

# Parliamentary spring session

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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

it to study a suitable method of dealing with conscientious objectors.

The report of the Federal Council regarding **electricity supplies** was accepted. Whilst the advocates of water-power had their say, they, too, had to agree that in the future, atom power would have to be prevalent.

The Council of States did comprehensive work in debating the **revision of the penal law**, and the National Council accepted the 74th report on **economic measures** in connection with interstate commitments. In this connection, Federal Councillor Schaffner once again explained Switzerland's attitude to **European integration**, which is still based on "wait and see". The situation could change if the British efforts to join the Common Market were crowned with success.

The new Federal Councillor Celio presented the fifth **"Mirage" Report**. He demonstrated clearly that he knew what he was talking about, and that he was aware of the complications connected with armament and delivery of the planes, although he was not yet responsible for the latest report.

**Technical Assistance** to developing countries was another subject for debate. For the period ending on 30th June, the credit granted amounted to 90m. francs. The Federal Council proposed 100m. for a similar period of 2½ years. An amendment was suggested to cut it by six months in order to create "a better impression abroad". In view of the precarious financial position, Parliament defeated the amendment, but Federal Councillor Spuehler promised to make new credit proposals earlier should the financial state improve considerably within the next year or so.

The National Council also debated the proposed grant of 150m. francs to **private railways**. According to the railway law of 1957, the Confederation is obliged to subsidise them. Of the 240m. so far granted, 190m. have been used. Applications received would require a new credit of 250m., but Parliament decided on 150m.

An important subject for debate was the draft prepared by the Commission under National Councillor Dr. R. Tschaepaet, Mayor of Berne, regarding **administrative jurisdiction** (Verwaltungsgerichtsbarkeit). A modern conception has been put forward, and three solutions are to be considered by the Federal and the Insurance Tribunals. (1) Separation of Federal Tribunal and Insurance Tribunal as hitherto. (2) Formation of a Federal Administration Tribunal with seat in Lucerne, in which the Insurance Tribunal and the Administrative Juridical Chamber of the Federal Tribunal would be combined. (3) Incorporating the Insurance Tribunal into the Federal Tribunal as second Administrative Juridical Chamber with seat in Lucerne.

The President of the Confederation reported that the **economic boom** had slightly abated, and that conditions were healthier. The emergency programme of the Federal Council (Building and Credit Limitations) will have come to an end in March. The so-called Anschlussprogramm which was to follow the emergency regulations, has shrunk to not much more than the revision of the National Bank law. The National Council accepted the proposed extension of Finanzkontrolle, which in essence is a revision of the law governing finance control, which serves both Parliament and Government. With the revision, the independence of this institution is to be demonstrated in opposition to the ever-growing power of the administration.

The Federal Council was invited to study the political, legal, military, scientific and economic consequences of a **non-proliferation agreement** as at present being debated in Geneva. Sooner or later, Switzerland will be asked to sign, and Parliament wishes to know the Government's attitude.

A further 5m. francs was voted towards the cost of extending the Central Laboratory and **Blood Bank Service** in Berne (total cost 21m.).

There was dearth of subject matters up for debate in the National Council, and a number of individual proposals and questions were put, i.e. increased **fight against alcoholism, reform of university education**, which would allow not only the training of graduates but also secure expert lecturers, and again the cost of **maintenance of the National roads**, which, according to the law, is the business of the Cantons. The Confederation can only give financial help if the burden is too great for any one Canton. For the time being, no subsidy of the national road police force is possible.

No fewer than six individual Postulates and Interpellations were put forward regarding **freedom of radio and television**. This was with reference to National Councillor Koenig who had attacked the Federal Council in the "Weltwoche" for influencing the Swiss Radio Corporation who, consequently, dropped a certain programme from the air ("Mini Menig- Dini Meinig" by Dr. Gmuer). Federal Councillor Gnaegi defended the Government and announced a Constitutional Article regarding radio and TV.

Before the end of the session, a question was put regarding **Stalin's daughter** Mrs Swetlana Allilujewa. The Swiss Cabinet had granted her permission to stay in Switzerland on a temporary basis. The exact place where she is resting and recuperating has not been disclosed. It is believed to be the Bernese Oberland, but the Swiss authorities have agreed to respect her wishes to be left alone. The Swiss Press with the exception of the "Blick" and some foreign correspondents, have acquiesced.

—The Swiss Observer