

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: - (1938)

Heft: 879

Artikel: Historians and the crisis

Autor: Wood-Ward, E.L.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-695063>

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: 15.05.2025

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

he completed "Die Meistersinger, Siegfried and Götterdämmerung." Toscanini had an extremely fine ensemble at his disposal, composed of soloists, noted chamber musicians, and the best players from the Swiss orchestras. The impression of the magnificent playing grew steadily as the concert progressed, the audience was enthralled by the music and by the man who brought it so powerfully to life.

SCHAFFHAUSEN.

M. Bühler, a member of the cantonal government, lost his life when on a mountaineering excursion in the Bernese Oberland. He fell into a glacier crevasse when ascending the Finsteraarhorn and was killed. M. Bühler, who was 46 years old, entered the cantonal government in 1935.

APPENZEL A. Rh.

Colonel Hans Ruckstuhl, for several years "Landammann" of the canton Appenzel A. Rh., has celebrated his 70th birthday. Colonel Ruckstuhl was "Platzkommandant" of Winterthur in 1918.

GRISONS.

A fire which broke out at the Paper Works in Landquart, partly destroyed the works; the damage caused is estimated to reach over half a million francs. Nearly one thousand employees will be faced with unemployment.

AARGAU.

The firm Weber Söhne A.G., Cigar Manufacturers in Menziken, are celebrating this year the 100th anniversary of their existence. The founder of the firm was Samuel Weber who started in 1838 in a small way to cultivate tobacco plants. To-day the firm has works in Menziken, Reinach, Rickenbach and Kölliken, employing over 500 employees.

VAUD.

The death has occurred in Lutry of Dr. Charles Jaccottet, formerly Professor of Mathematics at the University of Lausanne, the Collège scientifique, and the cantonal school, at the age of 68.

GENEVA.

The death is reported from Geneva of M. Charles de Haller, consulting engineer, at the age of 70.

The deceased was one of the leading engineers at the Saloniki-Constantinople railway, and later on was in the service of the municipal service of the town of Geneva. In the army, he reached the rank of Colonel of Infantry.

HISTORIANS AND THE CRISIS.

By E. L. WOODWARD.

The Eighth International Historical Congress has just finished a week of peaceful sessions in the hospitable city of Zürich. The political situation in Europe was bound to cast a shadow over the proceedings of an international meeting. Historians know only too well how quickly wars spread, and how many civilisations have failed to recover from the disintegration which follows the inevitable lowering of standards in war. European culture was near to the abyss in the last year of the Great War, and in the confusion after the armistice. The lessons of history are a warning that a risk of this kind cannot be taken twice in one generation. We Europeans cannot continue to live on the moral and intellectual capital accumulated in a previous era of peace. If we do not make our own positive contribution to a better world-order, we can but expect the destruction which has overcome cultures as proud and, seemingly, as firmly rooted as our own. Thus anyone who listened to the groups of people talking in the great hall of the *Technische Hochschule* in Zürich would have noticed an undertone of deep anxiety. Yet, over against this sombre background, there was something encouraging in the mere fact that members of more than forty nations could still meet together for intellectual discussions which were no mere exchange of compliments and banalities.

The Swiss organising committee responsible for the arrangements at Zürich carried out its work in a perfect way; I have never seen a large congress managed with such skill and kindness. The long applause with which a vote of thanks was passed at the closing session showed that the kindness was appreciated by everyone. The work of the Congress does not end with this closing session. *The Comité International des Sciences Historiques* is a permanent body, with an assembly of representatives from all participating nations, and a small standing committee which meets once a year. It receives valuable help from the Rockefeller Foundation. The assembly and its committee are responsible for certain publications of an international kind, and for co-

ordinating the work of various international commissions and national committees interested in different branches of history or in problems of practical importance for scholars. These committees are international in the fullest sense of the term. An American scholar, Dr. Leland, has succeeded an Englishman, Dr. Temperley, as President. The Secretary is French, the treasurer English (his predecessor was Swiss), and the standing committee includes historians from Belgium, Germany, Italy, Norway, Poland, Rumania, and Switzerland. There are no hard and fast rules about language; it has happened this year, and is likely to happen again, that French — not English — is used most frequently in the discussions and business meetings, with German as a close second.

One's impression of the papers can only be partial. The Congress is divided into fifteen sections; some of the sections are subdivided. You have therefore to take your choice from a dozen or more discussions held simultaneously. On the whole I think I found the greatest interest in listening to subjects outside my own field of work, though I learned a very great deal from one paper on my own "period" by a young Polish scholar, M. Widerszal (whose professor watched him read his work just as an Oxford College tutor might listen to one of his pupil's essays). In general, I wished very much that some of the English critics of the history taught by historians had been present at this Congress. The critics would have found that historians do not content themselves with telling sad stories of the deaths of kings. They deal mainly with ideas, and those ideas are far less remote from the world of to-day than the critics often admit. The papers read at the Congress were written long before the present period of acute international tension; summaries of every communication were published earlier in the year. These papers were written in every country, and yet they had in common a remarkable sense of responsibility, an attitude of mind which one can define best by saying that the writers were conscious of the value of their study — taken as a whole — for understanding the modern world and for instructing those who govern the world. It would also be true to say that, without distinction of nationality, there was something more than an undercurrent of feeling, that historians — as the guardians of knowledge of a political kind — must uphold certain standards of intellectual integrity.

Finally, I think that any observer would have been impressed by the fact that, in all these discussions, a common intellectual background is taken for granted. In spite of great differences of opinion, and of deep national attachments — at times, one might say, national prejudices — there is still a common fund of culture, a language of ideas common to all educated people. The transition from the common culture of a highly trained minority to a common political arrangement affecting the masses of men in modern States is obviously one of enormous difficulty — historians would be the last people to minimise this difficulty — but it is not merely the illusion of friendly talk in pleasant surroundings which makes one think that this transition is not impossible. The plain facts are that for people of high culture this step has already been taken, almost unconsciously, and that it does not involve any devitalising process, any surrender of the living forces which distinguish a healthy national growth from a weak cosmopolitanism.

We have all separated now, and as we broke up after our last session I could not but wonder whether, in a short time, I should be remembering those meetings as among the last events of the kind of life which civilised men enjoy living, just as throughout the four years from August, 1914, I remembered, again and again, an afternoon in the Black Forest in July, 1914, when I watched the drivers of a German battery of artillery giving village children rides on their horses, as they led them to the watering place. And if, as one hopes, a sense of reason and prudence returns to Europe, I wondered what, at our next Congress five years hence, we should then think of our present anxieties. Anyhow, it seemed to me no bad thing that, for the next session of our permanent committee, we chose, unanimously, the city of Prague.

Spectator.

PERSONAL.

We deeply regret to announce the death of M. Arnold Theodore Bodmer at the age of 69.

The deceased has been in this country for over 50 years, he served until recently as Vice-President of the "Kirchenpflege" of the "Schweizerkirche" of St. Anne and St. Agnes.

We express our sincere sympathy to his widow and daughter in their sad bereavement.

TRIPLE JUBILEE AT THE SWISSAIR.

A few days ago three members of the staff of the Swissair prominently figured in the news on account of their achievements.

Flight-captain Walter Borner and Wireless-operator Jules Gloor, both accomplished their one million kilometres, and thus joined the small, but distinguished company, of "Flight millionaires."

It was the good fortune of the editor of this paper, to travel in the company of the newly created "millionaires" only a few days after their splendid records and never has he felt happier in the company of "millionaires" than on that flight on Saturday last.

In spite of heavy fog which prevailed, and which necessitated a delay in taking off from Dübendorf, Flight-captain Borner made a remarkable landing in Basle which was a delight to all the passengers, and proved that he is worthy to join his colleagues who have established the good name which the *Swissair* enjoys in the international circles of Air Traffic.

Not only on behalf of our paper, but on behalf of the great number of passengers who had the good fortune to fly with our distinguished countrymen, we extend to them our heartiest congratulations and best wishes for the future.



Flight-captain Walter Borner

played for a great many years an important part in Swiss aviation; before joining the *Swissair* he rendered eminent services in connection with the establishment of the Aerodrome Geneva-Cointrin, in whose service he flew a distance of 150,000 km. Previous to his appointment as "Streckenflieger" to the *Swissair* he held the post as Manager of the Aero-Traffic S.A. in Geneva.

Wireless Operator Jules Gloor

who now becomes a "flight millionaire," has been connected with aviation since the age of 17, he was, as will be remembered, connected with the famous and epoch making flight to Alexandria. His cheerful and smiling face is a delight and comfort to all passengers who get in touch with him. The writer remembers him as a most helpful companion during the first Non-Stop Flight London-Samaden early this year.

Pilot Robert Fretz

who has recently flown his half-million kilometres has been promoted to the rank of Flight-captain, and thus the *Swissair* has seven Flight-captains on their staff.

Flight-captain Fretz was in former years a well-known personality amongst the "Sportsflieger;" during the famous "Europaflug" in 1932, at which all the famous international aviators took part, he secured 4th place. —

A very modest record, almost insignificant in comparison with the above mentioned records, has been established last Saturday by the editor of the *Swiss Observer*, who has just accomplished his 10,000 miles flight as a "passenger," ten thousand miles of sheer delight and comfort to which he is deeply indebted to the efficient staff of Switzerland's greatest Aviation Company, the *Swissair*.

ST.