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The Swiss Observer

FOUNDED BY MR. P. F. BOEHRINGER.

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HOME NEWS

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FEDERAL.

SWISS GENERAL ELECTIONS.

Activity is great in Swiss political circles in anticipation of the coming Parliamentary election. Little change is expected in the composition of the Council of States — or first Chamber of Parliament — in which each Canton has two representatives, and which has a more or less Conservative character. The struggle is concentrated on the National Council — or Second Chamber of Parliament — which is elected on the proportional principle, each Canton being entitled to one deputy in 20,000 inhabitants.

The Socialist Party hopes to conquer a larger number of seats in the National Council and possibly to outnumber the Radical Party, which is the most powerful and has had a majority in the Government since 1848. The House at present consists of 52 Radicals, 44 Roman Catholic Conservatives, 30 Peasants, 10 Liberals, 49 Socialists and 3 Communists. Dissensions among the bourgeois parties and the creation of new political groups in German-speaking Switzerland may result in Socialists progress in that region, but it is rather unlikely that the Socialists will secure more than 54 to 56 seats. The Radicals — though they are a Left Wing party — have refused to ally themselves with the Socialists.

Balancing the Budget.

Recovery from the economic crisis and the restoration of Federal finances are the avowed policies of all the parties. The Socialists are mainly insisting on the necessity of balancing the Federal Budget by new taxes and not cuts in expenditure. The bourgeois parties, on the other hand, are advocating a general reduction in State expenditure. According to the latest estimates the Federal deficit for the current year is likely to exceed 50 million francs, while the deficit of the Federal railways will be over 45 millions.

In a recent statement in Parliament, Federal Councillor Meyer, chief of the Federal Finance Department, outlined the financial programme he intends to submit to the new Parliament. He proposes to make a total saving of about 24 million francs by further reductions in State salaries and wages and by a 10 per cent. cut in all State subsidies. He also intends to obtain nearly 42 million francs by further increases in Customs duties, by the levying of a tax on bank deposits and by an increase in the "Crisis Tax."

ALLEGED KIDNAPPINGS ON SWISS FRONTIER.

Two curious cases are the subject of inquiry in Switzerland. One concerns the wife — resident in Basle — of a German Communist, who has been in prison in Germany for the past two years. She recently received a letter from Wyhlen, six miles from Basle, asking her to meet a German acquaintance who had urgent messages for her. As she herself could not go, she sent a Swiss neighbour, the mother of three children, who left Basle last Friday for Wyhlen. When she did not return after several days the Basle police inquired at Wyhlen and at the police headquarters of Loerrach, where they received the reply that nothing was known about a kidnapped person. On Wednesday, however, the Loerrach police informed the Basle police that the woman had been arrested on suspicion of being a political spy. The Basle police have filed a protest through the Foreign Ministry in Berne.

In the other case Frau Wilhelm, a native of Freiburg (Germany) but married two years ago to an Alsatian, of Huningue, near Basle, and therefore a French citizen, was induced, as the result of a postcard, to cross the frontier bridge near Basle and was immediately arrested by the German Gestapo. The Mayor of Huningue has lodged a protest with the Prefecture of Colmar, who will forward it to Paris.

SWISS NATIONAL BANK.

During the week ended October 15th, the gold reserve of the Swiss National Bank increased by 6,000,000f., and reached 1,380,800,000f. On the other hand the bank note circulation was 1,271,000,000f., a decrease of 25,000,000f. over the previous week. On October 15th the gold reserve and gold currencies abroad represented 86.27 per cent. of all the engagements of the bank.

CENSUS OF TURKISH POPULATION UNDER SWISS SUPERVISION.

A census of the population of Turkey was carried out under the supervision of M. Bruchweiler, Chief of Statistics of Switzerland. The whole population had to stay indoors from dawn till 3 p.m., while specially appointed officials visited every dwelling-place and registered the answers of every inhabitant to 16 questions on age, nationality, religion, profession, literacy, &c.

HEAVY SNOW FALL IN SWITZERLAND.

The Alpine passes, which were reopened to vehicular traffic on October 4th, are now almost all blocked by snow, which in the St. Gotthard Pass is 3ft. deep. Snow has fallen abundantly down to the 3,500ft. level.

ZURICH BORROWS IN LONDON.

The Zurich Corporation is moving an urgent resolution confirming a loan of £1,300,000 from a London finance house. The loan will be for 30 years at 4½ per cent. per annum. The issue price is 93 per cent. Public dealings in the loan are forbidden.

This move follows an abortive attempt by the Zurich Corporation to raise a loan in Switzerland.

OXFORD GROUP IN SWITZERLAND.

The Oxford Group concluded its seven weeks' campaign in Switzerland at Zurich with a large house party at Rheinfelden.

In all audiences of more than 50,000 have attended public meetings in Geneva, Berne, Basle, and Zurich, and an international team of 1,000 drawn from 30 nations, including 250 from Great Britain, have taken part in the campaign, which will now be continued in Switzerland under trained Swiss leadership.

SWISS RAIL DEFICIT.

A deficit of about £4,630,000 is estimated by the board of the Swiss Federal Railways for the year 1936.

Owing to decreased tourist traffic, indifferent economic conditions and road competition, the railways suffer a loss of about £6 10s. a minute.

LOCAL.

BASLE.

M. Walter Rebsamen, a former member of the Engineering staff of the Swiss Federal Railways and Brown Boveri and Co., in Baden, has been appointed Manager of the Municipal Tramway Administration. M. Rebsamen was born at Thalwil in 1896.

ZURICH.

The Aerodrome of Dübendorf has celebrated its 25th anniversary, the first meeting having taken place on the 22nd of October, 1935.

LUCERNE.

At the General Meeting of the Pilatus Railway, which was held at Lucerne it was decided to start at once with the electrification of the line. The costs for changing over are estimated to be 1,100,000 frs.

The death is reported of M. Walter Döpfner, proprietor of the Hotel Gotthard-Terminus at the age of 58. The deceased was for many years President of the Hotel Association in Lucerne.

BERNE.

Dr. Béguin, advocate in Geneva was condemned by a Bernese court to a fine of 200 frs. for slandering two of the General Managers of the Swiss Federal Railways. An appeal against the verdict was lodged by Dr. Béguin.

M. Marius Lederrey, National Councillor has been appointed Chairman of the Montreux-Oberland Railways in succession to the late M. Jean de Muralt.

GRISONS.

The death is reported from Chur of M. Joseph Schütter, President of the "Bündnerischen Gewerbeverbandes," the deceased was at one time a member of the Grand Council of the canton of Grisons.

FRIBOURG.

Dr. Emile Bourquin, a medical practitioner in Lausanne, was hurt and his brother, M. André Bourquin seriously injured, when his car collided at a level crossing near Courgevieux, with a railway engine.

VAUD.

The criminal court of the district of Moudon has passed a sentence of 4 years imprisonment on Théophile Tanner, a former manager of the firm Tanner frères, S.A., in Lucens for embezzling various sums amounting to 268,230 frs.

ART TREASURES IN LUGANO.

When coming from the North, the traveller is struck by the incomparable beauty and entirely southern landscape of Lugano, and it is not surprising that so many people visit this town on account of its wonderful Italian setting.

Evidently, Lugano is little known as a city of art treasures, which is most regrettable, as it possesses two churches that represent the essence of the great Art of the Italian Renaissance. They are the Cathedral of San Lorenzo and the Church of Santa Maria degli Angeli.

The Cathedral San Lorenzo retains parts which date from the Romanesque Period. The interior, revealing Early Gothic frescoes and even traces of Romanesque decorations, obtained its present form in the XIIIth Century, while some vaults were probably added in the beginning of the XVth Century. At that time the youthful Renaissance Art had already spread from Florence to all parts of Italy, and gorgeous church façades, such as those of the dome of Como and the Certosa di Pavia, were now being constructed in Lombardy. Thus Lugano decided that its Cathedral should not stand behind, and in 1517 the magnificent marble façade of San Lorenzo was built. This is a perfect example of the harmony in all its proportions of the Renaissance style, including a grand frieze and three splendid portals. The ornamentation belongs to the finest creations of the Early Renaissance of Lombardy. The entire façade compares very favourably with that of the Certosa di Pavia, as the former is characterized by a noble simplicity, while the ornamentation of the latter is rather overdone, especially for the taste of our times.

Almost fifty years before this façade was constructed, i.e., in 1470, the Franciscan convent of "Saint Mary of the Angels" was founded at Lugano, the church of which has recently been renovated, together with the famous frescoes of Bernard Luini. The great Passion Fresco covers the entire wall of the roodloft, being 40 feet wide and over 32 feet high. According to his biographer, the great painter was born at Luino, on Lake Maggiore, and was engaged in decorative work at the palace of an Italian nobleman named Pelucchi, when the only daughter of his employer, Laura, fell in love with him. She refused to marry a young nobleman of her parents' choice and was put into the convent of St. Mary of the Angels, at Lugano. Luini had gone to Milan, where he became acquainted with the works of Leonardo da Vinci, but returned soon after and painted the figure of Laura into a fresco of Saint Catherine. Thirty years later, he was commissioned by the Convent to paint the Passion of Christ in the church, which had been built as an annex to the Convent. Living in a cell he was very near his former love whom he never forgot. In the magnificent fresco he is recognised in the guise of a young saint, while Laura figures as the Virgin Mary on a separate painting which was ordered by the Ladies' Convent, and which now adorns the first chapel on the right. She too is pictured in the beauty of her youth.

CITY SWISS CLUB.

PLEASE RESERVE

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 22nd

for the

ANNUAL BANQUET AND BALL

at the

Grosvenor House, Park Lane, W.1.

Admission by ticket only, obtainable from

Members of the Committee.

The famous fresco shows the artist at his best. He differs from the subtle, intellectual and delicate work of Leonardo in that this painting is full of passion, with more depth of colour, not so light of touch and less distinct in outline. He therefore shows a marked style of his own and cannot be judged or classified as a pupil of Leonardo. In fact Bernardo Luini broke with all the traditions of the fifteenth Century. His composition is so admirable, because he has succeeded in bringing masses of people, in groups of scenes, into one great harmony of all proportions. His colouring is always appropriate, the attitudes and expression are always natural, and the drawing is immaculate. His Laura is popularly named the Madonna of Lugano, as nobody can resist the charm and sweetness her young face expresses. Symbolically it has been said, that Luini painted the great Passion fresco with his heart's blood.

G. & U.



A JOURNEY TO SOUTH AFRICA.

By VICTOR AND RUDY SCHAEERER.

Four years ago we had the pleasure to publish in our columns an article by two of our youthful collaborators, entitled "Die Engländer am Züricher Sechseläuten." The young authors were Victor and Rudy Schaeerer, sons of our old friends Mr. and Mrs. Th. Schaeerer. — It is just over a year now that the family Schaeerer has left us to seek new "adventures" in that lovely country, which is called South Africa. Unfortunately a letter which was addressed to the S. O., in which they wished to say goodbye to their numerous London friends, reached us too late to fulfil its object.

We are very glad to acquaint our readers that our two young collaborators have again wielded their pens and we shall publish their experiences under the above title in the next few issues.

Ed.

Somehow or another we left London in a terrific hurry although we had spent nearly six months preparing for it. We dashed back from a farewell trip to the Continent, collecting Rudy between Trains at Boulogne and then spent three hectic days in London, saying goodbye, giving instructions and hosts of other items that remain to be done at the last moment before starting on a long journey.

We had a wonderful send off at Waterloo being inundated with flowers, in fact we had a job sitting down. They made a wonderful show on our dining table together with the lovely lilies we found in our cabins on arriving on board, sent there by some kind friends.

At Southampton we set up an office in the Customs Shed and wrote a few letters including one to the Swiss Observer, asking them to express our regret that we had been unable to say goodbye to all our Swiss Friends. Somehow or another they must have lost it and naturally we have heard rumours about our forgetfulness or worse in this respect. Our office was such a success that a policeman came along to enquire if we were issuing passes. Our junior office boy got such a fright that he dropped a wad of foolscap and spent the rest of his time picking up the sheets one by one.

The first two days after leaving Southampton the Schaeerer family, knowing their weaknesses remained in bed and were quite contented. The next day, however, Master Victor believing himself to be the best sailor of the family and deciding to show the others something of his wonderful seamanship got up. After a mere quarter of an hour on deck he began to feel queer, but unfortunately as he was conversing with a young South African and wishing not to show his bad sailor-ship said nothing. A few minutes more, however, forced him to have a look over the side and retire downstairs again before the next onslaught. The next day the Bay of Biscay was passed and after a little scouting round by "our hero" the rest of the family appeared on deck.

The weather became very fine and everyone settled down to the process of making each other's acquaintance, some preferring the atmosphere of the bar others that of the sports deck.

A few days later we arrived at Las Palmas and after a fairly hurried look round with two unimpressed young Germans, decided that their outlook was after all correct and went back to the ship, which was not a great improvement since coaling was in progress.

PAUL BAUMGARTNER RECITAL.

An unusually strenuous programme — which included Beethoven's "Prometheus" (or "Eroica") Variations, Szymanowski's Sonata, Op. 21, and Schumann's "Etudes Symphoniques" — was played by Paul Baumgartner at Eolian Hall last Monday. Mr. Baumgartner is a powerful pianist, with a forceful personality, a strong sense of rhythm, an earnest and almost fiercely sincere attitude to the music he plays, and a steel-like precision of touch.

It is true that his passion for emphasis leads him into exaggeration and sometimes frustrates that very precision. The performance of Szymanowski's Sonata suggested that he was anxious to emulate those heroes of old who were ashamed to leave the platform without breaking at least one of the piano-strings. But it was good to hear the "Etudes Symphoniques" played triumphantly, with so commanding a technique and such unflagging energy.

J. A. W.

(Daily Telegraph).

The market at Las Palmas is a terrible place being completely submerged by an awful smell. One of the women there offered Mother her baby saying "Misses I sell you baby velly cheep!"

After lunch we did a spot of bidding with the Portuguese who had come out to the ship in their little rowing boats, bringing their shawls, table cloths, pyjamas, ivory elephants and poisonous cigars out with them. They hold these things out to the mercy of the wind and shout £10, £20, etc., or whatever they have the audacity to ask. They are terrible humbugs, one man wanting £22 for a shawl not worth more than 15/-. Another kept on crying, "Dis is only eleventeen pouts" referring to a pair of brilliant scarlet beach pyjamas. Yet another was brandishing a striped orange and blue morning gown and attracted everyone's attention by yelling his war cry "OOOH LAAAA EEEEEEE !!!!!" and in this way he sold quite a fair amount of rubbish. Just before the ship left they became terrifically excited and sold their goods for next to nothing dropping them and themselves overboard. The work itself is very good but the material on which it is worked is generally very cheap and thus the articles never really look good.

In the meantime the seas had become quite rough outside the harbour, luckily everyone had finished tea or there would have been a fine mess as the ship pitched and rolled while turning round just outside the harbour. This, however, did not prevent the whole of the crockery from falling down and those of us who had been forced to dash downstairs were cheered up by repeated crashes somewhere in the interior of the ship.

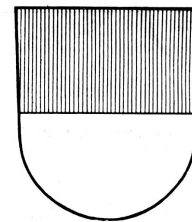
We then went to Freetown, the capital of Sierra Leone, which is a very pretty place but very hot and damp which makes it rather unhealthy all the year round. The general impression from the harbour is that of the Swiss Lakes during the summer time with beautiful trees coming right down to the water with the hills further behind. We were taken round by Mr. Schumacher, the Swiss Consul General's partner. He gave us a really fine glimpse of the wild but beautiful tropical country around the town. Finally showing us the Cold Storage which is the best along the Coast, the fruit drinks they bottle there are to be found right in the interior as far as the British Sudan.

The town itself is very dilapidated and nobody thinks of painting his roof, it seems to be a criminal offence. Native women sit on the pavement under enormous hats like inverted baskets selling grey beads from their little stalls. A lady passenger bought three monkeys and put them on deck with the sundry rabbits and pigeons we had on deck. People visited them for a little while until the smell drove them away, the crew had an attempt at washing them but had to give it up.

We never grew tired as there was always something to do, looking for flying fishes, dolphins, etc., we also had a swimming bath rigged up on deck and at night there was always dancing with a very excellent ship's band. There were also some very beautiful lightning effects over the Coast but we heard no thunder as it was too far away.

In Freetown we saw and read the first newspaper edited and printed by black men (niggers). The same as in the adjoining Republic of Liberia. Some of the articles were very good, well written, but criticized the white people, and some of the inconsistencies of their civilization. Some of the articles we read in this paper make us wonder what they say about the war between Italy and Abyssinia.

ARMS OF SOLEURE.



Per fess gules and argent.

Soleure, a place of some consequence in Roman times and once a free city of the empire, joined the Swiss Confederation in 1481. The origin of its arms can be traced to the Benedictine abbey founded at Soleure under the vocation of St. Ursus, the patron saint of the canton.

The figure of St. Ursus appears on ancient seals bearing a cross bottonnée, i.e., each end terminating in a trefoil. This cross, white on a red field, is to this day the arms of the Episcopal Abbey of St. Maurice in Valais.

The national emblem of Soleure is simplified and bears only the colours of the Cross of St. Ursus.

There is a sincere beauty in the fascinating modesty of these arms, a touch of that ancientness considered by armorialists the most honourable of all heraldic distinctions.

P.S.

After leaving Freetown and sailing Eastwards for almost the whole day along the Gold Coast, the sea being so smooth, and we, passing so near to the Coast, that it seemed like a trip on a Steamboat round one of the Swiss Lakes the more so as the hills seemed to plunge right into the sea. Of course this illusion was only on the North side of the ship, anyone who turned round and wanted to see the other shore of the lake was badly deceived as there was only an immensity of water.

All the Swiss on board got the same impression and, of course, we exchanged our views.

We next stopped at Takoradi. This is a very good harbour and well laid out. It is by far the best along the West Coast and serves the manganese and gold mining industries in the interior of the Gold Coast.

Early next morning we arrived at Acera and remained there unloading into surf boats for two days. Now we can land with surf-boat which is still not a joke, but I shudder to think what the Old Timers had to go through when landing on this coast 100 or even 50 years ago.

When they at last reached the coast after untold misery and privation they were not sure if they were not to be received with open arms by Cannibals only to be placed in their flesh pot.

We at least knew that this was not going to be our destination but all the same we were very glad to be back on the ship again.

It is terribly hot there so that all the work is done by natives. The process of unloading is very amusing, the natives enjoy it very much since they operate all the donkey engines for the hoists and thus find a permitted outlet for their delight in noise. All cargo, which in our case was mainly cotton bales and cement barrels, also three chevrolet cars, is unloaded into surf boats which are about the same size as a ship's lifeboat.

The goods are hoisted out of the hold and swung overboard. The head boy then directs the boy at the winch to lower them to about 4ft. above the surf boat. While this is going on the boat is jumping up and down about 6ft. on the crests of the waves and is very often bumped against the side of the ship. They hang in mid-air until a suitable moment comes to drop them into the boat, the head boy then gives a sign to the boy at the winch, generally by standing on his hands and kicking his legs into the air like a baboon, and the winch is let go hell for leather. The goods then land in the boat with a bump which nearly knocks the bottom boards out, very often knocking the crew overboard at the same time. Often, however, they are dipped in the water as the boat is no longer there. This does not seem to worry anybody as they soon dry again. What the cement looks like after it has been dipped in the sea only the person who receives it can say.

Before Takoradi was opened all the mining machinery was unloaded in this manner, in fact all parts had to be ordered in triplicate in order to ensure that one part arrived in the boat. The boat is paddled by ten natives sitting on the side with one foot in a grass rope loop and using a trident shaped paddle, all the time they sing. But what singing!! A few London cats can do much better. On reaching the beach one is carried through the waves on the shoulder of one of the paddlers, heavy people and ladies, however, get put in a kind of throne and are carried through the foam in state.

(To be continued).