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The Swiss Observer

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Federal Councillor Motta in London.

Last Saturday, Federal Councillor Motta, Chief of the Political Department at Berne, arrived in London on a private visit. He has come here chiefly to see the wonderful Italian Exhibition of paintings at Burlington House. At the same time he is taking advantage of this opportunity to get into personal contact with our Colony. The City Swiss Club gave a dinner in Mr. Motta's honour on Thursday the 13th inst. at the May Fair Hotel. A full report will appear in our next issue. Our honoured guest is departing again, after a week's stay, on Saturday the 15th inst.

HOME NEWS

FEDERAL.

INSTALLATION OF THE NEW FEDERAL COUNCILLORS.

The new chief of the Federal Home Office, Federal Councillor Meyer, formerly Editor-in-Chief of the "Neue Zürcher Zeitung," has taken up his ministerial duties on the 1st of February. Federal Councillor Minger who was elected at the same time as Dr. Meyer at the December Session of Parliament has taken up office as chief of the Military Department at the beginning of the year.

EXTRAORDINARY SESSION OF PARLIAMENT.

In order to expedite the legal formalities for the establishment of the International Bank at Basle an extraordinary Session of the Federal Parliament has had to be called for the 24th of February. Not since the "distress session" in November 1918 in connection with the emergency measures necessitated by the General Strike has our Parliament met outside the customary time table. The main business of the session will be the acceptance of the State Treaty for the Establishment of the International Bank at Basle, which was concluded on the 20th of January. Two resolutions will be taken, one confirming the treaty for fifteen years, which is the maximum period for which Parliament can commit the nation without referendum. The other is to confirm the treaty in perpetuity but subject to the Referendum. As the National Council first deals with the business the State Council will be occupied on the first day of the session with some minor agenda and vice versa on the second day.

On the 7th inst. the Federal Council has submitted its report on the Treaty explaining that owing to the special character of the International Bank similar privileges were due to it as have been granted the Swiss National Bank. If on top of those privileges the personnel of the new Bank had to be granted tax exemption this was an unavoidable concession to international opinion.

TEMPORARY ABODE OF THE INTERNATIONAL BANK.

The Organisation Committee appointed at the Hague for the preparatory work for the Establishment of the International Bank has after a short stay in Basle chosen the Hotel Univers-Savoy, opposite the Federal Railway Station, as a temporary abode of the Bank. The Hotel which contains three big halls and 50 guest rooms will be rented at the rate of 200,000 francs per annum, while some necessary alterations in the "Kirschgarten" Building will be effected. The first meeting of the Bank's directorate is planned for the 5th of March and on the 1st of April the Bank begins to function.

INCREASE OF FEDERAL PERSONNEL.

Including the Postal and Railway service the number of federal employees has increased during last year from 63,440 to 65,005. The increase was necessitated by a considerable growth on railway and postal traffic. The railways alone have 34,024 employees.

LIBERAL-DEMOCRATIC CONGRESS.

The Annual Congress of the Swiss Liberal-Democratic Party will probably be fixed for the 23rd of March to be held at Berne. The Executive meets on the 4th of March. Dr. E.

PROGRESS IN COMMERCIAL AVIATION.

Commercial aviation has again made good progress during 1929 and as in former years has been entirely void of accidents. The best frequented lines are Geneva-Vienne (Balair), Zurich-Berlin (Ad Astra), Zurich-Paris-London (Imperial Airways), Zurich-Amsterdam (Balair) and Basle-Geneva-Marseille (Balair). Statistics give the following figures: 15,581 passengers, 94,859 kg postal goods, and over 1½ million kg of freight.

Our commercial aviation has reached the highest degree of perfection in spite of many difficulties encountered on some of the routes. T.G.

CONFERENCE FOR THE CUSTOMS ARMISTICE.

The Swiss delegation to the International conference at Geneva dealing with the customs armistice will be presided by Mr. Schulthess, head of the Federal Department of Public Economy. Messrs. Stucki, director of the Commercial Division, and Gassmann, General Director of Customs will be the members of the delegation, which may be further increased according to how events progress.

PROPOSED NEW RADIO STATION.

The Postal Authorities have bought at Sottens near Moudon an area of land for Frs. 40,000 for the installation of a radio station for the French speaking part of Switzerland, similar to the radio station already in operation at Münster (Lucerne).

LOCAL.

ZÜRICH.

The first prize of the Zurich Zoo lottery, amounting to 30,000 Frs., was won by a labourer, at present unemployed. As he has to keep his invalid mother, Dame Fortune has for once smiled in the right direction. St. G.T.

BERNE.

Federal Councillor Häberlin has received a delegation of the Committee for Women's Suffrage. After listening to their address, he made a personal statement to the effect that, much as he recognised the capacity of women to exercise the privileges of citizenship and the desirability of their co-operation in matters affecting Church, Education and Child Welfare, he yet felt doubtful as to the wisdom of drawing them into participation in political warfare. In any case, so he assured the delegation, their petition will receive the most careful and serious consideration. St. G.T.

The population of the town of Berne has been increased by 1,616 during 1929 and now amounts to 110,880. T.G.

ZUG.

Albert Märchy, leather tanner and merchant, of Arth met with a fatal accident while descending the Morgarten road in his car. The road was covered with snow and ice, and the car skidded so violently that it crashed through the railings alongside the road and rolled down the slope. Märchy was thrown out and killed instantly. N.

BASLE.

The Delegates' Meeting of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique at Basle elected Dr Hammer (Solothurn) as Central President and Dr. Isler (Basle) as Central Treasurer. The former chief of the Auslandschweizersekretariat, Dr. Zellweger (Zurich), was elected a member of the Central Committee.

The meeting also decided to hold an Auslandschweizerstag in Basle at the beginning of September next.

Federal Councillor Schulthess addressed the meeting concerning the proposed old age and dependents' insurance (Alters- und Hinterbliebenenversicherung). He stated that he was authorized to say on behalf of the members of the Federal Council, that they were all in agreement with the proposal in its present form, and that they would support and further it as soon as the alcohol Bill, just now in its final stages, was settled. He also appealed warmly to the meeting to support this latter proposal when it is submitted to the vote on April 6th. St. G.T. and N.

Pastor Dr. E. Miescher died at Basle aged 82. He was the son of Professor Miescher (University Bern) and came to Basle in 1850. After completing his studies, he held appointments in the Thurgau and St. Gall. In 1890 he returned to Basle as President of the Basle Mission. From 1891 to 1921 he was Vicar of the St. Leonhards Church, and he was also the editor of the "Volksfreund" during 53 years. His son,

NOTES AND GLEANINGS.

By KYBURG.

White Drug Kings:

The account we published last week under the above title of the inglorious role Switzerland has hitherto played in the provision of drugs for illicit trafficking must have come as a shock to many of our readers.

I am not quite sure that I have ever read anything more sinister, more terrible for the good name of our beloved country. And yet, we flatter ourselves that Switzerland is a Home for lofty and humanitarian ideals! Ye gods! How can any Swiss feel proud of his nationality if he knows what these poison-manufacturers are doing and until he has helped to stop them and stop them effectively. Surely it's not a question of "Gewerbefreiheit," seeing that the good name of Switzerland is in question and that there cannot be two opinions about it among a people who call themselves Christian. The whole matter is utterly incomprehensible to me and I feel that if our Federal Authorities are in earnest in their endeavour to cope with this unclean business, they surely could get all the authority and power they require by appealing to the Federal Chambers. Cantonal Authority is one thing, Federal Authority another, but I have yet to learn that the Swiss People as such are willing to let such foul things go on unchecked in Switzerland. The truth probably is that they do not know, in which case the Swiss Newspapers are to blame. And I am glad our Editor has printed the article, because it is no good to anybody to go about in blissful ignorance of shameful things happening at home. When we know, we can start remedying such defects on our otherwise clean escutcheon.

Following is an interesting item on the participation of a Swiss firm in the elaboration of a new armour-piercing weapon:

Guns to Fight Tanks:

Morning Post, 22nd Jan.

How an ordinary wax candle fired at a range of 120 yards from a 12 bore shot gun pierced a three-quarter inch deal board, travelled over a hundred yards beyond it and sustained little damage, was described at a meeting last night at the Royal Artillery Institution, Woolwich.

This was one of the many experiments recently carried out to show what could be done with a high velocity. The experiments were conducted in relation to attempts to find a mobile armour-piercing weapon with which successfully to fight a tank.

Major-General Peck, Director of Mechanisation at the War Office, giving details of experiments recently made with a view to approving a weapon which would fire an armour-piercing projectile, emphasised the essentials

Home News—(Continued)

Dr. Miescher, is a member of the National Council and Director of the town of Basle's finances.

GRAUBUENDEN.

Stationmaster Johann Erni in Trins was crushed to death while supervising the loading of wood. St. G.T.

VAUD.

Mr. Emile Mermier, retired engineer of the C.F.F. has died at Lausanne aged 74. He was one of the engineers in charge of the Simplon tunnel and the author of a scientific study on ventilation and refrigeration. T.G.

The Cantonal Council is submitting to the States Council a proposal for a new penal code which has been prepared by Mr. A. Capt.

VALAIS.

The Red Cross Society has collected the sum of Frs. 21,300 for the communes of Lourtier, Salgesch and Torgon. J.G.

TICINO.

On his way back to work a 27 years old labourer, Severo, descended a small mountain path in the Val Grubiasca and fell into a precipice where he was killed instantly. T.G.

An Italian subject has successfully managed to pass the Italian-Swiss frontier, hidden in a luggage van, only to be arrested on arrival at Bellinzona. J.G.