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IT HAPPENED IN NORTH-WESTERN SWITZERLAND

BASELSTADT

The Canton of Baselstadt had a population of 238,313 inhabitants in May, 349 more than a month before. In an article in the "Times" on 3rd September, "Basle — city rich in colours", Elizabeth Wiskeman describes Basle as being distinguished among the cities of Switzerland because a major European river is its *raison d'être*. Early in July, the new bridge of St. Johann was completed in its first stage. It is an entirely new construction which is causing the greatest interest in many parts of Europe, especially with British engineers. On both sides of the old bridge, the new bridge has been constructed in such a way that, once the old one is demolished, the two halves can be pushed together. The stage now completed has been reached four months prematurely, traffic is already using the bridge. The construction of buildings both sides of the Rhine goes on at great pace — projects costing 250m. francs are at present being executed, for which probably another 5m. will be needed on account of the increased cost. 48.8m. francs will be required to enlarge and extend the garbage incineration plant used by twenty Communes, two in the Aargau and one in the Alsace. In the first meeting of the Basle Parliament after the holidays, a number of additional credits had to be voted, and a scheme for 72 flats costing only 5.2m. francs was agreed to. The members also agreed to a contribution of a third, maximum 2.4m., towards the building of a *Bäderklinik* Valens near Pfaeffers where rheumatic patients will be treated.

A credit of Fr.49,000.— was granted for a Charter Air Terminal at Basle station. The larger part of the cost will be borne by the SBB.

The area of the barracks will revert back to the Commune of Basle by the end of the year. It is now planned to use it as a centre with parks, shops and hotels, in which the historic remnants should be given a dignified place. The Gothic Cathedral dating back to 1385 resembled a building site earlier this summer; the crypt has been rediscovered and a number of graves and coffins and Roman remains. Another find was made when two thirteenth-century houses were renovated at the Nadelberg: valuable frescoes and silver coins of the fourteenth century.

On 11th September, the electorate (participation 16.2%) agreed to *Gewaltentrennung* and to a limitation of office for Cantonal M.Ps., but the citizens rejected the proposal that the Canton should take part in the increase of capital of "Balair". The results are considered a victory for "Junges Basle". This group already protested earlier when it was known that the women of Basle who have been given the vote could not take part in the voting on 11th September, as the federal *Gewährleistung* could not be given by that date. The young politicians felt that voting could have been postponed until later so as to let the women participate.

Women did vote, however, earlier in the year when the Protestant Church community accepted a partial revision of the Church Constitution.

The cellar theatre "Fauteuil" celebrated its tenth anniversary, and the Ciba pension fund can look back on 50 years. The *Gewerkschaftliche Organisation des Basler Staatspersonals* celebrated its 75th anniversary. The *Basler Feuerschützen* have just celebrated their 500th anniversary and the Guild of the *Rebleuten* is 600 years old.

The new Cantonal Engineer is Alfred Mueller and the newly appointed *Waisenvater* is Dr. iur. Walter Asal. One of the popular personalities, the "Faehrima" Karl Staedeli, celebrated his 70th birthday on 1st August.

BASELLAND

In the first six months of 1966, the population of Baselland increased by 7,481 to 183,920. The Canton needs more money to deal with urgent problems. An increase in taxes has been proposed by the *Landrat*. Earlier in the year, a motion that the daily allowance for a member should be reduced by Fr.10.— to 50 francs, was defeated by 33 to 29 votes.

In March, the electorate had agreed to introduce votes for women. The Cantonal Government has now worked out proposals for amendments to the Constitution. The 74 Communes accepted the proposed alteration of the *Schulgesetz* and the law governing additional benefits of the AHV insurance.

A heated discussion has started again regarding the construction of the national road through the Canton. Water purification plants are being introduced in more Communes; they are small, prefabricated plants which purify the water biologically. Ten have been ordered so far of the 29 the Canton hopes to have in all. An air hygiene commission has been appointed to study, jointly with Baselstadt, the problem of clear air.

Cattle stocks have further gone back; since 1961, the reduction has been 17% down to 3,394 heads. There are 2,186 horses in the Canton, 27% fewer than five years ago.

THE FUTURE CANTON BASLE

The work on the new Constitution of the future Canton of Basle which is to re-unite the two Half-Cantons, goes on, and the Constitutional Council meets from time to time to continue the deliberations. A demonstration against re-unification was held at Therwil on 25th September. It was stated that co-operative federalism as proposed by the "Nouvelle Société Helvétique" in Switzerland would be preferable. Things should be left as they are, though Cantons, Half-Cantons and Communes must learn to tackle tasks and problems jointly. About 500 people took part in the demonstration.

SOLOTHURN

Regierungsrat Dr. Urs Dietschi has intimated his intention to resign after nearly 30 years in the Cantonal Government.

The electorate accepted three proposals on 11th September: the new *Zivilprozessordnung*, the new building of a State Record Office in Solothurn and the law regarding midwifery and free obstetrics for the needy; voting participation was 20%.

Figures published earlier this summer showed that there were 625 industrial and 5,345 non-industrial undertakings in the Canton in September 1965, the former employing 53,544, the latter 28,340 people.

The Solothurn bus services again increased in 1965, kilometer-wise by nearly 17% and the number of passengers by 10%, with a daily average of 8,672 people being transported.

1965 was a bad year for fire insurance in the Canton; damages amounted to 2.4m. francs, a whole million more than in the previous year.