

Members of the Federal Government speak

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MEMBERS OF THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT SPEAK

On 5th May was "Europe Day," an annual event fixed by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe to remind the peoples of Europe of the necessity of uniting the countries of the European Continent. In January, the Federal Council decided to have a member give an address on radio and television and asked the Cantonal Governments to do all in their power to promote the idea of European integration. The Head of the Federal Political Department, Federal Councillor Spuehler, in his address, recalled the founding of the Council of Europe in 1949, and said that the eighteen nations were not a single unit, but a community of nations, well blended, which, in spite of differences, personified a common culture. He likened the development of the Council to the history of the Swiss Confederation. Switzerland was willing to co-operate in the building of a united Europe, without denying her own peculiarities, and such co-operation gave meaning to a "Europe Day."

At the General Meeting of the Swiss Officers' Association in Sion, Federal Councillor Celio, head of the Military Department, gave an address on 18th June. He advocated closer co-operation between the Association and the Federal Military Department (EMD) and said that the leadership had to rest with the chief of the EMD and not with a group or even a "Peace General." He was critical of the present way of handling matters and called for improved co-operation, for more direct and mutual information, more personal contact and less written exchange of views. In peacetime, the Army was not to be led, but rather organised, trained and armed and, such duties belonged to the EMD.

Federal Councillor von Moos represented the Government at the centenary commemoration of the "Schweizerischer Verein fuer Straf-Gefaengniswesen und Schutzaufsicht" in Zurich. He spoke on the historic development of Swiss penal law and the present efforts to reform it. Under it fell the improved training of prison personnel, with which the Society was much concerned. It was due to their efforts that training and occupation, better food and clothing, religious and medical care had been brought into much cantonal legislation.

At the Congress of the International Press Institute in Geneva, Federal Councillor Spuehler gave an address to the 220 delegates. He described the unique position of Geneva, a symbol of three thoughts: refuge, power of the spirit and ideals, and international co-operation. He reminded the journalists: "Never forget that one has to be a human being in the first place, before one is a patriot, a member of the Party or conviction, and that humanity needs a peace, a sense for the realities of life and for understanding, in order to survive." He also said that journalists

could not and should not be neutral. Neutrality was the policy of the Government, but it could not be transferred to the people or the individual. Switzerland's two corner stones were neutrality and solidarity, neutrality between the powers, solidarity with men and women. There was no difference between the high ideals of the United Nations and those of Switzerland. It was purely in the matter of sanctions and the fact that UNO had not yet accepted Switzerland's neutrality.

Federal Councillor Gnaegi represented Switzerland at the Conference of European Ministers of Communications and Transport in Hamburg and Berlin. Questions of importance for Switzerland comprised better safety for coaches, improved co-ordination of road, rail and water traffic, uniform road rules and the effect of alcohol on the road.

Federal Councillor Schaffner spoke to a meeting of the Institute for Auslandsforschung at Zurich University on 20th June. His theme "Switzerland in a changing world" covered a historic survey, Switzerland's neutrality which is no longer "sinful." It was always in times when great powers tried to build blocks of interest, that Swiss neutrality was attacked. So it was in the time of Napoleon, the period of the League of Nations and now with the Common Market. He talked of the role of mediator Switzerland had and also of her economic importance. In the largest economic world conference, the Kennedy Round which has lasted for four years, Switzerland was a full participant, and was successful with her formula of mediation. The Conference had also shown that constructive possibilities were open which had previously not been thought of. Federal Councillor Schaffner said we had to find a common denominator for preventative trade diplomacy; both USA and EEC were not flexible enough in their economic policies. Whilst the Kennedy round agreements were successful, integration had not yet been established. Switzerland was ready for any eventuality in extending unity amongst European countries. Switzerland had always favoured pragmatism rather than dogmatism, and the "Helvetic Compromise" was often more than just a measure to find a way out of an embarrassing position.

(News by courtesy of Agence Telegraphic Suisse)

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PARLIAMENTARY SPRING SESSION

The two Federal Chambers met in Berne from the end of February to the middle of March. The National Council decisively rejected a proposal to introduce a service for **conscientious military objectors** (106:15). Whilst the respective Parliamentary Commission and the Plenary Session agreed that a Civil Service would not be compatible with the Federal Constitution, a Postulate was submitted to the Federal Council asking