

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

Herausgeber: Federation of Swiss Societies in the United Kingdom

Band: - (1921)

Heft: 7

Rubrik: Notes & gleanings

Nutzungsbedingungen

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. [Siehe Rechtliche Hinweise.](#)

Conditions d'utilisation

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. [Voir Informations légales.](#)

Terms of use

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. [See Legal notice.](#)

Download PDF: 14.03.2025

ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>

RANDOM JOTTINGS IN SWITZERLAND.

January 30th was the date of the Swiss vote on the Initiative concerning the *Abolition of the Military Courts* and on the Initiative about the *Referendum on Foreign Treaties*. The Swiss people has endorsed the latter with 383,696 against 158,098 votes, and rejected the former by 386,888 against 192,803. The propaganda for those votings was not strong in the beginning of the campaign. It bettered afterwards. The citizens' parties as well as the Socialist parties were nearly everywhere officially in favour of the Initiative about Foreign Treaties, whereas the vote on the Initiative for the Abolition of the Military Courts was fought strongly according to the divisions "Bourgeois" and "Socialist," although it must be recorded that a considerable number of "Bourgeois" in the Cantons Geneva, Neuchatel and Tessin seem to have voted in favour of the Initiative, these cantons having adopted it. Our people shall henceforward have an opportunity of expressing their opinion about treaties running for a shorter term than 15 years. This cannot but prepare the terrain for the complete and definite right to a voice in the ratification of *all* treaties. Surely this final goal of Democracy will be reached some day. Those who voted for the abolition of the military courts may become reconciled to the verdict in remembering that the new Code of Military Law is being discussed in committee. Most of the ill-feeling against the military courts, by which the initiants benefitted, was in fact not so much directed against the procedure in these courts—which was all that the text of the Initiative aimed at—but rather against the excessively severe punishments the courts pronounced according to the Military Law. It is to be hoped that the new Code now in committee will be promulgated without delay.

The struggle about the Initiative concerning Military Courts nearly everywhere having been fought according to the battle-cries "Socialism" and "Patriotism," the voting results seem to indicate pretty distinctly the real force of the two main parties. Another figure is very interesting, too, in this connection, namely, the number of the openly declared *Swiss Bolshevists*. One remembers that the delegates of the Swiss Social-Democratic Party at the recent Party Congress in Berne refused adhesion to the Third Internationale, and that the pronounced Bolshevik minority, consisting of those who were willing to join Lenin, constituted itself immediately afterwards as the Swiss Communist Party, with Dr. Welti, of Basel, as provisional head. The referendum of the Social Democratic Party on that question has now given the following results: 23,324 in favour of the policy of the Executive, 8,723 against. Those odd eight thousand probably will mostly join the Communist Party. The new Left Wing already owns two newspapers, the "Vorwärts" and a new paper, "Der Kämpfer."

It is obvious that the *Economic Crisis* which spreads more and more over Switzerland cannot but favour the tendencies of the extremists who consider the capitalistic system responsible for it. According to a recent statement of President Schulthess there are now in Switzerland some 30,000 working people totally and some 80,000 partly out of work. That is only one dark aspect of the case. Another shows that according to the Swiss Commercial Balance for 1920 the exports in the latter year were 1,000 millions of francs less than the imports, a proportion quite unusual and dangerous. Switzerland is realising more deeply every day the evil consequences of her abnormal rate of exchange, of being inundated with the goods of neighbouring countries who can produce cheaper, and of finding no market

for her own products. The Federal Council has now decided to take steps in the direction of protecting by legislative measures Swiss trade and industry in view of the numerous complaints from Swiss manufacturers. It will ask Parliament forthwith to pass an Act which shall give the Federal Council the power to raise provisionally the Customs Duties on goods entering the country and to restrict the import of certain articles, as may be deemed necessary in order to protect endangered national industries. This projected legislation arouses great interest and will probably lead to violent debates. The controversial creeds and dogmas of producers and consumers, of Free Traders and Protectionists, of Capital and Labour will undoubtedly come into violent collision. Labour leaders have already declared against the increase of Customs Duties—at any rate unless the total produce of that increase is devoted to the benefit of the unemployed. The League of Swiss Co-operative Societies also issued a manifesto as soon as the intention of the Federal Council was known, in order to express their disagreement with such a policy, which they held to be disastrous for the consumers. A compromise will no doubt be the result after due discussion *pro* and *con*. It must be reached because Industry as well as Labour obviously needs some kind of Government aid.

It was our *Hotel Industry* which always corrected in former years the too great difference between our export and import figures. It was for this reason that the decline in that industry was not only detrimental in regard to the industry itself, but also in its effect upon the whole economic situation. But now at last the hotellerie is beginning partly to recover. A very good winter sport season—at any rate when compared with that of last year—is reported from the Canton of Grisons. St. Moritz has nearly 2,300 guests, 600 of whom are Englishmen (last year about 300). P. L.

NOTES & GLEANINGS.

The SWISS REFERENDUM has roused very little comment in the English Press; on the other hand, the decision of the Socialist Party was a topic more to their liking. Nearly all the papers state that in spite of an active propaganda, backed by Russian gold, the extremists have suffered a heavy defeat; "Switzerland has thereby declined to act as an ante-chamber to the West for Bolshevism."

Under the title INTERNATIONAL LABOUR LAWS *The Yorkshire Post* (3-2-21) publishes letters which have been sent to the International Labour Office (established under the Versailles Peace Treaty) by the Presidents of both the Swiss Federal Council and the Swiss Peasants' Union. The correspondence lays stress on the impracticability of subjecting agricultural labour to international regulations and suggests that deliberations under this heading should be deleted from the agenda of the forthcoming conference in Geneva.

The Pall Mall Gazette (3-2-21) brings a contribution from its Geneva correspondent entitled NATIONALISATION—THE EXAMPLE OF SWITZERLAND. After a merciless reference to the Swiss Federal Railways he proceeds to lump together all the debts of the Confederation, Cantons and Municipalities and holds up the sum total as the outcome of an overdose of nationalisation. His

gloomy picture of our State household is equalled only by his startling discovery that the Swiss spends yearly on alcohol £11 per head of population (about 7 pence per day).

According to *The Times* (8-2-21) the Federal Government has declined permission for the contingents supplied by foreign nations for the Vilna plebiscite to pass through Switzerland. The grounds of this refusal are that there is no understanding between Poland and Lithuania that warlike complications are possible, and that, in any case, there is hardly any necessity for the contingents, especially the Belgian and British, to cross Switzerland on their way to Lithuania.

The RHINE NAVIGATION problem continues to receive sympathetic consideration. *The Manchester Guardian* (24-1-21) and *Yorkshire Observer* (27-1-21) are both susceptible of the anxieties created in Switzerland by recent French policy. The latter paper says:—

"The triumph of the Allies in the war encouraged Switzerland in the hope that its cherished scheme of making Bâle a seaport, by way of the Rhine, would at last be realised. Prior to 1914, Germany, which controlled the Rhine, was opposed to the scheme, but the defeat of that Power has reopened the question. The Swiss have taken up with great enthusiasm the project of so improving the river as to enable North Sea vessels to go as far inland as Bâle, which would give their country some at least of the advantages of a sea coast, by making possible direct ocean communication with the North Sea, Baltic, and Mediterranean ports. France supported Switzerland in the pre-war days, but now France seems to have other ideas, which involve Strasburg as the navigable terminus of the river. France proposes to construct a parallel canal of the left bank of the Rhine between Bâle and Strasburg, on a higher level, as part of an hydraulic power scheme. This would involve locks and make Bâle as a seaport impossible. The Swiss are naturally feeling sore on the matter, and are appealing to other maritime nations, and especially England, to help them."

A delightful article from the pen of Philip Page in *The Daily Sketch* (26-1-21) describes LIFE IN ST. MORITZ; it is so exhilarating that we reproduce it in full:—

"St. Moritz has no casino, travelling thither is an ordeal deservedly dreaded, and it is vastly expensive. Yet when one has spent half a day at St. Moritz it is not difficult to see why "the great ones and the rich, and those who try to pose as sich," swarm there in unprecedented numbers.

"Turquoise skies of inimitable blue, pinewoods crowned by jagged white mountain peaks, intense cold that electrifies and exhilarates with, strange contradiction, a brilliant blinding, almost tropical, sun—here indeed is an anodyne. Everything in St. Moritz breathes health. Everyone is rudely, aggressively healthy.

"There is no social craze so consummately natural and praiseworthy as a few weeks of wintering in Switzerland.

"Twentieth century Juvenals, whether in or out of Holy Orders, would find but little material in St. Moritz for their trite diatribes on Society's sins. The whole atmosphere is a moral as well as a physical disinfectant.

"Yet St. Moritz is not the unsophisticated spot it was

in mid-Victorian times. No place so intensely cosmopolitan could have anything even consciously crude about it.

"The handful of shops contain jewels from the Rue de la Paix and creations of Worth and Paquin at prices the sight of which in a less restorative air would reduce intending purchasers to a state of coma. Peaches and grapes and orchids are in the miniature window of the florist's shop.

"The hotels, which are by no means miniature, are vast structures in no way behind the London Ritz or Berkeley in luxury or in tariff.

"At mid-day the fashionable world—and there is no doubt about it being fashionable—sips café cognac or Dubonnet out of doors in the sun, at a temperature which in London would drive one to fur coats and firesides.

"At four-thirty people swarm to the Rosatsch or Himmelbaum's, and fight for tables and tea-cakes in English, French, Dutch, Norwegian, American and German. At night a bal masqué or a bal de tête, with valuable prizes and jazz, jazz, jazz.

"The cost of it all? Well, there have been rumours of an pension terms at certain hotels of 20 francs a day. But from 60 to 100 francs a day is nearer the figure, with everything extra.

"These francs, it is well to remember, are not French francs, but Swiss, and only 23 of them go to the English pound.

"Which brings the last point. There are few signs of Bolshevism in Switzerland. But roadscrapers are paid nearly a pound a day—three times the pay of university professors."

In this connection *The Times* (3-2-21) enlarges on the delays and vexations caused to travellers by the dilatoriness of the French passport and frontier officials. Sir Howard Frank in an interview says that:—

"There are many who go to Switzerland for health and pleasure who cannot afford the South of France. It is a sensible and healthy holiday at the time of year when the climate of England is hardly attractive, and inasmuch as the Swiss do everything possible to make life there enjoyable, it is hoped that the French authorities will rise to the occasion and provide a train service which I think the traffic will be found to justify."

The Financial Times (29-1-21) is informed that:—

"It is cheaper, when posting from Switzerland to Germany, not to stamp letters. After fines and extra charges are paid, it is said there is still a balance in hand on the cost of the Swiss stamp. Why not set up an arbitrage business in postage? Possibly some genius has already profited from this idea."

The Star (26-1-21) thus introduces the chief members of the ANGLO-GERMAN MIXED ARBITRAL TRIBUNAL, which held its first sitting on January 26th:—

"Professor Eugene Borel, the President, a Swiss jurist and Professor of Public and International Law in the University of Geneva, is a white-bearded man, who emphasises his remarks by elegant gestures.

"On his left sat Dr. Adolph Nicholas Zacharius, whose closely cropped head indicated German nationality, and on his right Mr. R. E. L. Vaughan Williams, K.C."

A subject—Goitre (Kropf)—the seriousness of which Swiss abroad are apt to forget owing to its comparative rareness in other countries, is commented upon by *The Newcastle Chronicle* (122--1) in the following terms:—

“While scientists are puzzling over the causes of the new so-called sleeping sickness, it is curious to find ourselves reminded, by Dr. Klinger, of Zurich, that not very much is known even in this advanced age about the very ancient disease which manifests itself in the form of a Goitre. Here we are in the twentieth century, yet it seems that in certain districts of the Alps from 70 to 80 per cent. of the inhabitants are afflicted with this often painful disfigurement, and that in some of the Swiss Schools from 90 to 100 per cent. of the children are beginning to show signs of it. It is apparently not a question of mere locality, as the goitre comes to some living in the same place and not to others. Nor has it any special connection with food, as in the Fricktal Valley, between Zurich and Basle, where the people subsist on the same diet, some are goitrous, while others are not. Nobody, in fact, seems to know with any certainty what goitre really is or how it is caused. As for its cure, there seems to be the same element of dubiety. According to Dr. Klinger, the most approved treatment at present is by the administration of pure iodonatrium, which appears to have resulted in many cures.”

FINANCIAL AND COMMERCIAL NEWS FROM SWITZERLAND.

The Federal Council has been considering the economic situation of Switzerland, which, as we pointed out in our last number, is serious at the present time. As recently as the end of 1920 the Government decided not to take any action, but in the meantime the crisis in which our principal industries are entangled threatens to become wider day by day, since the high wages they have to pay and the high value of the Swiss franc render them unable to compete successfully with foreign undertakings which sell at comparatively very low prices. The consequence is a slow but steady increase of unemployment. We need only mention that the number of persons completely out of work, which amounted to 13,302 on the 6th December, 1920, had increased to 32,746 on the 24th January, 1921. Therefore the Government have revised its decision of December, 1920, referred to above, and ask Parliament for authority: (1) to restrict the imports of certain goods to be indicated by the Government or to declare their import subject to a special license, and (2) to place a tax on certain goods which under the present tariff could be imported without any duty and to increase the import duties laid on certain goods by the tariff now in force.

Of course, these measures will not tend to reduce the cost of living in Switzerland. Seen from this general standpoint they are, therefore, open to the gravest objections. But on the other hand the Government cannot take the risk that our industrial undertakings, which employ thousands and thousands of men and women, have to stop production; that would mean depriving a very large number of people of their means of livelihood.

The Government have withdrawn from their negotiations for a large dollar loan in America. As we stated in our last number, the money would have been used for

the electrification of the Federal Railways. The project has lately been widely discussed in Switzerland.—The withdrawal is due to several circumstances: Firstly, to the unfavourable conditions of the loan, and, secondly, to the fact that capital in Switzerland is no more so scarce to-day as it was only a short time ago. This is shown by the excellent result of the present internal loan, destined for the conversion of the Fourth Mobilization Loan of which 58,000,000 frs. were subscribed within the first five days. The most recent news from Switzerland states that the total of the subscriptions amounted to no less than 186 million frs., of which only about 40 million frs. are destined for conversion. A further reason for the withdrawal is undoubtedly also the fall of the price of coal. If this is below 150.— per ton it is more economic to postpone electrification for the present and to go on with the old steam engine system, which in this case is cheaper or at least as cheap as the electric system would be.

It will be of interest to our readers to learn in this connection that during the year 1920 the imports of coal into Switzerland amounted to 2,588,034 tons, of which 1,227,259 or about 47 per cent. was of American origin. For the same period in 1919 the total imports of coal were 1,694,088 tons, of which America participated with 508,632 tons or about 30 per cent.

C. F. Bally S.A., the well-known firm in Schoenenwerd (Canton Soleure), has the intention to establish a boot factory in the Union of South Africa which will be able to turn out 1,000 pairs of boots and shoes a day.—Bally is the largest boot factory on the Continent. Its share capital amounts to 40,000,000 frs., whilst the debentures at its disposal are 19,600,000 frs.

THE SQUEEZER.

The following letter appeared in *The Grocer* on Jan. 22nd, 1921:—

“Sir,—For the following reasons I regret being unable to reduce my overdraft:—

“I have been held up, held down and bagged, walked on, sat upon, flattened out and squeezed. First by our Income Tax, then by Super Tax, the Excess Profits Tax, and by every society and organisation that the inventive mind of man can invent to extract what I may or may not have in my possession. From the Red Cross, St. Dunstan's and Children's Homes, Y.M.C.A. and Y.W.C.A., the Salvation Army, the Belgian Relief, the Austrian Relief, the Blank Cross and the Double Cross, and every hospital in the town and country.

“The Government has governed my business so that I don't know who owns it. I am inspected, suspected, examined and re-examined, informed, required and commanded, so that I don't know who I am, where I am, or why I am here at all.

“All I know is that I am supposed to be an inexhaustible supply of money for every known need, desire or hope of the human race, and because I will not sell all I have and go out and beg, borrow or steal money to give away, I am cussed, discussed, boycotted, talked to, talked about, lied to, lied about, held up, hung up, robbed and d— near ruined, and the only reason why I am clinging to life now is to see what the h— happens next.—Yours truly, A GROCER.”