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**Autor:** Savary, Léon

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# The Swiss Observer

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## HOME NEWS

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### FEDERAL.

#### SWITZERLAND'S DEFENCE PLAN.

The Swiss Federal Government authorised the Ministry of Defence immediately to construct 40 military aeroplanes at a cost of £340,000. The decision was taken in view of the political tension in Europe.

The "Basler National-Zeitung" reveals that the aeroplanes will have a maximum speed of 212 m.p.h., and will be superior to the newest types of Fokker bombers.

The general defence debate was concluded at Berne. The Government has entrusted the Ministry of Defence with the drawing up of a scheme for general improvement of Switzerland's defences, especially the mechanised divisions of the army and artillery.

Special attention will also be devoted to strengthening the frontier fortifications. It is estimated that the expenditure on armaments, to be spread over a number of years, will amount to about £16,300,000.

It is proposed to raise £6,600,000 by floating a special defence loan at between 2½ to 3 per cent. interest. The scheme will be submitted to the Federal Parliament.

#### SWISS NATIONAL BANK.

During the last week of March the gold reserves of the Swiss National Bank increased by 11,500,000f. and reached 1,508,000,000f. on March 31st, while the bank-note circulation amounted to 1,318,000,000f. On March 31st the gold reserves represented 87.41 per cent. of all the engagements of the Bank.

#### LEU AND CO'S BANK.

It is announced that Leu and Co.'s Bank, of Zurich, one of Switzerland's "Big Seven," had been granted a fresh moratorium, which will remain in force until the end of October next.

The bank first announced its difficulties at the beginning of this year, and as a result, was granted a moratorium for three months.

It had been generally expected that the administrative council of the bank would have been able to reorganise the institution during the first quarter of this year, but it has evidently been unable to do so.

#### MISS HERMINE SCHUMOWSKA.

Miss Hermine Schumowska, formerly a well-known actress, died some days ago at Thalwil, near Zurich, at the age of 67. She was born a Croatian, but was a descendant of an old Viennese family named Waldherr, who came to Zagreb. Her rare and brilliant dramatic talent brought great success to her on the stages of the Croatian National Theatre at Zagreb, the Schiller Theatre in Berlin, and the Zurich Stadt-theatre, especially in prominent rôles in the dramatic works of Schiller, Sudermann, and Hauptmann, and some English authors. For a long time she lived in Switzerland at Zurich, where she was most popular. She was a leader in society life, and earned much gratitude as a benefactor of the poor.

#### SWISS GLACIERS RETREATING.

The latest measurements made by experts of the Swiss Glacier commission indicate that almost 90% of the country's glaciers, especially in the Valais, are still retreating. A marked decrease has been registered without interruption since 1921. Glaciologists are of the opinion that there will be no change in these tendencies until 1940. The most recent forward march of the

#### NEW HIGH-SPEED TRAINS.

The sum of 1,250,000 Swiss francs has been added to the 1936 budget of the Swiss Federal Railways to cover the cost of two streamlined, light-weight, three-car electric trains for very fast services on certain main lines. These trains will seat about thirty second-class and 130 third-

class passengers, and will have a maximum speed of 93 m.p.h.

### LOCAL.

#### BERNE.

Mme. Sigrist, from Aarau, who recently celebrated her 102nd birthday anniversary paid a visit to M. Meyer, President of the Swiss Confederation at the Federal Palais in Berne.

The Turkish Minister, M. Kemal Hüsnü, has paid his farewell visit to M. Meyer, President of the Swiss Confederation. The departing Minister has represented his country since 1930; his departure from Berne is much regretted in political and diplomatic circles in the Swiss capital.

The death is reported from Bienne, of M. Johann Näher, who was from 1911-1917 a member of the National Council. The deceased was for many years a member of the Grand Council of the canton of Berne.

#### BASLE.

The Federal Council has decided to send a delegation to the Basle Fair, which will be opened on the 18th of this month. The following members of the Council will represent the government: Dr. Meyer, President of the Swiss Confederation and Federal Councillors Pilet and Obrecht.

The death has occurred in Basle of Dr. Ernst Weiss-Müller, from 1904-1930 teacher of history at the "Töchterschule" in Basle, at the age of 60.

#### BASLE-COUNTY.

National-Councillor Dr. A. Seiler, member of the cantonal government, was made a honorary citizen of the town of Liestal; this honour has only been once bestowed during the last century. Dr. Seiler was born in Frenkendorf.

#### LUCERNE.

Dr. Hans Bachmann, Professor of Natural History at the "Kantonsschule" in Lucerne has celebrated his 70th birthday anniversary.

#### ZUG.

The community of Häfenberg has bestowed the freedom of citizenship to Federal Judge Dr. Andermatt.

#### GENEVA.

It has been decided that the grounds of the Villa Lammermoor at Geneva, which was bequeathed to the Swiss Government by Mrs. Barton, are to be converted into a public park. The authorities will respect the stipulation in Mrs Barton's will that the flower gardens should be kept in the same condition as they were during their owner's life.

The villa itself will be used as the offices of the Swiss delegations to the League and to the International Labour Organization.

#### VALAIS.

Antoine George, one of the most noted Swiss guides, has just died at Sion, aged 62. In his mountaineering career he had made expeditions into all the European Alpine regions.

He knew almost every stone of the mountains in the Canton of Valais. He had ascended the Col de la Dent Blanche (12,700ft.) 126 times and had rendered services to more English visitors than any other guide in the Canton.

#### AARGAU.

M. Plüss-Stauffer, Senior partner of the "Oel, Kitt and Kreidewerke Oftringen" has died at the age of 76. Mr. G. Plüss was a well-known personality in Industrial circles of the canton of Aargau.

The accounts for 1935 of the canton of Aargau close with a surplus of 58,743 frs.

#### ST. GALL.

The elections for the Grand Council took place recently throughout the canton of St. Gall. According to results published, the new Council, consisting of 174 members, represents the following parties:

	New Council.	Old Council
Liberals	55	56
Conservatives	76	79
Socialists	28	34
Evang. Pop. Party	0	1
Communists	0	1
Free Democrats and Young Peasants	10	1
Independants	5	0
Middle Class Party	0	2

The Socialists by losing 6 seats suffer the biggest loss, whilst the Free Democrats (Duttweiler party) and Young Peasants gain 9 seats.

## UNE COMMISSION PERMANENTE DES AFFAIRES ETRANGERES.

L'un des serpents de mer de la politique fédérale. — car il y en a plusieurs — c'est incontestablement la commission permanente des affaires étrangères. Sa tête bisornue est réapparue au-dessus des flots, au cours de la séance que la commission du National pour la S. D. N. a tenue récemment à Montreux.

Cette commission, que M. Henry Vallotton préside avec beaucoup de tact et d'autorité, a entendu M. le conseiller fédéral Motta et a examiné plusieurs des problèmes les plus actuels, touchant la défense de notre souveraineté et de notre neutralité.

Puis le serpent de mer a montré sa crête. Il s'agit d'une proposition Grimm, qui a déjà été à plusieurs reprises, notamment l'an dernier, l'objet de divers commentaires. Dans une de ses récentes, et d'ailleurs toujours intéressantes interventions parlementaires, le député socialiste bernois s'est efforcé de mettre en évidence les avantages de ce conventicule de la politique extérieure. A l'époque, le représentant du Conseil fédéral ne paraissait guère enthousiaste pour cette innovation.

Celle-ci avait du reste un peu l'aspect du vieux neuf. Voici de longues années que l'on parle de prêter, au chef du département politique, l'aide d'un organe qui, malheureusement, risque fort de ressembler au sabre de M. Prudhomme, destiné à défendre les institutions et, au besoin, à les combattre. Mais, chose curieuse, les paladins de la commission des affaires étrangères se recrutaient jadis dans le centre libéral; et nul n'ignore que ce fut un dada du regretté Frédéric de Rabours.

La politique extérieure a ceci d'agréable que à en croire beaucoup de gens, elle ne suppose aucune compétence. Tout le monde ne se hasarderait pas à entreprendre la construction d'un pont, à fabriquer une pendule, à tailler un habit — fût-ce une simple veste électoral — ou à lever des plans sur le terrain. Mais tout le monde vous explique que M. Mussolini a tort de faire ceci, que M. Eden aurait dû dire ça, et peut dévoiler, au café, entre deux bœcks, devant un complaisant auditoire, les secrets des chancelleries et les desseins inavoués des chefs d'Etat.

"Si j'étais à la place de M. Motta" ... Il y a un peu de cette vanité candide dans le cas des députés qui veulent absolument participer à la direction d'une politique extérieure, pourtant récente, chez nous, à ce que commande la nécessité, les audacieux coups de diplomatie n'étant guère dans nos moyens.

Mais, justement, il n'est pas absolument certain que le bien du pays réclame le concours actif du parlement dans la conduite de négociations, délicates par leur nature même, et qui doivent demeurer à l'abri des indiscretions et de l'agitation intempestive. Au surplus, les rapports avec l'étranger sont, en vertu de la constitution, la tâche du pouvoir exécutif, c'est-à-dire du Conseil fédéral, les Chambres étant, cela va sans dire, tenues au courant de tout ce qui doit être soumis à leur approbation. On ne saurait reprocher à M. Motta d'avoir jamais manqué à les renseigner avec toute la précision désirable.

Dans ces conditions, on sera peut-être surpris de lire que le représentant du Conseil fédéral ne s'est pas opposé à l'institution de la commission en question, si le parlement le soulaite. C'est que, en définitive, il s'agirait maintenant d'un organe purement consultatif, que le Conseil fédéral convoquerait lui-même "selon les besoins"; autant dire, quand il le jugerait à propos. De la sorte, les inconvénients en seraient notablement diminués. Les commissaires ne se substitueraient pas au gouvernement, ni ne soumettraient celui-ci à une manière de tutelle, pour les affaires étrangères. Le rouge nouveau pourrait rendre des services, en établissant une liaison entre le Conseil fédéral et la représentation nationale. Au cours de certaines périodes critiques, où l'opinion est prompt à s'alarmer, l'effet ne serait peut-être pas mauvais. Mais on n'en sera sûr qu'à l'expérience.

Puisque M. Motta, et sans doute ses collègues avec lui, ne s'oppose pas à cette création, nous aurions tort de nous montrer plus royalistes que le roi.

Léon Savary.

(Tribune de Genève).