

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: - (1941)

Heft: 991

Artikel: The 650th anniversary and the English press

Autor: [s.n.]

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-689851>

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: 04.12.2024

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

que cela se fait dans toutes les démocraties du monde et même dans plus d'une monarchie. Mais la cérémonie ne finit pas là. Dès qu'il est installé dans ses fonctions, le *landammann* reçoit à son tour le serment de fidélité et d'obéissance des citoyens. Il est plus et mieux qu'un simple président du pouvoir exécutif. Il est un véritable souverain. S'il doit tout à son peuple, son peuple lui doit tout autant. Entre ces deux contractants, il existe des droits et des devoirs égaux.

Certes, cette cérémonie n'existe dans aucun des cantons qui ne connaît pas l'institution de la *landsgemeinde*. Elle n'existe pas non plus pour le Conseil fédéral. Mais l'esprit qui l'anime et dont elle s'inspire, a coloré nos institutions et les a marquées d'un sceau indélébile. En effet, nous avons le sens et le respect de l'autorité. Nous ne concevons pas la démocratie comme une somme de libertés individuelles aussi larges que possible, sinon illimitées. Nous savons qu'elle comporte, pour les citoyens, autant de droits que de devoirs. Nous savons aussi que, si les gouvernements sont au service de la communauté, celle-ci leur doit obéissance et loyalisme.

Ainsi, de par une longue tradition dont la source remonte aux Waldstätten, notre régime est une démocratie libérale tempérée par l'autorité, par un gouvernement fort. Certes, au cours de certaines périodes de prospérité et de facilité, nous nous sommes laissés aller comme d'autres à mettre l'accent plus sur les libertés que sur l'autorité. Mais il suffit que le danger extérieur se dessine — ainsi qu'on a pu le constater en 1914 et en 1939 — pour que l'autorité soit restaurée dans sa plénitude et cela du consentement de tous.

Notre démocratie est solide. Elle n'est pas menacée comme tant d'autres. Nous le devons aux Waldstätten et cela suffit à ce que nous célébrions de grandes fêtes pour leur rendre hommage et pour les remercier du fond du cœur.

Berne, le 23 juillet 1941.

Pierre Béguin.

SWISS STOCK EXCHANGE PRICES.

Through the courtesy of the London Office of the Swiss Bank Corporation we are enabled to publish the quotations of some of the leading stocks ruling on August 5th:—

Bankverein	...	...	421	430
Kreditaanstalt	...	...	490	497
Rückversicherung	...	...	2900	2890
Ciba	...	...	5670	5600
Nestlé	...	...	857	845
Aluminium Neuhausen	...	...	3200	3125
Columbus	...	...	293	285
Sulzer	...	...	1040	1080
Brown Boveri	...	...	255	250
Wehranleihe 3% 1936	...	...	102%	102.80
SBB JURA-SIMPLON	...	...	102%	102.25

THE 650th ANNIVERSARY AND THE ENGLISH PRESS.

Most of the English papers notably "The Times," "The Manchester Guardian," "Time and Tide," and "The Tablet" have published special articles in eulogistic terms on the occasion of our great Anniversary. We reprint the one from "The Tablet," August 2nd.

The origin of the Swiss Confederation consisted in a very human and very Christian act, the taking of an oath on August 1st, 1291, by the representatives of the cantons of Uri, Schwyz and Unterwalden. It is interesting to note, particularly in these days when we are being urged to promote democratic revolution and to establish a Federal State uniting a number of peoples under one Government and when everything is being done to assert the supremacy of the wholly secularized common man, that the originators of the Swiss confederation were Christian aristocrats, Conservatives insisting on their ancient rights as against an intruder, not intending to create a State at all but resisting an attempt to absorb them in a larger and more powerful State, resisting in fact the beginnings of the modern world. Gonzague de Reynold is particularly illuminating on this question of origins: "The Swiss Confederation does not owe its origin to a revolution but to a reaction: Albert of Austria is more modern than the men of Waldstätten; he represents already the idea of a great State, the idea most opposed to medieval particularism."

Out of these origins Switzerland emerged as a system of alliances rather than as a unified State in the ordinary sense. The pact of Brunnen in 1315 formed the three above-mentioned cantons into a real confederation, with sovereign independence and the right of representation at the Imperial diets. Through a series of little wars or readily accepted agreements the federation was extended to Lucerne, Zurich and Glarus, and to Latin Switzerland through Berne.

The destruction of religious unity at the Reformation inevitably affected the history of a country where two of the leading reformers, Calvin and Zwingli, were most active, but the political hegemony of one of the confessions leading to an absolutist State was providentially avoided. The federation remained intact and Protestants and Catholics learned to put up with one another and to co-operate politically through the freely and spontaneously established forms of the *Eidgenossenschaft*. Napoleon's invasion limited Swiss independence, but this constitution of 1798 put an end to some of the political feuds amongst the cantons; the "Federal Pact" of 1815 was the work of the Swiss themselves and was not conditioned by outside influences, though it accepted many of the Napoleonic reforms. The spirit of the French revolution affected every other State in Europe, and this country also had its share of the revolutionary disturbances which reached their climax in 1848. In that year after some fighting, but comparatively little bloodshed, Switzerland declared itself a Republican Federal State and accepted a new constitution, largely derived from the pact of 1815. This in turn was subjected to further revision in 1874. By this time much of the cantonal independence had

Drink delicious "Ovaltine"
at every meal—for Health!

vanished and Switzerland had become a centralized State; nevertheless the unity was looser than that of other European States and it was with considerable difficulty that a central criminal code was accepted as recently as 1938. Cantonal feeling still remains strong, but equally intense is the loyalty of all citizens of every tongue to the federation; the threat from Nazi Germany has only served to increase this loyalty and it is probable that fewer Quislings would have been found among the German-speaking Swiss than anywhere else in Europe if Hitler had chosen to "intervene" in that country; in any case it is certain that such intervention would be met with armed resistance which, however ineffective at the moment of aggression, would secure the ultimate resurrection of Switzerland and keep alive the spirit of 1291.

Switzerland provides many lessons for those who will be responsible for the reconstruction of Europe; and in particular it shows that reconstruction must be the result of an organic development, with its roots deep in the past; it must be deeply Christian as all Europe once was Christian and must respect the rights of man, not merely as they were enunciated in 1789 but as they were engraved on his mind by the Creator. If it destroys much of the evil of the past it must also resist the new revolution which would curb those rights and destroy the Christian spirit in order to set up institutions completely out of harmony with the natural tendencies of human nature and contrary to the true spirit of Europe.

If we describe Switzerland as the model democracy, that is not to suggest that it is perfect — for no human institution can be perfect — nor to recommend other States to adopt with slight modifications the Swiss constitution and the cantonal system. Rather is Switzerland after six hundred and fifty years an example of the conditions under which democratic government can be made to work most satisfactorily, conditions which arise largely from human nature and which have little or nothing to do with institutional forms.

Modern Switzerland, a genuinely neutral country in the midst of a war involving practically every other country in Europe and rapidly extending to the nations of the whole world, has succeeded in maintaining law and order and in creating a unique harmony amongst four distinct language groups and a variety of Christian confessions. This happy state of things has not been attained through revolutionary methods, but through a very gradual development of a system worked out by men who had a proper respect for the dignity of their kind and who were moved by a deeply Christian spirit.

In the old Swiss confederation at times of great danger the members received what was called a "*Mahnung*." The exact meaning of this word is so difficult to convey that de Reynold does not even translate it into French; to understand it completely one would have to be a Swiss. We must be content to understand by it not merely a warning, but a summons, a challenge to the tardy and neglectful. And in wishing well to the Swiss on this great anniversary day we may also thank them for the *Mahnung* which they are giving to us tardy and neglectful Europeans.

LOUIS DUCHENE †.

Mr. Louis Duchene died in London on August 17th at the age of 49. Born in Geneva he settled down in London at an early age in the Hotel line and at the time of his death was general manager of the Ritz Hotel where he had been in an administrative position for sixteen years; previous to that he was general manager of the Carlton.

Mr. Duchene took little part in the activities of our Colony but he has been a member of the City Swiss Club since 1921, and a founder member of the Cercle Genevois.

SWISS HONOUR FOR ENGLISH SCIENTIST.

(*"Daily Telegraph,"* August 7th)

M. Thurnheer, the Swiss Minister, presided at a pleasant function at the Dorchester on August 6th. This was the lunch given in honour of Sir Robert Robinson, the famous scientist. At it the Minister handed to Sir Robert the first Paracelsus Medal of the Swiss Chemical Society. It was awarded to Sir Robert in 1939 when he was in Switzerland on a climbing holiday.

War broke out and he had to return to London to take up his job as member of the scientific advisory council of the Ministry of Supply. Thus it was not until yesterday that he actually received his medal.

The Swiss Minister confessed himself no scientist and no great authority on Paracelsus, who, he said, was at one time at Oxford. He drew attention, however, to the fact that this was the first award of its kind and that the recipient was one whom the Swiss Chemical Society regarded as having made the most important contributions to chemistry in the world.

Sir Robert, in an admirable impromptu speech, replied that he had not known until then that Paracelsus — his favourite reading when a boy — had been a member of Oxford University.

(*The 400th anniversary of the death of Paracelsus will be celebrated at Einsiedeln from Sept 27th to 29th.*)

OUR NEXT ISSUE.

We hope to publish our next number on September 26th, 1941.

SHIPPING to and from SWITZERLAND

For advice on present facilities apply to
WORLD TRANSPORT AGENCY
LIMITED

1, MARTIN LANE, LONDON, E.C.4

Tel: MANSion House 3434