

# It happened in the cantons of Fribourg and Geneva

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# IT HAPPENED IN THE CANTONS OF FRIBOURG AND GENEVA

## FRIBOURG

At the end of April, the Fribourg Council of State gave a Press Conference on the main matters on the agenda for the new session beginning on 6th May. Cantonal Finance Minister Waeber explained the annual accounts which ended in a deficit of not quite 80,000 francs; the budget had estimated one of 4.4 million. Thus the 1968 accounts could be called balanced at 174m. francs. The Council's President expressed the hope that — if all goes well — the Fribourg women should be able to take part in the elections in 1971. A credit of 5m. francs will be asked for the upkeep of the Fribourg woods, and 12m. for land improvement.

The budget for the current year estimates 168m. francs revenue and some 5 million more expenditure.

The 1969 President of the Cantonal Parliament is Louis Dupraz and of the Government the Fribourg Police Chief Paul Genoud. The new President of the Cantonal Tribunal is Jean Marmier.

Although Fribourg women have not yet got the vote, a woman, Mrs. Huguette Morisod, was elected Vice-President of the Independent Christian Socialist Party.

Three Liberal Initiatives were launched successfully, one for the popular election of the Councillors of States (for four years at the time like the National Councillors), the second for popular election of District *Oberamtmänner*, and the third for the obligatory finance Referendum as soon as more than 3 million francs is involved.

A Referendum has also been launched against the new public holiday law.

1.7m. francs will be spent on improving and extending the hospital of Merlach-Murten, the last of the district hospitals to be renovated.

The new Fribourg Chancellor is Georges Clerc in succession to René Binz who retired after 35 years in office. Dr. med. vet. Hermann Nussbaumer has been elected Cantonal Veterinary Officer. André Marro is the new Manager of the Fribourg Electricity Works.

The State Bank celebrated its 75th anniversary in the autumn. To mark the occasion, the Bank presented the Art Museum with the Treasure of Aumont, which was found in a Broye village in the last century. It is the only treasure of its kind which has been found North of the Alps; it dates to the 14th century and belonged to the Dukes of Savoy.

The town of Fribourg is overpopulated in parts, without comfort and not particularly healthy. That is the verdict of "Pro Fribourg", an

organisation which aims at improving living conditions. Fribourg now has a water purification plant, the first Youth Hostel, a special class for watchmakers at the trade college, a new compulsory sickness insurance, parks with children's playgrounds and — two new Honorary Citizens: Cardinal Journet and Mgr. Charrière. The town's population at the beginning of the year was 40,483 inhabitants, 499 more than twelve months before.

Three Fribourg Communes fused: Ecublens, Eschiens and Villangeaux. They already had a joint Commune Council in 1883; their total population is 267.

The Bulle-Romont railway is a century old. The Convent of "Notre Dame de la Fille — Dieu" at Romont celebrated its 700th anniversary last year. The event coincided with the completion of the restoration work.

Morat's old town is to be preserved, and steps are taken that the development of the national road nearby will not interfere with the beauty of the town. The waste-water plant will cost 11.5m. francs. There is now a secondary school for French-speaking pupils at Morat, and a new cellar theatre was opened some time ago.

## GENEVA

The annual accounts for the Canton of Geneva ended in a surplus of revenue of 13m. francs, expenditure standing at 555½ million francs. Vast sums have been and will be spent by the Canton: two-thirds of the surplus will be used for financing public building works, the rest on social housing. 1.1m. is to be spent on planning the new university building, 20m. on schools and kindergardens, 7m. for the construction of the "Route Blanche", the trunk road joining up with the Mont-Blanc Tunnel, 31.2m. for a new administrative centre, 1.5m. for a new salt storage hall, nearly 3m. for a new military store, 11.3 m. francs for a vocational training (selection type) at Sécheron, and finally 110.2 million francs for various buildings of the new Cantonal Hospital.

Social housing has occupied the authorities considerably, and a deputation went to Berne to demand better legislation for housing.

To mention some more figures: the 1969 budget estimates expenditure of 619.6m. francs, a deficit of 1.6 million.

At Meyrin, a special emergency hospital is being built which will also house civil defence shelters. At Lully, the Canton is establishing a horticultural centre.

William Rappard, the famous Geneva professor, died 11 years ago;

a road in the Commune of Bellevue has been named after him.

The Federal Council asked Parliament to accept the revised Geneva Constitution, according to which young men and women can be elected to office at the age of 20, not at 25 as hitherto. The electorate had already agreed.

An international commission has been formed for the protection of *Lac Léman* whose waters are threatened by pollution. There are 87,000 water birds on the lake, including 1,200 swans and 35,000 ducks.

The Swiss *Heimatschutz* advocates preservation of the 18th-century part of Geneva called "Vieux Carouge". "Petit Palais" is the name of a new museum which will also be used for lectures, concerts and other artistic events. An unique collection of French paintings from Renoir to Chagall is housed there. There is also a new hotel, "du Midi" in which the 82 rooms each have a fridge, an alarm clock and a private bathroom. A new entertainment hall within the University City has been inaugurated, an octagonal cement structure, erected by the Patino-Foundation. Geneva is to have its "Halles" built like the famous Paris markets and a car park under the Rhone (for 1,450 vehicles). The museum for old instruments is facing ruin, and several charity events have been organised to save its valuable collection.

And by now, the Woman Mayor, Madame Lis Girardin, has been in office for nearly a year, and very successfully, too.

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Petula Clark, the famous singing star who lives in Switzerland, will give a description of her life in Geneva in "Disney Time", BBC 1, on Whit Monday, 26th May at 7.25 p.m.

(Mainly A.T.S. and "Pro Helvetia".)

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