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HOME NEWS

From the official statements just published with reference to changes in diplomatic appointments it will be noted with regret that Monsieur J. Borsinger, the Chargé d'Affaires in London, is to be transferred to Brussels; his place will be taken by Councillor Dr. von Sonnenberg, at present with the Swiss Legation in Rome.

During an inspection last week of the telephone installation at Berne it was stated that about 400 million francs were invested in the Swiss telephone service and that the gross revenue derived therefrom exceeded 90 million francs annually. The number of subscribers has now reached 182,000, i.e., 16 per 100 inhabitants; this places Switzerland fourth in the list of European states, a higher percentage being shown only by the three Scandinavian countries.

A complete severance of the existing relations between State and Church is demanded by the Socialists of Basle-Stadt. Though the two are at present separated, the citizens throughout the canton are liable to a church tax for the benefit of Protestant denominations unless a written declaration to that effect is deposited disowning allegiance to that church.

A new educational institute, a kind of university college, entitled "Romeo Manzoni" is in course of formation in the canton Ticino; this is in opposition to the one directed by the famous Ticinese poet Chiesa, who is rumoured as being influenced by political and religious considerations in the choice of his lecturers.

The realisation of the assets of the former Spar und Leikasse Diessenhofen (Thurgau) produces a dividend of only 17%, the total deficiency reaching nearly seven million francs. Depreciation of its large holding of pre-war German securities is responsible for this disastrous loss.

The lake of Locarno and the harbour of Muralto are covered with a thin sheet of ice.

The merry-making during the present carnival time has not passed off without deplorable incidents. At Diessenhofen Johann Windler, a carpenter aged 40 from Schlattigen, had visited a masked ball where during dancing he confided to an acquaintance that he had a large sum of money in his pocket. On his way home he was attacked and murdered by another workman, an Italian, who, after possessing himself of the money, dragged the body to the neighbouring railway line so as to lead to the assumption that his victim had been run over by the train.—At a masked ball at the Rothaus in Brugg, one of the dancers, Dominique Toncati, a mechanic from Frutigen, being called to order for improper behaviour, pulled out a revolver and shot the hotel proprietor, Maurer, on the spot.

A mysterious occurrence is reported from the forest of Koppigen, on the road between Utzenstorf and Gerlafingen. Early one morning a lorry carrying workpeople was brought to a standstill by a private car occupying the centre of the road and which, in spite of hooting, would not give way. The lorry-driver, being in a hurry, with the help of some workmen, shifted the car out of the way as the two occupants were evidently asleep. The driver returned about an hour later and, finding the two motorists still in the same position, proceeded to a closer examination. He found the man at the wheel in an unconscious condition and his lady companion dead with her head resting in his lap. The motorist, who subsequently recovered at the hospital, was identified as Mr. Max Marti, a 38 years old insurance inspector residing at

Solothurn and his companion as Rosa Gyger, a restaurant employee from Saanen (Berne) in employment at the former place. A faulty exhaust pipe, giving the poisonous gas access to the coach of the car, is believed to have been the cause of the accident.

About three weeks ago nine supposed anti-Fascists were arrested at Basle in consequence of a rumour that they had arrived there with false passports to engage in a conspiracy to overthrow the present Italian régime. Preliminary police enquiries have now established the fact that they were Italian refugees unable to obtain their legitimate papers.

For having illegally stocked and subsequently disposed of, about 100lbs. of narcotic drugs, three Zurich traders were sentenced to fines aggregating Frs. 31,000, the principal receiving six days' imprisonment in addition.

A fire, supposed to have been started by a burning "Stumpfen" thrown away in the attic, completely destroyed the Gasthaus zum Löwen in Rheinau (Zurich).

After two days' deliberations the Geneva courts sentenced the Bulgarian dancing instructor Parashiva Duc to five years' imprisonment for having in the Kursaal shot and killed her former lover, Raymond Boissier, a scion of a well-known Genevese family; in her defence she asserted that in her despair at the promised marriage not being likely to take place, she had made up her mind to commit suicide but the shot somehow went astray.

The large farmstead known as "Praz Jouly" aux Pâquiers, near Gruyère, tenanted by the Otzot family but belonging to M. Despond, of Bulle, has been completely destroyed by fire.

The organist and choirmaster of Domdidier (Fribourg), M. Gabriel Pugin, had a fatal fall when travelling on his motor-cycle; he was only 24 years of age.

SWISS NATIONAL DONATION.

To the Editor of the *Swiss Observer*.

Dear Sir,—As usual, the Swiss Federal Celebration Committee have sent to the Legation the following letter, addressed to the Swiss Clubs abroad:—

Last year our compatriots abroad again generously responded as they have always done to our appeal on behalf of the Federal collection in aid of the foundation "For the Aged," thus proving that although far from their homeland, they still hold in high esteem the foundation day of our Swiss Confederation and the motto of our forefathers, "One for all." From foreign parts we received Frs. 10,343.96 for badges, and Frs. 3,670.52 as voluntary contributions. On request we shall be glad to let donors have an itemized statement.

Our cordial thanks are due to one and all for their loyal co-operation, and particularly to our diplomatic representatives, the Legations and Consulates, for their mediation. And they are no less due to all Club councils and to all donors from far and near. For us it is always a double satisfaction to note the sympathy accorded to the efforts of the Federal Celebration Committee by our compatriots in other countries.

The result of the collection was highly satisfactory; Frs. 382,000 were handed to the institution "For the Aged," which undertook the distribution of the funds. Swiss abroad will not be deprived of its benefits, for the institution "For the Aged" will not overlook the claims of distressed Swiss in other countries.

The next collection will be in aid of the Swiss National Donation, the fund intended for distressed soldiers and their families. We feel sure that you will not withhold your sympathies from those who fell on evil days during the mobilisation and subsequently at their country's call, and you will surely help to realise Winkelried's words: "Take care of my wife and children." The collection will again take the form of a sale of Federal badges, which cost one Swiss franc each.

Could you see your way to make the appeal known to readers of the *Swiss Observer*, who will certainly be pleased to know that this year's collection will be in aid of the Swiss National Donation, the fund intended for distressed soldiers and their families.

Thanking you in advance,
I remain, dear Sir,
Yours very truly,
Swiss Legation,
8th February, 1929.
J. BORSINGER.

NOTES AND GLEANINGS.

Swiss Economic Conditions.

The steady and sustained improvement in practically all phases of Swiss economic life which has been evident during the last two years is fully brought out by the following condensed survey which appeared in *The Times* (Feb. 5th):—

"The economic situation of Switzerland improved in 1928; trade and industry were active, and general conditions were again normal after a long period of depression and economic instability. Money continued to be abundant on the Swiss market. From January to November the Federal Government, cantons, communes, and municipalities borrowed 240,895,000 fr. (£9,635,000), as against 336,461,000 fr. in 1927; the borrowings of industry amounted to 365,775,000 fr., compared with 500,361,000 fr., the interest on these various loans ranging from 4½ to 5½ per cent. The Swiss Federal Railways placed a loan of 150,000,000 fr. for conversion purposes, and 101,650,000 fr. was borrowed by foreign Governments, industrial concerns, and transport undertakings; the most important of these loans were one of 56,000,000 fr. issued by the Midi Railway Company of France, one of 25,000,000 fr. issued by German electric works, and one of 15,000,000 fr. issued by a German mining concern.

Speculation was intense during the year, with the result that the Swiss Bourses registered a record year. The average value of 110 industrial securities on the Swiss market ranged from 241 to 255 per cent., the highest figure being recorded in September; the average value of 12 Federal Government and railway securities ranged from 94.69 to 92.10 per cent., the lowest figure being registered in September. Unwise speculation in the shares of a Swiss cinema company was followed by a "break," which caused, in October, the failure of a few minor banks at Zurich.

Federal finances further improved during the year. The deficit of 14,000,000 fr. for 1927 was, in fact, reduced to 1,500,000 fr., and the estimated deficit of 9,320,000 fr. for 1928 was expected to be transformed into a surplus of about 1,500,000 fr. The Budget of 1929 estimates expenditure at 350,800,000 fr. and receipts at 352,800,000 fr., thus leaving an estimated surplus of 2,000,000 fr. This is a historic Budget, as it is the first since 1898 that shows a surplus. During 1928 the Federal Government repaid 72,500,000 fr. of loans; the Public Debt is likely to be reduced by about 13,000,000 fr., with the result that the interest to be paid in 1929 will be 800,000 fr. lower.

Passenger and goods traffic increased on the Federal Railways, and, in consequence, the financial results were expected to be highly satisfactory. For the first ten months there is a surplus of 138,951,000 fr., against only 121,821,000 fr. for the corresponding period of 1927. The first stage of the electrification of the railways is now completed, and 1,100 miles out of a total of 1,806 are electrified, the cost being 612,760,000 fr. A second stage will begin in 1929, and within a period of seven years another 162 miles will be electrified at a cost of 30,000,000 fr.

Swiss foreign trade showed a great improvement in 1928. During the first 11 months imports amounted to 2,497,400,000 fr. and exports to 1,942,200,000 fr., as against 2,080,000,000 fr. and 1,675,000,000 fr. respectively in 1927. The adverse balance of 555,200,000 fr. was made good by the receipts of the transit trade, from tourists and banking, and the export of electrical power, etc., which are estimated at about 600,000,000 fr. Imports from Great Britain were somewhat higher, being 200,018,000 fr. for the period January-November (against 172,267,000 fr. in 1927), and exports to the United Kingdom aggregated 282,351,000 fr. (against 285,680,000 fr. in 1927)."

Wages in Switzerland.

On several occasions last year we elaborated on the unfair—not to say lying—statements which have been circulated by interested parties in the English Press whenever Swiss firms competed in this country for the construction of power generating plants or the supply of electrical materials. The old bogey of lower wages is a never-failing and convenient slogan, and we are indebted to the *Rochdale Observer* (Jan. 26th) for publishing the following instructive letter from the President of the Swiss Association of Electrical Appliance Manufacturers; we only regret that such statements, based on careful investigations, do not receive a wider publicity in this country.

CITY SWISS CLUB.

CABARET AND DANCE
NEW PRINCES' RESTAURANT, PICCADILLY, W.1
Saturday, FEBRUARY 23rd, at 7 p.m.

Tickets at 12/6 (incl. Supper), may be obtained from Members of the Committee.