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# The Swiss Observer

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## HOME NEWS

In the elections for half of the members of the Berne Municipal Council, the constitutional parties slightly increased their strength; they now hold 40 seats, against 37 held by the Socialists.

The Federal Tribunal has upheld the decision of the Lucerne cantonal courts, which deprived the Lucerne advocate Dr. Kramis of the right to exercise his profession for a period of five years.

By a large majority (130 to 25) the National Council has agreed to the proposed abolition of Sunday delivery: the Swiss Post Office will thereby effect a saving of over a million francs.

The budget for 1924 for the town of Basle anticipates a deficit of over seven million francs.

Statistics, compiled by the national association of Swiss universities, show that the number of students at our universities has decreased by about 25% since the year 1913; foreign students, who in the latter year represented 51% of the total, now number 18% only.

The largest creditors' meeting ever held in Switzerland took place last Monday in Basle, when the affairs of the local "Hypothekenbank" came under discussion; amongst other business, the 1,200 creditors present declined an offer from the Deutsche Bank in Berlin, which, *inter alia*, proposed reducing certain guarantees undertaken by the latter from 35 to 16 million francs.

During a recent demonstration and conflict in Lörrach, near Basle, a number of Communists escaped arrest by crossing the Swiss frontier. A subsequent request of the Baden authorities for their extradition has so far been successfully resisted by the Communists concerned; their claim to the privilege of free asylum as political fugitives is now being investigated by the Federal Tribunal in Lausanne.

Novel experiments in traffic control during the dark hours are being made in Zurich. At one of the busy crossings (Bahnhofstrasse-Paradeplatz) the policemen on duty direct the traffic with the help of staves partly made of glass, displaying, when required, a sharp red light, which can be noticed for some distance by approaching vehicles.

A most fervent appeal is being made in Switzerland in favour of Swiss domiciled in Germany: in some districts a house-to-house collection is being made.

Dr. Thomas Bossart, the "Abt" of the Einsiedeln monastery, has died at the age of 66, after a long illness.

On the occasion of the annual meeting of the Zurich Democratic party in Winterthur, Federal President Scheurer delivered an address, dealing with the development of our constitution during the last 75 years. We give below a *resumé*, published by the *National Zeitung* (11th Dec.):—

Nachdem er kurz auf die Kraft hingewiesen hat, die der Erinnerung an frühere Zeiten entspringt, gibt er einen kurzen geschichtlichen Ueberblick über die schwierigen Verhältnisse, unter denen unsere Verfassung von 1848 entstanden ist, und hebt hervor, das Hauptverdienst der Schöpfer derselben sei, dass sie nach Besiegung ihrer politischen und religiösen Gegner diese ausserordentlich milde behandelten und in der neuen Verfassung ihnen nach Möglichkeit entgegenkamen. Nur so ist es ihnen gelungen, das Land von den unseligen Wirren zu befreien und ihm eine ruhige Entwicklung zu sichern. Hierauf geht Bundespräsident Scheurer auf die innerpolitische Seite unserer Bundesverfassung ein. Von diesem Standpunkte aus betrachtet er als Hauptproblem den Bundesstaat. Er weist darauf hin, welche grosse und schwierige Aufgabe unsere Vorfahren durch Einführung dieser Staatsform gelöst haben. Denn es galt damals, mehr als den blossen "Kantönigeist" zu überwinden, wie heute oft behauptet wird. Sonst hätten nicht zwei Männer, die in völlig entgegen gesetzten politischen Lagern standen und denen man gewiss nicht Mangel an politischem Weitblick nachsagen kann: Phil. Ant. von Segesser in Luzern und Jakob Burckhardt in Basle, das Verschwinden der Kantonsouveränität tief bedauert. Bundespräsident Scheurer ist der Meinung, dass für die Schweiz in absehbarer Zeit eine andere Form als der Bundesstaat nicht möglich ist, da dieser den verschiedenen Gegenden unseres Landes erlaube, sich ihren besonderen Verhältnissen anzupassen. Wir müssen deshalb bestrebt sein, einen lebensfähigen Bund und lebensfähige Kantone zu erhalten, wobei eine scharfe Trennung

der Kompetenzen von Bund und Kantonen unerlässlich ist. Nachdem der Redner noch kurz auf die Gefahren eines extremen Zentralismus und eines extremen Föderalismus aufmerksam gemacht hat, beleuchtet er die Aufgaben unseres Bundesstaates in aussenpolitischer Beziehung. Erfreulicherweise ist es der Schweiz gelungen, im Kreise der Völker eine achtunggebende Stellung einzunehmen. Doch müssen wir uns vor jeder Selbstüberschätzung hüten. Als Grundsatz für unsere Aussenpolitik betrachtet der Sprecher folgendes: Wir müssen die auswärtigen Angelegenheiten selbständig betrachten, auf die mannigfaltige Zusammensetzung unseres Landes Rücksicht nehmen und unsere Kraft nicht überschätzen. Deshalb müssen wir alles unterstützen, was zum Frieden unter den fremden Völkern dient. Hierzu gehört auch der Völkerbund, der trotz aller Anfeindungen schon viel geleistet hat und der nach der Meinung des Bundespräsidenten Daseinsberechtigung besitzt. Dann kommt der Redner auf die Demokratie zu sprechen, welche Staatsform für unser Land die einzig richtige ist, wenn sie vernünftig angewendet wird, trotzdem auch sie natürlich Gefahren in sich birgt. Zum Schlusse berührt der Bundespräsident noch kurz das Verhältnis der Staatsverwaltung zum ganzen Land. Wenn wir auch jede unnötige Ausdehnung des Verwaltungsapparates bekämpfen, so warnet Scheurer doch vor allzu scharfer Kritik, da sonst das gegenseitige Vertrauen untergraben wird. Wie schwierig es auch ist, eine einmal verlorrene Verwaltung wieder in Gang zu bringen, können wir im Auslande genügend sehen. Zurückblickend auf die 75 Jahre des Bestehens unseres Bundesstaates stellt Bundespräsident Scheurer fest, dass derselbe die Kraft besass, die an ihn gestellten Aufgaben zu lösen. Wenn es uns auch in Zukunft gelingt, zu zeigen, dass es trotz drei verschiedenen Kulturen, Sprachen und Konfessionen möglich ist, zusammenzuleben und zusammenzuarbeiten, so erfüllt unser Bundesstaat seine Pflicht gegenüber dem Volk und gegenüber der ganzen Menschheit.

## NOTES AND GLEANINGS.

By "KYBURG."

Well, the elections are over, and the result is in so far satisfactory that it has given Free Trade a clear victory and opened the way for quite an amount of democratic legislation, such as electoral reform, to instance only one pressing matter. As I wrote two weeks ago, an enormous amount of rubbish has been printed during the British electoral campaign on the Swiss Capital Levy proposal of a year ago. I have been snowed under almost by press cuttings dealing with such utterances by candidates of all parties, but, as the matter is not likely to crop up for a while, I propose to do as did those wise little fishes at Greenwich.

### Fascism in Switzerland.

*Evening Standard* (21st Nov.):—

The Swiss Federal Council has just cut the Gordian knot of Fascism in Switzerland by promulgating a decree making it against the law to wear a black shirt! (says the *British United Press*).

According to the Swiss Federal Council a Fascist shorn of his black shirt has just about as much chance of "getting away" with a revolution as Samson shorn of his locks.

The necessity for this drastic action on the part of the Swiss Federal Government was the rapid spread of Fascism in the Southern Canton of Tessin. This Canton has a large population of Italians, and a certain portion of this public has never failed to conduct an irredentist propaganda for the return of this Canton to Italy.

So stringent is the new decree that even people accustomed to wear black shirts under the regular waistcoat and coat are not exempt from arrest for violation of the decree. All Fascist banners and other insignia are also prohibited, except buttons and neckties.

Our compatriots at home have often very strange notions. Witness the Conradi verdict! Witness also the various Bürgerwehren, formed in opposition to the Swiss Bolshevists. If people would only use their democratic constitutional means of fighting political battles, if they would only remember that two wrongs do not make one right! I am pleased to see that the Federal Government has stepped in, if the above report is correct, and has issued that decree. I hope the Federal Government will have enough wisdom and courage to do the same at all times and against any party or society which is so oblivious of our democratic institutions as to think such means legitimate or even necessary.

My readers know by now that one of my pet theories has to do with the abolition of political and economical frontiers. I welcome all signs which point towards that, to my mind, not only desirable, but, if our civilisation is to survive, inevitable end. In the *Manchester Guardian Commercial* (22nd Nov.) I read:—

Marseilles-Geneva.

At the recent meeting at Lyons of the Franco-Swiss

Committee for the Upper Rhône the Swiss were insistent that France should hasten the constitution of the Compagnie Nationale du Rhône, under the provisions of the law of 1921. This is necessary for the execution of the work of adapting the Upper Rhône for navigation between Lyons and Geneva. The law provides that this work shall be carried on parallel with the work of electrification. The Swiss point out that the Germans have made a great effort for the construction of the Rhine-Main-Danube canal. There is also a project for connecting the Danube with the Lake of Constance, which would thus become a great river dock for the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. This, however, would place the Swiss in close economic dependence on Germany, and to escape this they want to see the barges coming in from Marseilles to Lake Geneva.

Lyons would benefit greatly by this development of the Rhône. It would become the centre for the waterways from Marseilles or Cette, Bordeaux or Saint Nazaire, and Antwerp via Strasbourg. Marseilles and even Bordeaux are nearer Switzerland than Antwerp is.

These projects are dependent upon an agreement between France and Switzerland on the subject of Lake Geneva. The French have demanded the raising of the level of the lake by 40 to 50 centimetres as a technical condition necessary to the execution of the work. Up to the present the Swiss have raised certain difficulties, but the Franco-Swiss Committee is endeavouring to smooth them away. It has also discussed plans for the improvement of the Rhône-Rhine canal. Works are in progress to make it accessible to 300-ton barges. There is also a project for a new canal of 1,200 tons capacity, that of the Rhine barges. The Committee will next meet at Paris.

Of course, you may think that Switzerland desires "barges coming in from Marseilles to Lake Geneva" in order not to be too dependent economically on Germany. Quite so. But the proposed or desired solution is also inevitably a step towards the drawing together of the Three Nations.

A further encouraging sign, pointing, slightly but all the same distinctly, the same way is the



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