

Swiss political aspects in 1946

Autor(en): **Feldman, Marcus**

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NEWS FROM THE S.B.C. (SWISS BROADCASTING CORPORATION).

Colonel Feldmann, the founder of the Soldatenspende during the war 1914-18, died at the age of 79 years.

In the election of the State Council of the Canton of Basle City, the left parties and the "Bourgeois" both returned 64 seats and the 2 remaining seats belonging to the Evangelist Party are now the deciding factor. Noticeable changes in party strength are the loss of the Socialist Party from 39 to 33; whereas the PdA. (Communist) went from 26 to 31; the Independents (Duttweiler) dropped from 9 to 6.

In 1945 Swiss Sfr. 1,050,000,000 have been paid in taxes by the Swiss people. The debt of the Confederation, without consideration of the debts of the cantons and communities, has risen during the war from four billion to over ten billion Swiss francs.

A head of a family with two children and an income of Sfr. 10,000 has to pay the following taxes annually.

In Zurich	Sfr. 749
" Chur	Sfr. 1339
" Altdorf	Sfr. 441
" Glarus	Sfr. 337

On a fortune of Sfr. 100,000 which would not be taxable in New Zealand, the taxes amount to the following figures:

In Zurich	Sfr. 615
" Chur	Sfr. 1060
" Altdorf	Sfr. 715

SWISS POLITICAL ASPECTS IN 1946.

By

Dr. Marcus Feldman.

1946, the first year after the war, is slowly drawing towards its close. The nations are groping to find a way to a new peace order and although but a relatively rough outline of this peace is to be perceived, this outline is somewhat favorable as a result of the negotiations in New York. At any rate, the problem must not only preoccupy the minds of the former belligerent nations, but also those who have remained neutral during the world conflict; among those nations figures Switzerland.

In 1946 Switzerland's foreign policy was dominated by two principal aims; the re-establishment of normal diplomatic relations with Soviet Russia and the preparation of Switzerland's attitude to the United Nations. In both respects our country has achieved considerable success in the past year. Normal diplomatic relations between Soviet Russia and Switzerland were assumed in March 1946, after an interruption of 28 years. The respective ministers have opened offices in both capitals. Not only have diplomatic relations between the two countries now been established, but the political relations have also visibly relaxed. Only a year ago, Soviet Russian propaganda occasionally tried to make Switzerland appear a pro-fascist country. Once they even went so far as to accuse the head of the Federal Political Department, Federal Councillor Petitpierre, of being the exponent of a plot aimed against peace. These attacks disappeared in 1946, and Soviet Russia now seems politically to value the maintaining of correct relations with Switzerland. Only thus can the repeated Russian proposals to establish the seat of the United Nations in Geneva be explained.

Within a relatively short period, the situation has indeed undergone a radical change. Switzerland's policy with regard to the UN is based on two principal thoughts. On the one hand, she wishes to co-operate actively in the world reconstruction, within the framework of her possibilities, and is therefore willing to lend every possible support to the UN. On the other hand, Switzerland is determined to maintain her personal independence in the form of her permanent

and traditional neutrality, which she also intends to keep in the future. The Federal Government, in an agreement with the Secretariat of the UN has placed the former League of Nations premises in Geneva at the disposal of the UN for the establishment of a European seat, where they are to meet and according to their own responsibility. The agreement contains the provision that no military operations are to be conducted from Geneva. The International Labor Bureau is gradually returning to its old home in Geneva, and an international refugee bureau is also to be set up in the same city.

With Switzerland's admission to the International Court which was approved on December 11 this year by the General Assembly of the UN, Switzerland is only pursuing a traditional policy of always co-operating in the furtherance and development of international arbitration.

A few days ago, the Federal Parliament gave its consent to Switzerland's entry into FAO, the food and agricultural organization of the UN, and a first contact with UNESCO has been established during the recent conference of this cultural organization in Paris. These preparatory steps still leave undecided the problem of Switzerland's adherence to the UN itself, the final decision lying, according to the Swiss Constitution with the people and the cantons. It is to be expected that the Swiss people would only approve such an adherence if maintenance of the country's independence and its foreign political sovereignty is assured. During the first post war years, her internal situation has had various interesting aspects.

The predominant factor is that the value of political freedom has been clearly recognized again and the conception of the democratically guided state of the people based on freedom has been strengthened in all Swiss parties. The special wartime powers with which Parliament had vested the Federal Government are gradually being abolished. It is interesting to note the reserved and skeptical attitude with which the Swiss people are facing any extension of the rights of the people guaranteed in the constitution. Several cantons, such as Zurich, Basle, Geneva and Ticino, have rejected bills for the introduction of women's right to vote by a very large majority. The people who dispose of the greater political rights of all nations of the world are showing a rather conservative attitude towards the further extension of these public rights. In various cantons, the parties of the left have been able to score considerable gains in the recent elections of the Cantonal authorities. At the same time, however, the extremists of the left, the Party of Work, have become entangled in a heavy political and financial crisis. The fact that this crisis coincides with the re-establishment of normal relations with Soviet Russia must be particularly stressed. At any rate, the attempts of the communists to make party politics in the country by means of foreign political pressure have failed completely.

Economic and social rights in Switzerland are in full development now at the end of 1946. A fortnight ago, the Swiss people and the cantons rejected by a strong majority a popular initiative aimed at inclusion in the Federal Constitution of special provisions granting the citizen the right to work. The next popular initiative in the economic and social field to come up for public vote will be that of the social democrats aimed at economic reforms in the introduction of the right to work.

On December 16, the National Council with 108 votes against 50 decided to recommend to the Swiss people to reject this proposal. The decision was explained with the argument that it is not up to the constitution to guarantee the citizen economic system in the form of the provisions given, which would only lead to an increase of state influence on economy by way of legislation and without the approval of the required majority of the canton.

The Federal State Council has approved the bill of the introduction of a general old age independent's insurance in Switzerland with 34 votes against 1 after the National Council had done the same with 170 votes against 8.

In 1947, the Swiss people will be called to the polls on several occasions. There are the socialist initiative on the right to work; the new economic articles, the old age independent's insurance, and in October 1947 the elections to the National Council.

Switzerland faces the new year in a consolidated position. Internally the country finds itself in the middle of the liveliest discussion on decisive questions regarding the transformation of Switzerland to an economically stable democracy. (Radio Suisso.)