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The Swiss Observer

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We wish all our Readers a Happy New Year



HOME NEWS

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FEDERAL.

THE DEFENCES OF SWITZERLAND.

The Swiss Federal Government published a report on the strength of Swiss defences and the rearmament which must be undertaken in the next few years.

The report states that in the past few years 650,000,000 Swiss francs (£32,500,000) have been devoted to extraordinary military expenditure; while the Government estimate that a further extraordinary credit of 350,000,000f. will be necessary in the next few years, which will bring the total amount of extraordinary expenditure on defence to 1,000,000,000f. (£50,000,000). Of the projected credit of 350,000,000f. the air force and anti-aircraft defences will absorb 150,000,000f.; frontier defence works and the establishment of a second interior line of fortifications 100,000,000f.; the development of the tank branch and the artillery 50,000,000f.; and the establishment of reserves of ammunition and other war material, the protection of the railways, and other items 50,000,000f.

The Government feel that it is advisable that this extraordinary expenditure should be paid off in the next 20 years. From 300,000,000f. to 400,000,000f. of the total amount will be met by the present National Defence Tax, and the remainder by a property tax which will be entirely devoted to this purpose.

FEDERAL COUNCILLOR DR. WETTER.

The newly elected Federal Councillor, Dr. Ernst Wetter, is taking over the Federal Finance Dept. on the 1st of February.

LEGACIES.

The heirs of M. Ernst Gessner, late silk manufacturers in Wädenswil, have made a present of the Park, known as the "Rosenmatt" to the community of Wädenswil.

In remembrance of the late Karl, Jakob Billwiler of New York, an amount of 20,000frs. has been given to the town of St. Gall, to be used for charitable purposes.

The late Dr. J. Kopp, surgeon-in-chief of the cantonal hospital in Lucerne has left an amount of 90,000 frs. to various charitable institutions.

Dr. Meili, advocate at Hinwil, who recently died has left 650,000 frs. to be divided amongst different charitable institutions.

The late Mme. Tealdina Maroni-Stampa, has bequeathed an amount of 90,000 frs. for the poor of the town of Lugano.

SWISS CONSUL RETIRES.

Dr. Max Kunz, for the last ten years Swiss Consul at Mannheim, is relinquishing his post at the end of the current year.

Dr. Kunz has rendered for the last twenty years great services to the Swiss Colony in Mannheim, he is returning to Switzerland.

ICE HOCKEY MATCH.

Oxford University were beaten by 23 goals to 0 by Davos in the annual contest for the Aspang Ice Hockey Cup at Davos.

MUCH SNOW IN SWITZERLAND.

Switzerland was covered with snow during Christmas and the cold was very severe. In the plains there were 27deg. of frost and a part of

the Lake of Biemne is frozen. The Lake of Neuchâtel looks as though it were on fire, with the mist, caused by the cold air reacting on the water, still warm from the summer rising like thick smoke.

Tourist traffic was as heavy as last year, the largest contingents of foreign tourists coming from Great Britain and the Netherlands. More than 60 special trains containing about 20,000 persons have arrived at the various resorts in the Grisons. The Bernese Oberland is also crowded, although the snow conditions are not so good there. At Kleine Scheidegg there are 25deg. of frost and from Sin. to 20in. of snow; at Mürren, 24deg. of frost and from 4in. to 12in. of snow; at Davos, 24deg. of frost and 6in. of snow; at St. Moritz, 36deg. of frost and nearly 3ft. of snow; and at Zermatt, 30deg. of frost and from 1ft. to 2ft. of snow.

STAMPS IN AID OF CHARITY.

The annual issues of Christmas charity postage stamps are newly arrived from the Continent and may now be seen in the stamp shop windows.

Switzerland issues this year the twenty-fourth series of particular postage stamps to be sold at a premium upon face value throughout the month of December at all post offices in aid of the funds of the national child-welfare association "Pro Juventute," in the interests of which the first Christmas charity-postage stamp was originally introduced in 1913. The subjects of this year's designs include a portrait of the poet Salomon Gessner (1730-88), engraved by Karl Bickel and recess printed by the Swiss postal administration (5c. x 5c. green), together with characteristic pictures of girls from the Cantons, designed by Carl Liner and Hans Zaugg, and reproduced in photogravure at Chaux-de-Fonds. St. Gallen is represented on the stamp of 10c. x 5c. violet and buff; Uri on that of 20c. x 5c. carmine and buff, and, finally, Aargau upon the 30c. x 10c. blue and buff.

FOREIGN SPYING IN SWITZERLAND.

An espionage ring of nine persons was arrested at a border town about two and a half miles from Geneva by the Federal police in co-operation with the cantonal police of Geneva. According to the "Tribune de Genève," the Geneva police first learned of the existence of this well-organised group in the pay of a foreign Government about six months ago. A former dancer of Italian origin appeared to be the organiser, and she was observed making frequent trips to the frontier town.

The opportunity of arresting the suspects came when the former dancer and four accomplices drove up in a car. They were taken to the police department along with the four other members, who were arrested in their homes.

When the homes of all the members of the group were searched, voluminous correspondence

and documents were seized. According to information in the "Tribune de Genève" the spy ring was engaged in espionage on behalf of Italy to the detriment of France, and their activity centred in the region of Grenoble.

SWISS MINISTER WARNS NAZIS TO CURB AIDES.

The warning that certain Nazi agents in Switzerland must halt their activities was said to have been delivered by Federal-Councillor Giuseppe Motta to Otto C. A. Koecher, German Minister to Switzerland.

Usually well-informed sources said Dr. Motta, on behalf of the Swiss government, also expressed "extreme displeasure" over remarks said to have been made repeatedly by Germans along the Swiss-German frontier that there must be union between Germany and Switzerland.

Dr. Motta also expressed concern, it was said, over published reports that Germany was planning to send a certain political agent to reside in Berne.

BANKING STATISTICS.

Banking statistics for the third quarter of 1938 disclose a further decline of foreign deposits. The amount of decline for the seven leading banks was Swiss Frs. 52 million. The figures of cantonal banks also show a further withdrawal of foreign balances.

A banking group headed by the Swiss Bank Corporation and the Union de Banques Suisses has made arrangements for the issue of a Danish Government loan. Negotiations have also been proceeding regarding new banking credits in South-Eastern Europe. Suggestions emanating from Germany that such credits should be granted jointly with German banking interests have not met with ready response in Swiss banking circles.

NAZI DEMAND TO SWITZERLAND.

A warning to Switzerland that if she wants to be regarded as a neutral Power she must stop agitation and propaganda against Germany is contained in the "Völkischer Beobachter," the Nazi party paper. It says:—

Germany, as one of the guarantor States, has a right to demand from Switzerland, neutralised since 1815, that she maintain national neutrality. What Germany must very definitely claim from a small neutral Power is an objective and fair attitude towards German affairs.

It is a matter of complete indifference to the Reich what goes on in Swiss internal policy. On the other hand, the Reich must require from Switzerland that she restrains the shameless agitation which has been going on for years against the internal policy of Germany and which has reached intolerable proportions since the taking over of Austria and the Sudetenland.

Switzerland must be in decided manner told that it is not in the least like neutrality when all pro-German elements in the country are persecuted and proscribed while the worst agitators against the Reich continue to function with impunity. (???) Ed.)

LOCAL.

BERNE.

Mlle. Dr. G. Woker, Professor of Chemistry at the University of Berne, has celebrated her 60th birthday.

ZUG.

M. Ph. Etter, President of the Swiss Confederation, on a visit to Zug received a hearty ovation at the town hall and a Banquet was held in his honour.

CITY SWISS CLUB.

Messieurs les membres sont avisés que

L'ASSEMBLEE MENSUELLE

aura lieu Mardi 10 Janvier au Restaurant PAGANI, 42, Great Portland Street, W.1. et sera précédée d'un souper à 7h. 15 précises (prix 5/-).

ORDRE DU JOUR :

Procès-verbal.	Démissions.
Admissions.	Divers.

Pour faciliter les arrangements, les participants sont priés de bien vouloir s'inscrire au plus tôt auprès de Monsieur P. F. Boehringer, 23, Leonard Street, E.C.2. (Téléphone: Clerkenwell 2321/2).

Le Comité.

OBWALDEN.

The death has occurred in Sarnen of M. J. W. Stockmann, "Landammann" of the canton of Obwalden, at the age of 61.

The deceased was a member of the cantonal government since 1934.

BASLE.

Dr. Fritz Vischer, since 1912 Professor of Swiss History at the University of Basle, has died in Basle at the age of 63.

* * *

M. E. Labhardt, "Kreisdirektor" of the Swiss Federal Railways, has celebrated his 65th birthday; only recently he had celebrated his 40th service Jubilee with the S.F.R.

M. Labhardt is shortly relinquishing his office on attaining the age limit, he has rendered great services to our country in connection with the railways and his retirement from active work is greatly deplored.

GRISONS.

Dr. Rudolf Ganzoni, a former member of the cantonal government, has died in Chur at the age of 73.

LA POLITIQUE.**Le haut commandement.**

Contrairement à ce que d'aucuns croient, le problème du haut commandement de l'armée suisse n'est pas tout récent; il ne s'est pas posé à l'occasion de la réorganisation actuellement en cours; on le discutait déjà il y a une vingtaine d'années, et le général Wille l'abordait dans son rapport sur le service actif de 1914 à 1918. Toutefois, à l'époque, qui était celle des belles illusions dorées, on ne jugea ni urgent ni même opportuniste de prendre une décision. Aujourd'hui, on voit les choses sous un jour, hélas! bien différent, et l'on se rend compte de la nécessité de régler cette question.

Il s'agit, bien entendu, du commandement en temps de paix; car, pour le temps de guerre, la loi a tout prévu, et la seule modification qui pourrait intervenir serait l'élection du général par le Conseil fédéral, plutôt que par l'Assemblée fédérale.

Mais un courant existe en Suisse pour le commandement suprême et unique même en temps de paix, c'est-à-dire en somme pour la création d'un poste de général permanent.

Tel n'est pas l'avis du Conseil fédéral, ni du chef du département militaire, M. Minger, qui a tenu tête, à ce sujet à plusieurs de ses proches collaborateurs. Nul n'ignore, et d'ailleurs le message le dit en propres termes, que le colonel commandant de corps Wille, chef d'arme de l'infanterie, est partisan d'un chef unique, tandis que les chefs de corps sont hostiles à ce système.

Après longue étude et délibération, le Conseil fédéral en est arrivé à une solution qui ne satisfait probablement pas les protagonistes du commandement unique, mais qui paraît, à première vue, présenter divers avantages indéniables, du point de vue pratique. Nous en avons du reste exposé les grandes lignes dans un article paru ici le mois dernier. Le Conseil fédéral estime qu'il n'est pas possible de préjuger, en temps de paix; le choix de celui qui devrait commander en temps de guerre. Il désire que toute latitude soit laissée pour désigner, en cas de danger, la personne qui, à ce moment-là, paraîtra la plus qualifiée. On doit convenir qu'il y a de forts arguments en faveur de cette thèse. De plus, il est évident que le département militaire, conscient des prérogatives dont il jouit, dans un pays comme le nôtre, où le pouvoir civil n'entend pas se déposséder de ses attributions, verrait de mauvais œil la direction de l'armée lui échapper, — et ce serait le cas, fatalement, si l'on instituait un poste permanent de commandant en chef.

Aussi bien a-t-on essayé de répondre d'autre façon à des besoins de coordination qui sont réels et que nul ne songe à nier. Selon le projet soumis aux Chambres, en étendant les attributions de la commission de défense nationale, qui, d'organe purement consultatif qu'elle est présentement, deviendrait une autorité exerçant son influence sur "toutes les questions intéressant l'instruction et la préparation à la guerre," jusqu'au moment où, les circonstances l'exigent, un général serait nommé. En outre, ainsi que nous l'avions indiqué précédemment, il y aurait deux nouveaux postes supérieurs; celui de chef des écoles militaires, auquel seraient subordonnés tous les services d'instruction, et celui d'inspecteur de l'armée, chargé de "contrôler l'application uniforme des prescriptions dans toute l'armée," ainsi que la préparation à la guerre des états-majors et des troupes, et d'inspecter les cours dirigés personnellement par les commandants de corps d'armée, le chef des écoles militaires et le chef de l'état-major général.

Le projet prévoit en outre une réorganisation du département militaire, par un regroupement des services qui en dépendent. Sous le nom de direction de l'administration militaire, le secrétariat actuel du département deviendra le service administratif proprement dit du département, et déchargera le conseiller fédéral titulaire de ce département de nombreuses affaires d'importance secondaire.

Il y a des chances pour que ce projet fasse encore couler pas mal d'encre. Nous aurons sans doute l'occasion d'y revenir. Pour l'instant, on peut se borner à relever que le gouvernement cherche à concilier les exigences d'une certaine concentration dans le haut commandement et les vieilles habitudes helvétiques qui font craindre un chef unique en temps de paix.

L. S.

(Tribune de Genève.)

THE ART OF GOOD LIVING.

By ANDRÉ SIMON

The vine is deeply rooted in Switzerland, where it was introduced by the Romans, some 2,000 years ago, and the people of Switzerland are deeply attached to their vineyards. If it were not for this deep attachment of the peasant, he would have given up long ago growing grapes which he cannot expect to ripen properly more than two years in five (in spite of incessant labours all the year round), when potatoes or other crops would be easier to raise and more profitable.

The valley of the Rhône, the shores of Lake Léman and the hillsides of the Lake of Neuchâtel are all admirably suited to the culture of the vine, but the arch-enemy of vines and vignerons is Jack Frost. Thus, in 1933, there were merely 5,000,000 gallons of wine made in all, whilst in 1935 the yield was 25,000,000 gallons.

The species of vines grown in Switzerland are mostly the same as those favoured in France, Germany and Italy, but owing to variations of soil and climate, wines made from their grapes have a distinction of their own quite in keeping with the independent spirit of the people of Switzerland. There are vineyards in seven of the Swiss Cantons: Neuchâtel, Valais, Vaud, Genève, Bern, Schaffhausen and Thurgau — but the first three are by far the most important.

Neuchâtel. — This Canton produces both red and white wines, the best of its red wines being that of Cortaillod. The vineyards of Neuchâtel are planted all along the shore of the Lake of Neuchâtel and upon the lower slopes of the Jura Mountains. One of the best white wines is that from the Domaine de Champréveres, an ancient vineyard which the then Duc de Neuchâtel presented to the monks of Champréveres in 1143.

Valais. — The vineyards of this Canton, which produced nearly four times as much wine as those of Neuchâtel, crown the slopes of a tremendous groove at the end of which the Rhône, descending from its glacier, flows towards Lake Léman. The best wines of the Valais are the Fendant de Sion, Fendant St. Michel, Dole de Sion, Les Muzets de Sion, Clos de Montibaux, Johannisberg, Mollignox and Château Conthey. There is also a popular Gletscher (Glacier) wine from Sion.

Vaud. — This is the most important wine-producing Canton in Switzerland, with an average production about double that of the Valais. It comprises the Aigle district, to the north of the valley of the Rhône; the Lavaux district, which extends over the eastern part of the Lake Léman; and the Côte, which extends from Lausanne to Geneva. The best wines of the Canton of Vaud are the white wines of Yverne, which are made from the Fendant-Vert grape; those of Dézaley, which are made from the Chasselas grapes on the north shore of the Lake of Geneva; and those of Eppesses, Vevey and others.

LE COIN DU SOURIRE.

Mme. B. reçoit à son jour. Une dame laisse tomber son mouchoir. Charlot, admis au salon, se précipite, ramasse le mouchoir et le tend à la dame en souriant et faisant une jolie révérence.

— Merci, mon cher petit! ce que tu es gentil et bien élevé! s'exclame la dame.

— Oh! dit Charlot, toujours souriant comme un chérubin, c'est que maman m'a dit qu'il fallait être toujours très poli et prévenant, et surtout avec les vieilles dames, même si elles sont laides!

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