

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: - (1920)
Heft: 1

Artikel: Gleanings from the English press
Autor: [s.n.]
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-685977>

Nutzungsbedingungen

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. [Siehe Rechtliche Hinweise.](#)

Conditions d'utilisation

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. [Voir Informations légales.](#)

Terms of use

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. [See Legal notice.](#)

Download PDF: 18.03.2025

ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>

En bon "Observer" de tout ce qui s'écrit sur la Suisse il aura toujours quelques citations intéressantes qu'il n'a qu'à tirer de son portefeuille, et si vous n'êtes pas trop pressé, il vous lira une page de l'histoire si curieuse et si peu connue de la Colonie même ou des rapports anglo-suisse. Et comme son amour est le même pour tous les fils du pays il aura pour chacun d'eux une parole encourageante dans son idiome à lui, —et pour le reste— nous comprenons tous l'anglais.

Le "Swiss Observer" servira de guide aux nouveaux arrivés; il leur indiquera l'hôtel qui les recevra, le tailleur qui leur prendra la mesure, le restaurant dont on ne se fatigue pas, l'horloger suisse, les sociétés qui l'admettront toutes avec empressement, la Légation, l'Eglise, la Banque où l'on compte sur lui.

Une fois par quinzaine le "Swiss Observer" ira voir tout son monde, jusqu'au plus éloigné des isolés en province. Pour ceux-ci, il sera le messager fidèle de Londres, celui qui se soucie de leurs intérêts communs. Les devoirs de solidarité et la sympathie pour ceux qui partagent notre sort le feront souvent parler des autres colonies suisses à l'étranger. Son plus beau rôle sera celui d'officier de liaison avec la patrie. C'est de là qu'il tirera son inspiration. Il s'en tiendra à l'idéal helvétique sans préjugé de parti ni de langue, ni de race, ni de religion. En ceci il croit vous ressembler, à vous tous qui, vivant loin des factions, ne voyez que ce qui fait l'unité, la force et la grandeur du peuple suisse et de son histoire.

Bien que le "Swiss Observer" aime d'un égal amour tous les coins et les vallées que vous chérissez dans notre terre natale, nous n'aurons pas assez d'espace pour donner des nouvelles de chacun des cantons en particulier. Mais chaque numéro de l'"Observer" vous donnera quelques faits soigneusement choisis pour vous permettre de vous tenir au courant de ce qui se passe de vraiment important en Suisse et de ce qu'on en pense.

Combien de fois avez-vous regretté au cours des années de guerre l'absence d'un tel lien entre Suisses en Grande Bretagne! Il aurait souvent pu nous encourager, nous consoler et surtout nous aider à préciser notre attitude en face des difficultés résultant de notre position de neutres, de notre isolement du pays.

Enfin, bien que tard, le voici, votre journal suisse de Londres. Puisse-t-il trouver l'accueil et le succès que nous lui souhaitons en le lançant sur la glace.

N'allez pas en juger trop sévèrement avant d'avoir lu plusieurs numéros et d'avoir payé votre abonnement.

Londres, le 16 Novembre 1920.

A. LATT.

COMMENTS OF THE SWISS PRESS ON TOPICAL SUBJECTS.

The chief event of interest in the period under review has been the referendum on the eight hours' working day in the public services of the Confederation. Though considerable objection was manifested in the agricultural districts, the majority in favour of the new law was about 100,000 votes.—an illustration of the progress of the industrialisation of our country.

Basler Nachrichten (1-11) is surprised at this result: "Niemand hat gewagt, die Annahme des Arbeitszeitgesetzes mit Bestimmtheit zu erwarten. Die eidgenössische Abstimmung über das Gesetz betr. die Ordnung des Arbeitsverhältnisses, also über eine der Vorlage für den 31. Oktober nahe verwandte Materie hatte im Frühjahr 1920 mit einem ganz kleinen Zufallsmehr eine Verwerfung ergeben, deren Wiederholung das Personal der eidgenössischen Verkehrsanstalten bis am Sonntag Abend befürchtete."

Journal de Genève (2-11) hails the decision as a measure of social progress and peace: "Nous pourrions ainsi continuer à

l'avenir de considérer, comme nous le faisons dès aujourd'hui, la date du 31 Octobre comme une date heureuse dans l'histoire politique de notre pays, comme une date marquant la volonté de notre peuple d'écarter de son chemin les luttes de classes, et de travailler à l'avènement d'une ère de condorde."

Bund, N.Z.Z., Liberté, etc., expect that the railway and postal workers will appreciate the proof of goodwill given to them and will justify our hopes in their loyalty towards the community.

Gazette de Lausanne in this connection reminds us of the increased deficit of the C.F.F. It was 9 millions in 1914, 26 in 1915 and 160 in 1919, and it will be 230 at the end of the present year, 522 millions in 1925 if the law is accepted—and it was accepted!

The forthcoming meeting of the *Assembly of the League of Nations* naturally evokes considerable interest and enthusiasm for the ideal of the League. After welcoming the Secretariat, people begin to study the names of the delegates of the various countries. Our own delegation will comprise men who were among the most active supporters of the ideal during the referendum campaign. It is particularly satisfactory to see that each of the three tribes is represented by one member, each of whom is worthy to speak for all of us: Monsieur G. Motta, President of the Confederation, Monsieur G. Ador, last year's President and head of the International Red Cross, and Ständerat Ustri from Zürich.

Navigation on the Rhine and the Rhone as well as between Geneva and Basle is again very much to the forefront of public interest.

The loan in the U.S.A. for the electrification of the C.F.F. still causes lively comment.

Swiss abroad will note with interest a plea of the *Journal de Genève* in favour of financial help from the Confederation for Swiss Schools abroad, an echo of a glowing appeal by Dr. Nadig from the Milan Group, addressed to the annual meeting of the N.S.H. at Schinznach.

A few interesting pages on Anglo-Swiss relations have been contributed to the *Semaine Littéraire* by Louis Debarge in a series of articles on Byron and Shelley's stay in Switzerland. Dr. August Ruegg in the *Basler Nachrichten*, under the title of *Bayreuth in England* records his impressions of recent visits to Glastonbury and Stratford-on-Avon.

GLEANINGS FROM THE ENGLISH PRESS.

Electrical Times and Lighting (4-11) records the fact that: "the first electric passenger train passed through the St. Gothard Tunnel on September 23, so that with the Loetschberg-Simplon line two Swiss-Alpine railways are now electrified. This is of great importance in the interests of transit traffic between Germany and Italy via Switzerland. The Swiss public will undoubtedly demand a speeding-up of general electrification of the railways, which under the present plans will take 30 years to accomplish. But the Swiss industry can not turn out more than 130 electric locomotives per annum, so that the Federal Railways will have to call upon foreign industry. There seems to be here an opportunity for British manufacturers, but the Germans will be powerful competitors, with some evident advantages in their favour."

Monsieur Motta in an interview, reproduced in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, and other papers (5-11) dispelled Italian apprehension that Swiss traffic was going to be deviated from the port of Genoa: "the President pointed out that particularly with the present exchange rates, it is to the interest of the Swiss merchants to utilise as much as possible the port of Genoa, even apart from the fact that Switzerland has no better communication with the sea than the line which passes through Genoa. As a matter of fact, 85% of the total supplies of cereals destined for Switzerland pass through Genoa."

The Textile Mercury (6-11) quoting from Dr. C. A. Schmid, draws attention to the ever increasing peril of Switzerland's economic penetration by Germany: "In eastern Switzerland, notably in Zurich, the number of German workers employed in cotton spinning rose 92.4 per cent. in six years from 1905 to 1911, while during the same period the number of Swiss in the same occupation diminished by 19.6 per cent. At Zurich foreign trade unionists are at present so numerous that they can, of their own accord, cause the Swiss organisations to declare strikes, even in the public services."

The Manchester Guardian Commercial (11-11) publishes in full the report of the Swiss Delegation to the Brussels Economic Conference, which we reproduce in another place.

The new Geneva Correspondent of the *Westminster Gazette* (11-11) after throwing ridicule on a large number of English tourists, is now engaged in a crusade against the houses of ill-fame in Calvin's city and against the gaming tables at the Kursaal. Really, if he stays long enough, Geneva will see wonders: "nearly half the city ought to be pulled down and rebuilt, for hardly a town in Europe has so many slums or so many doubtful odours. These slums, the uncleanly habits of large numbers of the population, and the imperfect cleansing of the streets, are probably the main causes of Geneva's being reputed not a very healthy city."

J. A. R. Marriott in an article on *Swiss Democracy*, contributed to *The Edinburgh Review* (November) and in another contributed to the *Fortnightly Review* of the same month, compares the Swiss Federal Institutions with those of America and his idea of a constitution for the British Empire. He admits that Swiss democracy is the most direct one and theoretically perfect, but he does not think that: "it can exist elsewhere than in a small State, itself the federal aggregate of still smaller States; peculiarly situated, alike as regards geography and also international relations."

THE ECONOMIC POSITION OF SWITZERLAND.

Statement of the Swiss Delegation to the Brussel's Conference—English Version contributed by Monsieur Henri Martin, Commercial Attaché to the Swiss Legation.

The economic life of Switzerland is very closely bound up with the economic life of the rest of the world. As a matter of fact, Switzerland has to import a large proportion of essential foodstuffs and fodder; she lacks the more important raw materials and subsidiary and semi-manufactured goods (coal, chemical manures, ores, cotton, silk, wool, hemp, flax, cacao-beans, etc.), and yet she possesses industries which are relatively very highly developed. Moreover, Switzerland was destined to be very severely tried, even though she herself was not directly involved, by a world-war, extending over several years, and the more so because, having no direct access to the sea, she found herself entirely dependant on the belligerent countries which, in numerous cases, compelled her to pay unfair prices for their goods.

The Swiss population, according to the latest census in 1910, finds employment to the extent of 60 per cent. in industry, trade and transport, and of 30 per cent. in agriculture. Since then the proportion has been further modified in favour of industrial occupations.

During the course of the last five years, the economic life of Switzerland has been subject to great disturbances which have taken place in industry, commerce, public and private finance, and in the movement of prices.

RISE OF PRICES.—The purchasing power of money has greatly decreased in Switzerland. According to the index-numbers, the cost of living is at present about two and a half times what it was in 1914 (in June 1914, 100; in December 1919, 243).

The result is the same as in other countries, an increase in wages and salaries. As these have to be paid in Swiss money which is standing at a high rate of exchange, they entail a heavy charge on

the Swiss export industry; on the other hand, this rise in wages and salaries has the effect of still further increasing the high cost of living.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY.—The Trade Balance in Switzerland before the war showed a debit balance of more than half a milliard francs (in 1913, 550 million francs), which was compensated, in the inter-national balancing of accounts, by the receipts derived from the tourist traffic, from transport and from investments abroad. During the war the situation altered to such an extent that the trade balance in 1916 showed an export surplus of 70 millions. Since then more or less normal conditions have been restored, and the trade balance has reverted to its former position, with a debit balance of 240 million francs in 1919, but without any compensation, on the international balance of accounts, in the form of receipts mentioned above.

Industrial output in Switzerland has been seriously compromised by the War. In addition, the increasingly deplorable state of the exchange has further aggravated the difficulties arising from the lack of raw materials and their excessive dearth. Contrary to general expectations, the currencies of the belligerent States, far from recovering after the conclusion of peace, have undergone a continual depreciation, a phenomenon which created fresh difficulties for Swiss industry. In fact, Switzerland has been flooded with cheap foreign products, which have created in her own market a formidable competition against indigenous products, which are naturally dearer. Switzerland derives only a limited benefit from the advantages which her favourable rate of exchange would appear to give her in the purchase of raw materials from countries with a depreciated currency. On the other hand, she suffers from all the disadvantages of having to compete with cheap goods.

For instance, Switzerland has to pay higher prices for coal and iron than are paid by foreign industries, and to these prices must be added high costs of transport, for the sources of supply nearest to Switzerland are hardly in a position to deliver anything.

As Switzerland has no raw materials, her export industry has had to develop in those branches in which labour represents an important proportion of the total value of the goods (clocks and watches, embroidery, silk goods, machinery, etc.). Already during the War there were great difficulties to be encountered in the export of Swiss goods; since the conclusion of peace this state of things has become still worse, for the Swiss export trade is to some extent checked by embargoes on importation, sometimes in violation of commercial conventions, and which deprive it of its natural outlets.

FINANCIAL SITUATION.—The financial situation in Switzerland has been entirely thrown out of balance by the War. Surrounded by belligerent countries, Switzerland had to mobilise over a considerable period the whole of her military forces and further large bodies of troops. Expenses of mobilisation amounted to a sum of 1¼ milliards of francs at the end of the year 1919; and to this expense has to be added that resulting from direct or indirect effects of the War. Whereas in 1913 the revenue and expenditure of the Confederation nearly balanced each other, in 1919 there was a deficit of about 400 millions. To this sum must be added the deficits of 25 Cantons, which are autonomous in respect of financial matters. For 1919 these amount as a whole to a deficit of 80 million francs.

The National Debt of the Confederation, which was only 1¾ milliards of francs in 1913, amounted at the end of 1919 to a sum of 3¾ milliards of francs. Moreover, the debt of the Cantons must be taken into account, and this, at the end of 1919, was 1¼ milliards as against about 800 millions at the end of 1913. Consequently, the total combined debt of the Confederation and Cantons amounted to 5 milliards of francs at the end of the year 1919. To this sum the debt of the Communes has also to be added, and this is considerably in excess of that of the Cantons.

With regard to taxation, it should be noted that the Confederation does not impose any direct taxes other than the army tax, the war tax, and the war profits tax. The war tax has so far yielded 100 million francs and the war profits tax half a milliard.

In normal times a great proportion of the expenditure of the Confederation is met by customs duties, which during the War yielded only a reduced amount, owing to the enforced slackening of trade. These dues in 1918 amounted to only half the sum obtained in 1913.