

Zeitschrift: The Swiss observer : the journal of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK

Herausgeber: Federation of Swiss Societies in the United Kingdom

Band: - (1962)

Heft: 1411

Rubrik: News at random

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The Swiss Observer

FOUNDED IN 1919 BY PAUL F. BOEHRINGER.

The Official Organ of the Swiss Colony in Great Britain

Advisory Council: R. J. KELLER (Chairman), GOTTFRIED KELLER (Vice-Chairman), DR. E. M. BIRCHER, O. F. BOEHRINGER, J. EUSEBIO, A. KUNZ, A. STAUFFER, G. E. SUTER.

EDITED BY MRS. MARIANN MEIER WITH THE CO-OPERATION OF MEMBERS OF THE SWISS COLONY IN GREAT BRITAIN.

Telephone: CLERKENWELL 2321/2. Published Twice Monthly at 23, LEONARD STREET, E.C.2. Telegrams: FREPRINCO, LONDON.

Vol. 48. No. 1411

FRIDAY, 29th JUNE 1962

NEWS AT RANDOM



Federal

At the end of 1961 Switzerland approached the Council of Ministers of the European Common Market with a view to preliminary steps regarding the possibility of associating. Monsieur Couve de Murville has now answered Federal Councillor Wahlen, head of the Swiss Foreign Office, that the Council will be ready to hear the Swiss case, which will, however, not yet constitute the beginning of negotiations. The Federal Council has approved 24th September as the date of the meeting. The other two neutral countries, Sweden and Austria, will be heard in July.

* * *

An agreement has been signed between Switzerland and Yugoslavia which covers state old age and invalidity insurance. The new arrangement puts Swiss and Yugoslav nationals on the same basis in each others' country.

Agreement was reached in Berne and Athens regarding exemption of tax for Greek and Swiss companies concerned with air and marine traffic.

* * *

On 4th June the summer session of the Federal Parliament opened in Berne. Various annual reports from federal departments and organisations, such as the Swiss Federal Railways, were received and approved by the National Council — some after lively debates. The federal accounts for 1961 were discussed and various credits were decided upon, amongst them a further allocation of 1.6 million francs for a university sportsground in Zurich-Fluntern.

The discussion of the proposed new labour law which was started in spring was continued. It contains 69 articles, about half of which have so far been debated.

At the meeting of 15th June Parliament tidied up the proposal for a guarantee by the federal authorities to the Solidarity Fund of the Swiss abroad.

The Council of States dealt with similar business. In addition, it accepted unanimously the proposal regarding the inclusion of refugees in the Swiss Old Age and Invalidity Insurance scheme. It also approved the agreement with Tunisia regarding protection and development of capital investment and technical and economic co-operation. It is interesting to note that neither the National Council nor the Council of States referred to the general powers to make such agreements asked for by the Federal Council.

The Council of States also approved the new law regarding improved financial help to mountain regions.

On 14th June the Federal Assembly held a session under its President, National Councillor W. Bringolf, to

consider appeals for leniency in five cases of customs and turnover tax offences.

* * *

The Federal Council has decided to raise the Swiss Legation in Ethiopia to an Embassy. As the Council was empowered by Parliament to establish diplomatic relations with Tanganyika, it has appointed Counsellor of Embassy Monsieur Roger Duerr, at present in Rome, as Ambassador to Ethiopia and Tanganyika with residence in Addis Ababa.

* * *

The Federal Council has approved two resignations. The first is that of Dr. Ernst Vaterlaus, President of the Council of States, as the federal representative on the council of trustees of the foundation for the promotion of Swiss national economy through scientific research. It has appointed National Councillor Clottu, from St. Blaise, as the new representative.

The second resignation is that of Dr. Hans Ryffel as assistant director of the BIGA (Bundesamt für Industrie, Gewerbe und Arbeit). He has worked in the federal service since 1939 and will now take up a university appointment in Speyer.

* * *

The Presidents and Vice-Presidents of the National Council and of the Council of States gave a reception to the parliamentary journalists in the foyer of the foreign press in Berne. The excellent relationship between Parliament and the press was praised in speeches by National Councillor Bringolf and the President of the Parliamentary Press Association.

* * *

On 15th June a first group of Swiss nationals from Algeria arrived by air at Geneva. The Federal Political Department had been informed by the Swiss Consul-General that some of the women, children and old people wished to leave Algeria. The authorities in Berne, in conjunction with the central committee for the Swiss abroad, chartered a plane to repatriate some eighty Swiss from Algiers and Oran. On the way out the Balair plane had Red Cross material on board.

* * *

Refugees living in Western Germany now no longer need a visa to enter Switzerland.

* * *

Cantonal

In the Canton of Schwyz a change in the constitution was made a few years ago which enabled the authorities to have polling by ballot rather than at the "Landsgemeinde", the open-air parliament. Elections in recent years have shown more and more that citizens preferred the ballot box. Of the six districts within the Canton only that of Schwyz itself still decides by show of hand both elections and administrative business. [A.T.S.]

The Zurich Commune Council discussed the desirability of keeping dance halls open till 2 a.m. In 1954 some restaurants were licensed to keep open till 2 a.m., but it did not prove successful and measures had to be taken to improve matters. In January 1958 electors voted against longer opening hours, and inns and restaurants went back to the previous midnight closing time. There is now a new proposal for places only which have dancing to keep open till 1 a.m. There will be a stipulation that non-alcoholic drinks must be available. This proposal was accepted by 61 to 47 votes.

The new parts of the "Stadtgärtnerei" (municipal nurseries) in Zurich-Albisrieden were opened to the public, who will now have an opportunity of enjoying lovely flowers and shrubs in beautifully laid-out gardens, hothouses and nurseries on the outskirts of the town.

[A.T.S.]

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The Bernese "Grosse Rat" elected unanimously Justizdirektor Hans Tschumi as the new President of the Council (Regierungspraesident). The new Vice-President will be Erziehungsdirektor Virgile Moine.

The town of Berne finished the financial year of 1961 with an excess of receipts over expenditure of Fr.581,000, which is over Fr. 100,000 more than in 1960. The total income amounted to 123½ million francs. The improvement is mainly due to an increased income from taxes.

At the end of May, Berne started its annual flower season with a market display and sale on the Bundes- and Bärenplatz, which were gaily beflagged for the occasion. 10,000 geranium and petunia plants were on show, sold by pretty girls in national costumes. Demonstrations were given of how best to plant the flowers in pots and boxes, and buyers were advised as to treatment. There will be a competition for the most beautiful window-box arrangements run by the association "Berne in flowers", which was founded in 1937. The authorities give encouraging assistance in this laudable effort to improve the face of the town. [A.T.S.]

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The accounts for 1961 of the town of Olten show a surplus of 1.2 million francs. The total income amounted to 11.2 million francs. Half the surplus will be used for the newly-planned garbage utilisation plant and the new water-purifying installation. [A.T.S.]

* * *

The electorate of Basle voted for a new "Strafgerichtspraesident" (President of the Penal Courts) in the person of Dr. Max Benkler.

The new head of the "Vormundschaftsbehörde" (guardianship authorities) is Mr. Fritz Müller-Breitenmoser.

A series of chain letters have been circulated in certain schools in Basle. They promise the addressee large financial gains if he fulfils certain conditions, such as sending one franc to the person next on the list. The issue of chain letters is prohibited in Switzerland, and parents and teachers have been asked to report them to the juvenile guardianship authorities. [A.T.S.]

* * *

54 newly elected members of the authorities appeared with their traditional swords before the Cantonal Council of Appenzell-Ausser rhoden at Herisau and were sworn in at the new session of the Council. [A.T.S.]

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The traditional flower festival took place at Locarno on 10th June. Eighteen flower carts, eleven folklore

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groups, and seven bands took part in the procession, and over 30,000 spectators watched in beautiful sunshine.

[A.T.S.]

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The senate of the town of Geneva has elected Professor Jean Graven as the new "rector magnificus" of the university. Professor Claudius Terrier has been appointed Vice-Principal. [A.T.S.]

DEATHS

The following deaths have been reported from Switzerland:

National Councillor Gottlieb Duttweiler died in Zurich at the age of 74. He was a well-known if controversial figure in Swiss political life and the founder of Migros and other organisations. (The story of his life will appear in the next issue.)

Dr. Volkmar Andraea, the famous conductor and composer, died in Zurich within a fortnight of his 83rd birthday.

Monsieur Walter Hofer, Swiss Ambassador in Thailand and Minister in Burma, died of heart failure in Bangkok at the age of 61.

Hans Roelli, well-known Swiss song writer, lute player and singer, died at the age of 73.

Prof. Pierre Gilliard died in Lausanne, aged 83. He lived in Russia as tutor to the Russian Crown Prince Alexej until 1917, when he was involved in the tragic events of the revolution and banished to Siberia for three

years. Later he became Professor of Philosophy and History at Lausanne University.

Dr. Leo Altermatt, director of the Central Library of Solothurn, died at 67.

Former National Councillor Rudolf Schmid-Kaeser died in Zurich at the age of 75.

Hans Bernard-Schmid, Town-Councillor of Chur, was drowned when trying to board his kayak on a river in Vorarlberg. He was a supporter of regional television and, as captain of the Swiss Army, did military service in Korea. He was 50.

Eugène Robert, the oldest inhabitant of Neuchâtel, died in his 102nd year.

Walter Schaerer and August Haag, both from Zurich, were killed when their sports plane crashed shortly after take-off at Montreux.

The Basle actor, Hermann Gallinger, well known from theatre, radio and film, died at Ronco at the age of 62.

Miss Magdalena Seiler from Boenigen nr. Interlaken died at the remarkable age of 104. She enjoyed good health to the end and is believed to have been the oldest inhabitant in Switzerland.

Grossrat Franz Ammann, Basle, aged 52.

The Geneva alpine climber Michel Jaquet lost his life in the Monte Rosa region. His body was found in a deep glacier crevasse.

Former National Councillor Walther Trueb, one-time Chief engineer of Brown-Boveri, Baden. As director of

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the Zurich electricity works he was also an internationally known expert on electricity. He was 79.

André Albrecht, former Honorary Consul at Conakry (Guinea), died in France at the age of 55.

Dr. F. A. Herzog, former provost of the Foundation of St. Leodegar im Hof, died in Lucerne at the age of 82.

Cornelio Bonetti, well-known industrialist and prominent member of the Swiss Colony in Paris, died in Bellinzona aged 91.

Dr. iur. Robert Tobler-Giger, former National Councillor and one-time leader of the "National Front", died in Zurich at the age of 61.

Carlo Grassi (80) died in Lugano. He was the founder and owner of the "Arti Grafiche Veladini" and the "Istituto Editoriale Ticinese". He was Honorary President of the Swiss Association of Printers and an Honorary Member of "Pro Ticino".

Mrs. Helene Brugger-Wittelsbach died at Kreuzlingen in her 101st year.

Dr. Marcel Fischer died in Zurich at the age of 57. He was director of the Swiss Art Institute and, as a writer on art, he received the C. F. Meyer Prize for Literature in 1949.

Eugenio Cavadini, the Locarno architect and Ticinese politician, died at the age of 81.

Dr. Felix Burckhardt died in Zurich aged 79. He was director of the Zurich Central Library from 1932 to 1949. He wrote a number of works on bibliography and was an expert numismatist.

Alfred Cortot, the famous pianist, died in Lausanne at the age of 85. He was born on 26th September 1877 at Nyon, the son of a Frenchman. His mother was Swiss. He was one of the most famous interpreters of the music of Chopin.

[A.T.S.]

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