishman, Dr. J. R. Bourne, Lecturer at Nottingham University. The subject: *Chemische Verfahrenstechnik*.

The "British Bank of the Middle East", London, is to open a branch in Geneva. The management will be British, but some 15 to 20 Swiss nationals will be employed.

A British Export Centre was opened at the Lavaterstrasse in Zurich in February.

The HACO A.G. at Guemligen near Berne has concluded an agreement with Messrs. J. Lyons & Co. Ltd., according to which the HACO soups will be distributed to the trade in the U.K. by "Catering Sales Ltd.", a subsidiary of Lyons.

Brown Boveri & Co. Ltd. installed and commissioned at Stewarts & Lloyds, Bellshill, Lanarkshire, a 3,000 h.p. D.C. tube mill drive fed from thyristors, which incor-

porates a new development in thyristor control. This particular installation, believed to be the first of its type in the world, is based on the use of individual draw-out thyristor units called "Thyserts".

Peter Ustinov's play "Halb auf dem Baum" was given its Swiss première at the Zurich *Schauspielhaus* mid-February. The Comedy, which in its English original "Halfway up the Tree" is at present running at the Queen's Theatre in London, was a great success, and the author attended the première in person.

Sir Arnold Lunn, founder of the modern slalom ski method and promoter of tourism, had to be taken to Inter-laken Hospital with a brain hæmorrhage after a week's holiday at Muerren. He is in his 80th year, and in 1954, he received an honorary doctorate from the Faculty of Philosophy of Zurich University.

On 15th March, a meeting took place at the Congress House in Bienne, of the new section of the Friends of the Swiss Children's Village Kirjath Jearim in Israel. Lord Balfour, whose Uncle was responsible for the so-called "Balfour Declaration" in favour of a Jewish National State in November 1917, spoke on the valuable work carried out by the Village.

At an international women's forum (Moral Re-arming) in London, 49 Swiss women from all walks of life took part. The theme of the successful meeting was "Women create the Future".

At the opening of the Swiss Motor Show in Geneva, one of the Vice-Presidents of the British Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders, Mr. M. I. Prichard, spoke at a press conference. He said that Switzerland was the third-largest importer of British cars in Europe. In 1967, over 23,000 vehicles were sold there.

Under the title "Swiss Art and Graphic Design", the "Pro Helvetia" Foundation organised a ten-day information tour in Switzerland for six well-known lecturers on graphic art from London College of Printing (2), Leicester College of Art and Design, College of Arts, Leeds, Carlisle College of Art and Design and Ravensbourne College of Art and Design London. The visitors were able to see colleges, agencies, studios and public art galleries in various parts of the country. [A.T.S.]

£2,360,000 PROFIT FOR SWISSAIR

In 1967, Swissair made a net profit of 24,548,000 francs (£2,360,000), compared with Frs.22,652,000.— (£1,870,000 at pre-devaluation rates) for 1966. Total revenue rose in 1967 to 770.8 million francs (£74.1 million) from approx. 700 million (£57.8 million) in the previous year.

Operating costs before depreciation came to about 651.3 million francs (£62.6 million) as against 566.4 million francs (£46.8 million) in 1966. Of the operating surplus of 119.5 million francs (£11.5 million), 95 million (£9.14 million) is to be appropriated to depreciation.

Including the profit balance brought forward from the previous year, about 25.8 million francs (£2.48 million) will be put at the disposal of the annual general meeting on 26th April. After appropriating 4.75 million francs to the statutory reserve and 4 million francs to staff insurance funds, the Directors propose a dividend of 8 per cent on the increased capital of 218.75 million francs. For the previous year, an 8 per cent dividend was paid on a capital of 175 million Swiss francs.

GOLD AND SILVER

During the recent gold crisis, the Bank for International Settlement in Basle was a busy place. The Governors of the main central banks met early in March. Switzerland was represented by the National Bank. Swiss stock exchanges were extremely lively, and money flowed back to Switzerland, where it was invested in stocks and shares. Already before the Washington decisions regarding developments on the gold market, certain measures had been agreed to between the Swiss National Bank and the big Swiss banks. The Swiss franc's gold parity remained at its previous level, and no de- or revaluation of the franc was ever considered. In Washington, Switzerland was represented by the President of the Board of the National Bank, Dr. E. Stopper, and by General Manager Dr. M. Ikle. On their return, the Federal Council expressed general agreement with the decisions taken in Washington. The big Swiss banks decided to organise gold trading in Switzerland as from 18th March, in order to prevent chaotic conditions.

According to the Washington agreement, Switzerland would have to accept her share of 50 million dollars (216 million francs) of the total of 1.2 milliard earmarked to help sterling. In 1963, a credit for such support actions was granted by Parliament, amounting to 865 million francs. Of this, 450m. have been used so far. Therefore, the National Bank is in a position to give the new help without asking the two Chambers for assent. The Federal Council, with the rest of the world, is now waiting to see whether the British Budget will work.

Meanwhile the demand for Swiss silver coins grew in a most spectacular fashion, especially for the 2-franc piece, with which considerable profits can be made in Germany and elsewhere. Once the "sale" was reduced in Basle, the buyers began their purchases in Zurich, and when no more 2-franc pieces were available, those of lower denominations were asked for. The Federal Council called a special meeting to discuss the position, and they decided to prohibit export, melting down and hoarding of silver coins. Travellers may not take with them more than 10 Swiss francs in silver (amounts in paper money, of course, unrestricted).

(Compiled from information received by courtesy of A.T.S.)

SWISSAIR TO INTRODUCE STERLING

VOUCHERS

From 1st April, Swissair passengers who are U.K. residents will be able to buy sterling vouchers for up to £4 per person per flight to meet expenses on board the airline's aircraft.

The vouchers which are in denominations of 2s. 6d. and may be sold only together with the air ticket, will be available from Swissair's U.K. ticket offices and from approved travel agents. They are not encashable for foreign currency or sterling.

Refunds for unused vouchers will be made only by Swissair's London office which will also provide supplies of vouchers to travel agents on request.

**Have you been to the Swiss Centre Restaurants
in London's West End? Worth trying!**