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HOME NEWS

In a message to the Chambers for the renewal of authority to contract fresh loans, the Federal Council states that the total indebtedness of Switzerland has increased during the last two years by about 200 million francs; i.e., the figure at the end of 1920 was 1,9 milliard, against 2,1 milliards at the end of 1922.

A demand for the reduction of the military budget has recently been addressed to the Federal Council, and it is now stated that a reduction of expenditure is impossible without deviating from the established basis. In this connection a lecture was delivered on December 4th by Generalstabschef Sonderegger, and the following exposé from the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* will prove of interest:—

Der uralte Gedanke, den Krieg unmöglich zu machen, hat in neuester Zeit im Völkerbund Gestalt angenommen. Auf verschiedenem Wege sucht der Völkerbund diese Mission zu erfüllen. Art. 10 des Vertrages sieht das solidarische Vorgehen aller Völkerbundstaaten gegen einen Friedensbrecher vor. Die Anwendung militärischer Gewalt zu diesem Zwecke ist aber nicht obligatorisch, sondern den Mitgliedern nur anheimgestellt. Die im Art. 16 angedrohte wirtschaftliche Blockade muss illusorisch bleiben, so lange Amerika dem Völkerbund nicht angehört. Der Völkerbund versuchte auch eine allgemeine Abrüstung einzuleiten; man ist aber in dieser Hinsicht noch nicht weit gekommen. Die Frage, ob sie sich verpflichteten, für das Militär nicht mehr auszugeben als im letzten Budget vorgesehen war, haben dieses Jahr nur drei Völkerbundstaaten (Belgien, die Tschechoslowakei und Australien) bedingungslos bejaht. Die Schweiz hatte sich zu dieser Verpflichtung bereit erklärt unter der Voraussetzung, dass alle anderen Staaten mitmachen; nachdem dies nun nicht eingetreten ist, ist die Schweiz in ihrem Handeln wieder völlig frei. Ein Abrüstungsprojekt von Lord Robert Cecil beruhte auf dem Grundgedanken: Was die Staaten durch die Abrüstung an nationaler Sicherheit verlieren, soll ihnen durch Garantieverträge für gemeinsame Verteidigung gegenüber einem Friedensbrecher ersetzt werden. Dieses Projekt wurde im Sommer von der dritten ständigen Kommission des Völkerbundes behandelt. Die Kommission kam aber zum Schluss, dass bei der gegenwärtigen Weltlage eine allgemeine Abrüstung unmöglich sei, und die Versammlung stimmte ihr hierin ohne weiteres zu. Es ist also festzustellen, dass der Völkerbund heute die Frage der Vermeidung von Kriegen, sei es durch militärische oder wirtschaftliche Machtmittel, sei es durch die allgemeine Abrüstung, nicht lösen kann. — Auch die Beschlüsse der Konferenz von Washington, die sich die Beschränkung der Rüstungen zur See und die Verhütung des Gaskrieges zum Ziele setzte, sind noch von keinem Staate ratifiziert worden.

Die Idee der Abrüstung wird in der Schweiz von den verschiedensten Leuten verfochten. Da sind Volkswirtschaftler, die behaupten, unser Land könne die Rüstungskosten nicht tragen. Ihnen ist zu erwidern, dass unser Volk jährlich 77 Millionen für Tabak und 146 Mill. Fr. für alkoholische Getränke ausgibt. Hält man daneben die 78 Mill. Fr., die für das Militär angewendet werden, so wird man gewiss nicht sagen können, dass dies unsere Volkswirtschaft erdrücke, besonders wenn man noch bedenkt, dass darunter viele Millionen Franken für produktive Ausgaben enthalten sind. Das beste Mittel zur Verhinderung des Krieges wäre ein engerer Zusammenschluss der Völker über die verschiedenen Rassen hinweg, selbstverständlich unter Wahrung der Individualität der einzelnen Nationen. Dazu ist vor allem ein besseres Sichkennenlernen notwendig, was ohne weiteres auch den Abbau der politischen Gegensätze und Rassenvorurteile im Gefolge hätte. Den Bestrebungen der idealen Pazifisten, die in diesem Sinne dem dauernden Weltfrieden als einem künftigen Idealzustand nacheifern, stehen auch die militärischen Kreise sympathisch gegenüber. Gefährlich sind dagegen die aktiven Pazifisten, die, über alle Wirklichkeiten sich hinwegsetzend, durch gänzliche Abrüstung den sofortigen Friedenszustand glauben erzwingen zu können; häufig genug verbergen sich auch hinter dieser Sorte Pacifismus kommunistische Treibereien.

Die Schweiz kann als kleines Land nicht mit dem guten Beispiel vorangehen; das verbietet auch die innere Lage. Eine weitere Einschränkung der Militärausgaben kann auch nicht mehr auf dem Budgetwege erfolgen, sondern nur durch Revision der Militärorganisation. Die Heeresbestände können nicht weiter herabgesetzt werden, wenn wir am Grundsatz der allgemeinen Wehrpflicht und am System des Milizheeres festhalten wollen. Die Idee der Zivilienpflicht ist praktisch undurchführbar. Man kann dem einzelnen nicht ansehen, aus welchen Gründen er den Militärdienst verweigert und die Zivilienpflichtigen könnten gar nicht beschäftigt werden. Wir können—so schloss der Redner—nicht abrüsten, ohne grosse Gefahr für unsern Staat zu laufen. Das Schweizervolk aber will und wird wehrhaft bleiben.

The Grand Council has, by a substantial majority, ratified the proposal of the Graubünden Government to acquire Bad Rotenbrunnen for fr. 100,000 for the erection of a cantonal home for the aged. This will replace the present accommodation allotted to the old folks in part of the Realta Almshouse.

The strike in the printing trade, which has continued unabated for over three weeks, seems to be nearing its natural end. A preliminary arrangement, arrived at under the auspices of the Federal Labour Office, had at first been rejected

by the officials of "Typographia" (the printers' union), who subsequently made efforts to interest other trades, so as to force the employers to agree to the impossible demands insisted upon. According to latest information, the principles of these preliminary arrangements have now been accepted and it would appear that the alleged right of the workers to refuse to print editorial matter likely to prejudice their own particular political aims (which was the ostensible reason for declaring the strike) has been negated.

That the Swiss possessed of means wish voluntarily to assist their fellow-countrymen less blessed with this world's goods was apparent immediately after the announcement of the defeat of the Capital Levy Initiative. A letter sent the same day to the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* by a family of Zurich, who desire to remain unnamed, offered fr. 100,000 to the society "Für das Alter," adding that, "though the Swiss have shown they are opposed to forcible seizure of property, it is now for the well-to-do to prove their interest in the welfare of the necessitous, especially the aged and infirm, who are in a sad plight until the old-age insurance comes into force." As this insurance would have benefited by the levy, the writers hope that a large sum may be raised for them as a thankoffering, and they trust that many large and small donations will follow their gift to "Für das Alter."

The highest meteorological station in Europe has been constructed recently on the Jungfrauoch, at an altitude of over 11,000 feet. The station has now been connected with the existing system of telegraphic service, and the Jungfrau Funicular Railway Company has placed a permanent observer at the new station.

NOTES AND GLEANINGS.

The Winter Season.

"All ready for Swiss Winter Sports" is the keynote of a great variety of articles appearing in the English press, which point out that winter sports are no longer the preserve of a few, as a good many have discovered how cheaply a holiday can be spent in Switzerland. The Jura range of mountains is now being extensively advertised, and this district, not yet being fashionable, should, on account of the very moderate charges, appeal to those who are willing to forego the distractions of dancing and drawing rooms. The old-established places are organising their season with a thoroughness and lavishness which will shake the attractions of the fashionable West-end hotels. Famous novelists and writers have been engaged to give lectures; exhibition dancers have become a necessary appendage; St. Moritz has secured the services of a well-known London couple to introduce the latest, never-ending variations of the fox-trot. But, says the *Pall Mall* (Nov. 30th) in a long article, "the real joy of Switzerland is not 'either the social life or the sport, but the extra-ordinary sense of well-being that the clear cold 'air gives.' The well-known alpinist, Prof. F. F. Roget, has written a special booklet for Messrs. Burberry, entitled "Hints on Alpine Sports," which is being given away to their prospective clients. Like influenza, love and many other ills that flesh is heir to, the lure of the Alps is catching, for according to the *Daily Mirror* (Dec. 6th) it is intended to "transfer all the pupils of a highly select school to one of the Swiss 'resorts for the whole of the Lent term, so as to 'enable the children to enjoy healthy air during 'the worst three months in the English year and 'to share in the winter sports.' After this, we shall not be astonished to read that an ingenious American has devised ways and means of shifting the whole of the City community, lock, stock and barrel, for the winter season to St. Moritz! A word of warning is uttered in the *Daily Express* (Dec. 8th) to the would-be ski-enthusiast, for "a 'careful statistical study has shown that three-quarters of the time of 99½% of those who ski 'is spent on the back, with a very visible means 'of support in the shape of five feet of snow and 'a facial expression denoting a mixture of surprise, anger and exasperation.' There are always some people who, acting under the influence of a grudge or an imaginary tort, give vent to their feelings in the correspondence columns of the press. Mr. A. Duruz, the manager of the London Agency of the Swiss Federal Railways, is ever at pains to correct these erroneous statements (see for instance *Bath Herald* of Nov. 23rd).

Talking about travelling, we should like to record the delicate manner in which Mr. McNeill,

the Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, expressed himself in the House of Commons on Nov. 29th, when, with reference to the mutual abolition of the visa on passports now in force with some countries, he is reported as having said, "the 'Swiss Government had so far concluded no reciprocal arrangement with his Majesty's Government."

Swiss Capital Levy.

The emphasis with which our people have rejected the proposed Capital Levy has been abundantly commented upon in the English press. The *Daily Telegraph* (Dec. 5th) calls it "a most notable 'object-lesson in the working of a highly-organised 'democracy . . . the quality of Swiss citizenship 'has been proved to admiration." The *Westminster Gazette* considers the result of the ballot as deeply instructive: "When 86 per cent. of the voters are 'drawn to the poll we may feel sure that the cause 'is one which touches matters of vital interest to 'the many. When of this heavy poll the votes are 'in the proportion of almost seven to one for or 'against a measure, we can have no further doubt 'as to its popularity. The rejection of the capital 'levy by such a majority proves beyond any doubt 'how deeply the Swiss people object to the proposed levy. This, in itself, is a remarkable fact. 'But it is seen to be of immense significance when 'we remember that Switzerland is one of the most 'democratic countries in the world, and the rich 'people, whom it was proposed to relieve of some 'of their wealth, form but a small fraction of 'the people." The *Morning Post* calls it "an 'instance of a highly-organised democracy totally 'rejecting Bolshevism," and adds that "it is possible to rob a man of the capital in virtue of 'which he is able to obtain credit for trading 'purposes; it is impossible, however, to transfer 'his credit to the robber." The *Daily Herald* opines that "the rejection is largely the result 'of an intensive and not over-scrupulous propaganda by Swiss business interests."

A New Type of Locomotive.

Particulars are being published in the technical press of a combination locomotive, designed and built by Messrs. Sulzer Bros. of Winterthur, successful trial runs of which have recently been made on the Zurich-Romanshorn line. The *Manchester Guardian Commercial* (Dec. 7th) supplies the following description:—

"The motive part comprises a 250-h.p. internal-combustion engine on the Sulzer system, able to impart to the vehicle a speed of up to 44 miles per hour. The passenger compartment has third-class seating accommodation for 70. One or two ordinary passenger cars (according to gradients) may be coupled to the vehicle, thus forming short trains.

"The main advantage over a steam engine service lies in the extremely low fuel expenses. The vehicle, which has the considerable weight of 65 tons, is said to consume only four gallons of fuel on the line Winterthur-Frauenfeld (about 20 miles), the cost of which is about equivalent to the price of one third-class ticket for the same distance. The new system is said to be readily adaptable also for locomotives, so that a far-reaching revolution may be expected in locomotive construction.

"The total running expenses in the case of this system are likewise said to be considerably lower than those of both steam and electric operation, being about one-half less."

Pro Juventute.

The new series of stamps was put into circulation on Dec. 1st, and philatelists will find a most instructive article in the *Daily Telegraph* (Dec. 7), which deals with the objects of this admirable institution and the artistic designs of the stamps since its inception. Up to last year the use of these stamps for international mail was limited, but the recent postal congress at Madrid sanctioned their validity for postage to any of the countries belonging to the International Postal Union, "so 'that many of the letters coming to this country 'from Switzerland will, no doubt, bear these attractive heraldic stamps, which come as philatelic heralds of Christmas and symbolise the 'seasonable spirit of charity, peace, and goodwill."

The Late Mr. Gaston Carlin.

The former Swiss Minister in London, who died intestate on June 13th in Berlin, left estate in the United Kingdom of the value of £21,319.

FINANCIAL AND COMMERCIAL NEWS FROM SWITZERLAND.

In putting before Parliament a proposal to grant renewed powers to the Federal authorities for raising loans, the Federal Council state that in the last two years the national debt, including funded loans and floating charges, has grown by 200 million francs. At the end of 1920 the total was 1,900