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A young diplomat from the Aargau, Philipp Albert Stapfer (1766-1840), an Helvetic Minister and a great educationist who, incidentally, was later responsible for saving the Valais from being annexed by France in 1802, managed to convince the Government that such a day of prayer would be desirable. The "Directorium" or Cabinet commissioned him to draft a circular which was to go to the "Statthalter" (the Cantonal Governors) to be forwarded by them to the clergy, together with the necessary police regulations. Several Governors added a personal note to the circular.

This famous "Bettagszirkular" shows first of all the attitude the Government took with regard to the National Day of Prayer. The Helvetic Constitution acknowledges the inviolable right of the citizen to worship. No religious bodies were prevented from congregating, but public order must be safeguarded and the respect of the lawful powers in the state must not be undermined.

The celebration of the Day of Prayer was fixed for 8th September 1796 and the Minister appealed to the Governors (Statthalter) to see to it that the Gospel was used to further unity and not to disturb it. The celebration should be one of thanksgiving to the merciful Creator who guided our destiny. The day should not be misused by painting the moral state of the nation or the new state order in hateful colours. Nor should the occasion be used

to show that the evils of the Revolution were God's punishment and the result of His wrath.

To do justice to Stapfer's appeal one has to consider the trend of thought in important leading circles of the Helvetic Republic. It was a brave confession of Christian faith and it remains Stapfer's achievement that he dared and succeeded in issuing such a religious, even Christian message to secular as well as clerical authorities in the name of and under the protection of the government.

And so the Day of Prayer became a national institution. It was kept up during the period of Mediation and Restoration. It was difficult to find a day which suited both denominations. Finally, on 1st August 1832, Parliament fixed the third Sunday in September on which to celebrate the Federal Day of Thanksgiving and Prayer in all the Cantons. The State and the Churches of all denominations officially join in marking this September Sunday as a nation-wide celebration of remembrance and prayer.

We have good reason to give thanks to the Almighty. There is room for penitence and need for guidance which we as individuals and as a nation shall pray for, wherever we are, when the bells call us to our places of worship on this year's Federal Day of Thanksgiving, Atonement and Prayer.

Mariann.

NEWS FROM SWITZERLAND

FEDERAL

The Swiss electorate will go to the poll on 4th November this year to decide whether to replace article 72 of the Constitution by a new one, viz. that the National Council should consist of a fixed number of 200 representatives rather than a member for every 24,000 inhabitants.

These seats would be distributed amongst the Cantons according to the number of inhabitants. Zurich would get three more Councillors (35), Geneva 2 (10), Baselland one (5), whereas Fribourg and the Grisons would each lose a seat.

* * *

The income of the Confederation for the first six months of 1962 rose from 1,528.8 million francs to 1,832.8. This sum is made up by the following items: Defence Tax (Wehrsteuer) 384.3 million, withholding tax (Verrechnungssteuer) 164.6, stamp duties 129.1, turnover tax (Warenumsatzsteuer) 434.5, luxury tax 0.85, beer tax 4.4 and import duties 450.9 million francs. Import duties on fuel amounted to 113 million to which a further increase was added amounting to 8.1 million. Tobacco tax brought in 62.6 million and tobacco import duties 38. Another 5.9 million was realized from various duties and 37.1 million from a number of special levies.

* * *

An Initiative for a revision of the AHIV (Old Age and Invalidity Insurance) has been successfully launched by the committee of cantonal organisations of pensioners (AVIVO) in Geneva. Of the 82,926 signatures 10,617 had to be declared invalid as the chief of the voting registry of Geneva had certified the votes with a facsimile rubber stamp signature only.

The journal "Schweizerische Beobachter" also started an initiative for an increase in AHIV pensions. The 237,428 signatures were sent to the Federal Office of Statistics for examination.

In this connection it may be interesting to know that the equalization fund of the AHV amounted to 6,069.9 million francs at the end of June. This total is held by the following bodies: Confederation 529.2 million, Cantons 996.5, Communes 801 millions, mortgage banks and institutions 1,581.8 million, Cantonal Banks 1,147.8, public institutions 21.9 and mixed private and public undertakings 991.6 million francs. The average yield amounted to 3.25 per cent.

(Agence Télégraphique Suisse.)

DEATHS

The following deaths have been reported from Switzerland.

Dr. Rudolf Laemmel, well-known educationist and writer, died in Zurich at the age of 84.

Giovanni Morandini, the Italian-born pioneer of films, who opened the first cinema in Lucerne in 1909, died at 81.

Dr. med. Arthur Kielholz, the psychiatrist, died in Aarau at the age of 83. Until his retirement in 1944 he had been director of the "Heil- und Pflegeanstalt Koenigsfelden" at Windisch (AG).

Alfred Leonz Gassmann, popular composer and known for his tune of "vo Luzern gaege Waeggis zue", died at Vitznau at the age of 86.

Henri Martin, well-known member of Radio Lausanne, died at 62.

Josef Schelbert-Foehn died at Muothathal at 70. He was a prominent local politician and his speeches at the "Landgemeinden" were highly original.

Enrico Manzoni was in his 80th year when he died in Lugano. He was director of the watch factory of Arogno, but in later years he had made a name for himself with his drawings.

Harry Zweifel-Hollenweger (89), commercial director of CIBA for 37 years, died in Basle.

Prof. Walter Mueller, lecturer at the Technical College of Winterthur from 1913 till 1952 and a prominent churchman, died at 80.

Arnold Stocker, painter and artist from Geneva and Bienne, died at Neuenstadt at 71.

Prof. Dr. Gregor Zweifel, theologian and former professor at the "Lehrerseminar" Rorschach, died at the age of 92.

Edouard Martinet, well-known writer and literary critic, died in Geneva at 65.

Louis Gauthier (68) died in Fribourg. He was head of police of the Canton of Fribourg and prominent in the organisation of refugee help during the Second World War.

Arthur Cuendet died in Lausanne at 67. He was a former inspector in the PTT and a politician.

Prof. Richard Weiss, 51, well-known expert on ethnology, was killed in an accident in the Onsernone Valley.

Maurice Lavanchy, Vaudois politician, died at Yverdon at the age of 85.

Dr. phil. Gustav Adolf Frey, journalist, died at Augst (AG) at 87.

Mrs. Margarethe Kissel-Brutschy, prominent suffragette, died at Rheinfelden.

Hermann Hesse, the famous writer and Nobel Prize winner, died at Montagnola (TI) at the age of 85. His biography will appear in our next issue.

Otto Graber, notable architect and builder, was 83 when he died in Lucerne.

Prof. Luigi Brentani died in Lugano in his 70th year. He was a historian and educationist, a pioneer in vocational training.

August Frei was 88 when he died in Basle. He was an expert in gymnastics, a teacher and later cantonal inspector. He was an Honorary Member of the Federal Gymnastic Society (ETV).

Alphonse Blanc, the oldest Notary in the Canton of Neuchâtel, died at La Chaux-de-Fonds at the age of 82.

Franz Murer, from Beckenried (NW), one of the initiators of the aerial cable railway Beckenried-Klewenalp, a building contractor and politician, died at 85.

Commissioner John W. Dent, leader of the Salvation Army in Switzerland, died of heart stroke at 64. (Berne).

Carl Kuhlmann, the well-known actor, was also 64 when he died in Zurich.

Dr. Emil Nietlipach, politician and former federal insurance judge, died in Lucerne at the age of 75.

Prof. Dr. Kasimir Strzykowski, lecturer on pharmacology and toxicology at the University of Geneva from 1898 to 1932, died in Lugano at the age of 94.

[A.T.S.]

SWISSAIR LOAD FACTOR RISES

Swissair services during July achieved an average load factor of 55.7 per cent — an increase of 0.6 per cent over July 1961. This figure includes freight and mail.

The densest traffic was on routes serving North America and South America. The 130-seater DC-8 jets fly to New York, Chicago and Montreal, and Convair 990 Coronado jets serve the southern routes as far as Santiago (Chile).

During the month the DC-8s average 12¾ hours' flying time each day. The 98-seater Coronados, which entered service with the Swiss airline only six months ago, were in the air 9¼ hours a day and the twin-jet Caravelles, which are used on European routes, logged an average of 8½ hours' flying a day.

Total Swissair production in July reached 37.8 million tonne-km.—28 per cent higher than in July 1961. There were 32 per cent more passengers, 24 per cent more freight and 10 per cent more mail.



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