

Since Brussels

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SINCE BRUSSELS

The opening of the French Weeks in Zurich on 30th January gave an opportunity to Federal Councillor Schaffner to refer to the French attitude towards European integration. He departed from the smooth non-committal form of a welcoming speech and put the considerable French economic propaganda into perspective with the political and economic protectionism which France had championed within the Common Market, by reminding the French visitors how much more open Switzerland was towards imports from France than France and some of her EEC partners were towards imports from Switzerland. Federal Councillor Schaffner pointed out that international exchange was based on reciprocity. Switzerland had often profited from France's presence, but on the other hand, Switzerland had rendered many a service to France, and it was important to remain loyal to these bonds. He hoped that this tradition would be strengthened during the "French Weeks" in Switzerland.

On 30th January, the Executive Committee of the Swiss Europa-Union issued a communiqué in which it censures President de Gaulle's action, stating that France, as the only Common Market member, had acted in a spirit which made any lasting community of European peoples impossible and which was entirely contrary to the aims and objects of EEC. It was important, the statement said, that the well-tried principles of the Swiss federalistic-democratic State should be given more consideration as a basis for real European unity. Switzerland had a vital part to play in the creation of a European Community in which all countries were to enjoy equal rights.

On 18th and 19th February the Ministerial Council of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) held a meeting in Geneva. The Swiss delegation was led by Federal Councillor F. T. Wahlen, Swiss Foreign Minister, and Federal Councillor H. Schaffner, Minister for Economic Affairs, who put the Swiss point of view. They confirmed that Switzerland's application to negotiate with the Common Market had not yet been considered and that there was no reason why it should be withdrawn.

The outcome of the meeting in general was, as Christoph Eckenstein put it in the "Basler Nachrichten" on 19th February, "The readiness to march was established, but no concrete orders to advance were in view". Some people in Switzerland regretted that the Ministers of the EFTA countries had neglected to affirm with conviction the Atlantic partnership. EFTA was founded to facilitate entry into EEC for its members. This object remains, but the question is open whether EFTA is perhaps too careful and might register more success by showing a more determined attitude. This viewpoint was expressed in the

"Schweizerisches Kaufmännisches Zentralblatt" on 1st March.

After the Brussels fiasco many doubted the future of the Common Market. In a talk, "Europe — yes or no", National Councillor Walther Bringolf affirmed that the European Economic Community was still a fact and would not disintegrate. In his opinion it was passing through a crisis which, he hoped, would turn out to be nothing but growing pains. The will to associate with EEC had to remain alive in Switzerland.

The Editor-in-Chief of the "Basler Nachrichten", Peter Duerrenmatt, wrote in an interesting article on the new state of affairs (2nd February) that the Brussels "derailment" showed that the political aspect of the Treaty of Rome was its weakness. Had it been a question of purely economic integration all obstacles could have been overcome in Brussels. It also showed that the policy of integration followed by the Federal Council had been proved right. It was a wise decision not to comment officially on the Brussels failure, but to leave it to public opinion.

On 7th March, Federal Councillor Schaffner informed Parliament on the state of integration in Europe. He said Switzerland was one of the countries which had grown most intensively into European integration through capital transfers and exchange of goods, through service and work, and as regards traffic, Switzerland was already one of Europe's turntables.

EEC had now drawn a new customs barrier right through Europe which was to Switzerland's disadvantage. As the boom in Europe declined and supplies gradually surpassed demands our country, Federal Councillor Schaffner said, would encounter export difficulties. Only EFTA countries which today took 18% of our exports could be counted upon to import more Swiss goods. Switzerland was therefore still dependent on Common Market countries.

He affirmed that the Federal Council did not intend to withdraw its application to negotiate for associate membership of EEC. It thus wanted to stress that the problems were still unsolved and needed a solution. He did not expect much success in the near future. It would indeed be useless if individual countries tried to change from one group to another, for what was needed was a solution on a multilateral European basis.

Federal Councillor Schaffner then reported on the meeting of Ministers in Geneva which had proposed to relinquish the remaining 50% of industrial customs duties already by the end of 1966 and not only in 1970 as previously envisaged. This plan would necessitate a few

adaptations on a reciprocal basis especially for agricultural produce. A few provisions of the EFTA Stockholm Treaty would now be considered more thoroughly, above all how to improve co-ordination of trading policies in order to ensure success of the Kennedy Round in GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade) and thus to mitigate the consequences of discrimination.

In addition, improved economic co-operation amongst EFTA countries would be studied. The permanent council of EFTA in Geneva had been asked to submit proposals to the next meeting of Ministers in Lisbon in May.

Federal Councillor Schaffner concluded by expressing his hope that it would be possible in not too distant a future to bridge the artificial tearing up of the European economic area and to prevent the formation of antagonistic blocs which did no good to anybody. It would be erroneous to believe that the ever-widening gap of discrimination could be bridged by an excessive economic boom also in the future.

(Based mainly on news received by courtesy of the Agence Télégraphique Suisse.)

NEW APPOINTMENTS IN THE SWISS DIPLOMATIC CORPS

The Federal Council has appointed six Ambassadors. Dr. Richard Aman, Ambassador to Thailand, is also to represent Switzerland in the Malayan Federation.

The Ambassador to Mexico and Minister to the Dominican Republic and Haiti, Dr. F. Bernoulli, has been appointed also as Ambassador to Jamaica.

Dr. Fred Bieri, at present Counsellor of Embassy in Cologne, will be Swiss Ambassador to Indonesia.

The new Ambassador in Canada will be Monsieur H. W. Gasser, at present Consul-General in New York.

The present Ambassador to Iran, Dr. Arturo Marcionelli, has been appointed to represent Switzerland in the Congo Republic.

Monsieur René Naville, Ambassador to China, has been appointed Ambassador to Portugal.

Two new Consuls-General have also been appointed: Monsieur Jean Studer, Chargé d'Affaires in Algiers, to San Francisco, and Monsieur François Châtelain, Consul-General in Bombay, to Hong Kong.

[A.T.S.]

SOCIAL NEWS FROM THE FEDERAL PALACE

On 9th February the traditional Diplomats' Dinner took place in Berne. All the "Chefs de Missions" accredited to the Capital, accompanied by their wives, were the guests of the Federal Council. The Doyen, the Apostolic Nuncio, Mgr. Alfredo Pacini, led the visitors, and the President of the Confederation, Federal Councillor Spuehler received them. The Presidents of the National Council and the Council of States were amongst the 220 guests. The Army, the Federal Railways, Postal Authorities and the Government of the Capital were represented.

On 23rd February the annual dinner of the Consular Corps took place in Berne, chaired by its Doyen Consul Hermann Stucker.

A few days later the President and Vice-President of the Confederation were hosts to the Parliamentary Press. There were fruitful discussions and it was appreciated by the representatives of the Government that the parliamentary journalists were doing an important job as interpreters to the public.

[A.T.S.]

NEWS OF GENERAL INTEREST ABOUT PHILATELY

Since the world-wide stamp campaign of last year when the postal authorities of many countries donated stamps in aid of the battle against malaria, and the issue of two United Nations stamps remembering those who had lost their lives in the service of nations, a philatelic museum has been opened at the Palais des Nations in Geneva. It houses a complete collection (over 10,000) of all stamps issued by the League of Nations, the International Labour Office and the United Nations and its Specialised Agencies. To commemorate the inauguration four stamps to be used for UNO dispatches only were issued.

Lately, there has been much discussion about the postal rates which went into effect beginning 1st January 1963. The present system of postal rate calculations in Switzerland has been applied for 100 years. In 1849 the local postage rate for a letter had to be calculated on the basis of four distance ratings and eight different weight-rates. This certainly was time-consuming work for the mail man. In 1852 this system of calculating postal rates was greatly simplified, and again in 1862 a local postal zone of 6.2 miles range was introduced for each post office. Thus were established the regular distance mailing zones which are in effect still today, and thereby, the number of stamps was reduced. But speaking of stamps: There is a machine in operation which is capable of printing 430,000 stamps an hour on sheets the size of 9.6 x 15.2 inches. A model of this efficient printing machine (1 : 20), is on display in the Swiss Museum of Transport and Communications in Lucerne. On the pressing of a button the model will function and show its operation. The actual machine makes 2,160 cylinder rotations per hour producing 4,320 stamp sheets of 100 stamps each. This modern printing equipment is an important part of the Printing Division of the Swiss Postal Administration.

Apart from the usual special issues like "Pro Patria" for the Swiss National Day on 1st August and the "Pro Juventute" stamps in December, special jubilee stamps are being issued on 21st March: Fifty years Swiss Boy Scouts (5 Rp), centenary of Swiss Alpine Club (10 Rp), fifty years of the Loetschberg Railway (20 Rp), FAO "Free the World from Hunger Campaign" (30 Rp), centenary of the Red Cross (50 Rp), first international postal conference in Paris in 1863 (50 Rp).

There will also be a Red Cross jubilee block of four 50 Rp stamps and a two-franc "Pro Aero" stamp commemorating Oscar Bider's first flight across the Alps. Finally, in September, the first stamps for the National Exhibition 1964 will be on sale.

Messrs. Courvoisier, of La Chaux-de-Fonds, in Western Switzerland, print postage stamps by the photogravure process for almost forty different postal administrations. The firm specialises in this method, for which it is well-known throughout the world. Photogravure imparts a marked richness of texture to the print, and the use of a very fine screen to break down the image enables every shade of colour and any intermediate tone to be reproduced. It is also interesting to note that Courvoisier stamps, unlike others, have never yet been counterfeited. An official of the Swiss post office is permanently on hand to supervise the work of the firm on behalf of all the postal administrations included among its clientèle. Recent successes of the firm include an order for two series of United Nations stamps.

(Based on news from A.T.S., O.S.E.C. and Swiss Transport Museum, Lucerne.)