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HOME NEWS

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FEDERAL.

SWITZERLAND AND THE RUSSO-GERMAN NON-AGGRESSION PACT.

Pessimism is the keynote of Switzerland's reaction to the Russo-German non-aggression pact. "The situation which was coming to a head to Germany's disadvantage has been instantly reversed," says the "Neue Zürcher Zeitung."

The question of what price Germany had to pay for the agreement is asked by the "Bund."

7,000,000 VISITORS TO SWISS NATIONAL EXHIBITION.

The outstanding success of the Swiss National Exhibition at Zurich is emphasized by the fact that the figure of 7,000,000 visitors was reached on Sunday last, making the total number to date nearly twice the population of Switzerland.

The patriotic demonstrations in connection with the Exhibition become more spectacular from day to day. Last Saturday and Sunday the Swiss national costume festival was attended by a crowd of 250,000, the largest crowd assembled in one place that Zurich, a city of 350,000 inhabitants, has ever seen. Delegations from the 22 Cantons in their picturesque costumes took part in the parade.

SWISS GRAND PRIX.

The motor race for the Swiss Grand Prix took place in Berne on Sunday last without mishap. Fifty thousand spectators lined the course, and there were 17 entrants for the race. Lang (Germany) driving a Mercedes Benz, won the race in 1 hour 24 minutes 47.6 seconds at an average speed of 94.7 m.p.h. The second and third places were also taken by Mercedes cars driven by Caracciola (Germany) and von Brauchitsch (Germany).

SWISS ELECTRIFICATION FIGURES.

The Swiss Federal Railways now have 2,149 route km. (1,335 miles) electrified, equivalent to 73 per cent. of the total length of the system. The electrified lines carry 87 per cent. of the train-mileage and 94 per cent. of the gross ton-miles. During 1938 the current consumption was 539 million kWh for traction, of which about 93 million kWh was produced by the Etzel hydro-electric plant opened in 1937. The Federal Railways now have 494 electric locomotives as against 178 belonging to Swiss private railways, the largest being the 12,000 h.p. locomotive for the Gotthard line.

GERMAN ABUSE OF SWISS MAIL.

It is announced from Berne that the German propaganda leaflets posted in Switzerland and addressed to French citizens in France were placed in open envelopes of various shades and colours and dropped in different post boxes in the frontier region between Basle and Constance.

One of these envelopes having fallen, its contents were revealed. The leaflets dealt with the Danzig question in such a manner that the Swiss Post Office considered their circulation was illegal and the seizure of all these messages was ordered. So far about 6,000 envelopes and leaflets have been seized.

SWITZERLAND'S LOSSES.

The "National-Zeitung" of Basle estimates the financial losses Switzerland has suffered by the incorporation of Austria and Czecho-Slovakia into the Reich at £15,000,000 a year in capital and £600,000 in interest in the case of Austria, while losses on Swiss investments in Czecho-Slovakia are given as £6,750,000 capital and £300,000 interest.

NEW SWISS MINISTER TO JAPAN.

The Federal Council has appointed M. Camille Gorgé, Counsellor of Legation, at present at the

Political Department in Berne, to the post of Swiss Minister in Tokio.

GERMAN MILITARY MACHINE LANDS IN SWITZERLAND.

A German military machine effected a forced landing near Fraubrunnen (Ct. Berne). The pilot, according to his version, lost his way, and was forced down owing to lack of petrol.

The Swiss military authorities, after having investigated the case, allowed the pilot to return to Germany. He was accompanied, on his return journey, by two Swiss military machines as far as the Swiss frontier.

PROFESSOR DR. KARL BURCKHARDT.

Professor Karl Burckhardt, High Commissioner of the Free State of Danzig, and a compatriot of ours, has suddenly come into the limelight of international politics, and it might be interesting to mention a few facts about his responsible office and his personality.

To understand the position of Dr. Burckhardt it is necessary to turn back the pages of history for a few years, to the Treaty of Versailles, which, in 1919, separated Danzig from the rest of Germany and constituted it a free city. It was the usual compromise. Poland had asked that this great port, her natural outlet to the sea, should be included in the territory which had been ceded to her. The peace-makers felt reluctant to place a city 96 per cent. of whose population was German under other sovereignty. They therefore made an innovation, and announced that Danzig should have a separate constitution, free to elect its own Parliament, but subject to the supervision of the League of Nations, who were to appoint a resident High Commissioner.

Responsibility for the working of the constitution was to be vested in the three countries of Great Britain, France and Sweden, to whom the High Commissioner was to report at regular intervals, and whose advice he was to seek should difficulties arise. General Haking, a British officer who had seen service in Egypt, was appointed the first Commissioner in 1920 and served until 1923, when he was succeeded by Mr. H. S. MacDonnell, and later by Dr. van Hamel, of Denmark; Count Gravina, of Italy; Mr. Helmar Rosting, of Denmark, and in 1933 by Mr. Sean Lister, of Eire. The latter was appointed Deputy Secretary-General of the League of Nations in September, 1936, and was compelled to resign his work in Danzig.

Considerable difficulties then arose. For the first few years of the new régime, Germany had raised little objection. She was too busily employed with the reconstruction of her other territory to trouble much about Danzig, but by 1935 had begun to realise that Danzig was of vital importance. It had always been the main outlet for East Prussia, her greatest port on the Baltic, and a valuable territory both from naval and military points of view. It became apparent that the work of the High Commissioner was likely to be one of the greatest difficulty. The League were, therefore, in a quandary as to the most suitable occupant of the post. Obviously he had to be a man who would be respected both by the Poles and the Germans, but would at the same time be able to insist on the constitution being fully observed. An Englishman or a Frenchman would not have been suitable.

Fortunately the League made an inspired choice. They had received much assistance from time to time from Professor Burckhardt, who was in charge of the School for International Law Studies at Geneva. On more than one occasion he had attended meetings of the League to interpret vexed questions of international law, and suggest how conflicting interests could best be solved. Resident in the town where the League held its sessions he had, moreover, come to be regarded as a most generous host. His house was always open for those informal discussions which play so important a part in such conferences. It was particularly remembered that on one occasion, in 1933, when Dr. Goebbels paid his only visit to Geneva, there were complaints that the German delegates were being ignored or treated with less respect than others. Dr. Burckhardt was appealed to. He invited Dr. Goebbels, the other German delegates, and those from Great Britain and France, to dinner. Tempers were soothed, and it has since been stated that it was the happiest party ever held in Geneva.

No surprise was, therefore, occasioned when in February, 1937, the League invited Dr. Burckhardt to accept appointment as their High Commis-

sioner at Danzig. It was a task which the majority of men would have shirked, but Dr. Burckhardt felt it was his duty to undertake the burden. As the looker-on who sees most of the game he had realised that sooner or later the system was bound to collapse unless very strong measures were taken to support it. Not that he felt the necessity for force, or a heavy hand. It was a situation which would demand the utmost tact, and of that he was possessed in an unusual degree. There was considerable relief on all sides when he intimated his acceptance. On April 13, 1937, he arrived to take over the duties.

Karl Burckhardt had been born in Basle, in Switzerland, in 1891, of Swiss nationality, but from parents who could trace German descent. He was one of the vast number of the mixed races who combine to make up the Swiss population, but even as a boy he had learned that peoples of different nationalities can live in the greatest amity. He appreciated that what could be done in Switzerland must be possible in other parts of the world. If only everyone, he once stated, could sink their own petty differences for the common good the world would be a much happier place.

Burckhardt proved a keen student, taking honours degrees in legal subjects at the Zurich University, and later practising as an international lawyer in Paris. At the age of 30 he was invited to return to Zurich as Professor of Law, and quickly earned a world reputation for his detailed knowledge of the subject. Many times he was invited to the Hague to give an opinion on the many problems which were submitted to the Hague Tribunal. Later he helped to establish the now famous International Institute for International Law Studies at Geneva.

Above all, Dr. Burckhardt is a scholar, but he is by no means a highbrow. He is at home in any company, a born mixer, and quick to make friends. He has proved at Danzig that he is equally at home with the Poles and with the Nazis. They all hold him in the utmost respect. Even Herr Hitler, whom he has met on more than one occasion, referred to Dr. Burckhardt as a man of the greatest tact. He is a man of reflective mind, a typical diplomat who knows when to speak and when to maintain silence. He has his own shrewd opinions as to how a peaceful solution of the present situation may be found, but he feels that his position is rendered more complicated by the fact that he represents a League of Nations which is not nearly so representative as it was when he was appointed.

In Danzig, during Dr. Burckhardt's term of office, the internal position has been amazingly quiet. No matter what the outcome, Europe owes much to the man who has sat on smouldering flames for two years and prevented an enormous conflagration.

LOCAL.

BERNE.

Dr. Karl Liechti has recently celebrated his 40th anniversary as a member of the staff of the Jungfrau Railway. Dr. Liechti, after having occupied some minor posts in the administration, was appointed manager in 1904. In 1916 he was also entrusted with the management of the Wengernalp Railway.

During the last 40 years he has rendered eminent services to this world-famous mountain railway, and the University of Berne honoured him by bestowing on him the degree of *doctor honoris causa*.

LUCERNE.

A monument to the memory of the late Federal-Councillor Dr. Joseph Zemp, will be inaugurated on Sunday, August 27th, in Entlebuch. Dr. Zemp was a member of the Federal Government from 1891-1908, he was President of the Swiss Confederation in 1895 and 1902.

ST. GALL.

The death is reported from St. Gall, of M. Edwin Ruckstuhl, a former "Landammann" of the canton of St. Gall, at the age of 71.

The deceased was a member of the cantonal government from 1906-1936.

* * *

M. Jean Leutenegger-Bösch, President of the Board, and Manager of the Embroidery firm G. H. Graf & Co. A.G., has died in Rebstein at the age of 67. M. Leutenegger was in the Embroidery trade for the last 45 years.