

Summer session of the Swiss parliament

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SUMMER SESSION OF THE SWISS PARLIAMENT

The Federal Parliament assembled on 8th June for their summer session of 3½ weeks. Prior to the opening, the band of the King's Royal Hussars had given a concert outside the "Federal Palace". This famous regimental band even played the "Bernermarsch", though somewhat more quickly than is customary.

The shadows of the "Mirage Affair" hovered over Parliament. The Daenzer Report on the "Mirage" was asked for, the Federal Councillor Chaudet had to agree to giving at least a resumé of this expensive report which will come up for debate again in the autumn. The federal accounts for 1964 were debated and accepted by 105 : 0 votes — the favourable balance (420 million francs excess of revenue) and the implication of ever rising accounts will come up again in the winter session in connection with the budget and the long-term financial policy. The National Council had agreed to retaining the "Coupon tax" in March. Now, the Council of States rejected it by 32 : 5 votes, and the ball is back in the court of the National Council. The Council of States debated the business report of the Federal Council. There was some opposition regarding agriculture's demands. The Federal Council had increased the basic price of milk by 1 ct. and the price of meat (live weight) by 10 cts. This was explained to Parliament by Federal Councillor Schaffner as an adjustment to the increased cost of living. Agriculture is still dissatisfied. The Council of States also considered questions of scientific research. Without opposition, the continued subsidy of Fr. 100,000.— annually towards furthering research at the ETH and the successive increase of contributions to the Swiss National Fund for the Furtherance of Scientific Research from the present annual 23 mio. to 60 mio. in 1969 were accepted. The National Council approved the accounts of the Swiss Federal Railways and diplomatic representation in Malta and three African States. A Motion demanding new legal basis for the fight against noise and air pollution was insisted upon unanimously by Parliament, after Federal Councillor von Moos had tried to reduce it to a Postulate.

The extension of the present method of supervising the administration was to be debated during this session. This demand was also a result of the "Mirage Affair". The National Council has now agreed to a postponement. Another Motion regarding the increase in the number of Federal Councillors from seven to nine or eleven was again debated and rejected, and the proposer agreed to change it into a Postulate in order not to lose it altogether. The Government will now have to study the question and draft proposals. Thus the whole problem of parliamentary and governmental reform remains on the agenda. A motion for legal reduction of foreign workers to half a million was defeated. The National Council accepted by 145 : 0 the proposal to include the construction of a road tunnel through the Gotthard in the network of national road construction. Parliament also agreed to a 60 million credit for land purchases for military purposes. The Council of States agreed to Switzerland's participation in the World Exhibition in Montreal and to the third stage in the extension of the Kloten airport.

During the debate in the National Council concerning the business report for 1964 of the Government, there was considerable concern regarding the Federal Department of Communications and Energy, specially with reference to the competition between Swissair and Globair, the responsibility in the catastrophe at Duerrenesch and difficulties with personnel.

Finally, the National Council accepted a proposal to extend the International Wheat Agreement of 1962 and to the continuation of the annual subsidy of 1.5 million francs to the Swiss Office for the Development of Trade (OSEC). The Council of States agreed to continue allocating scholarships for foreign students — 12 mio. francs during the next five years.

(By courtesy of Agence Télégraphique Suisse and Schweiz. Kaufmännisches Zentralblatt.)

ANGLO-SWISS TREATY SIGNED

An Anglo-Swiss Treaty for Conciliation, Judicial Settlement and Arbitration was signed at the Foreign Office on 7th July. This sets up machinery for handling possible disputes between the two countries. A standing Anglo-Swiss Conciliation Commission is to be formed and would be called upon by either Government to consider a dispute.

The treaty was signed by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Michael Stewart, on behalf of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. The Swiss Ambassador, Monsieur B. de Fischer, signed on behalf of the Federal Council of Switzerland. After the signing of the Treaty, the Ambassador entertained the Foreign Secretary to luncheon. Among the guests were prominent lawyers, M.P.s and high-ranking officials of the Foreign Office.

FEDERAL YODELLING FESTIVAL

From 11th to 13th June, the Thirteenth Federal Yodelling Festival was held at Thun. Six thousand yodellers took part, as well as 150 alphorn players and 100 flag tossers. Tens of thousands of visitors came from far and near — one figure estimated them at 150,000. Federal Councillor Wahlen gave the official address. A protest was lodged by local Church authorities that the procession had to choose the very hour of divine service to go through the town. Why, it was asked, could not that time have been made available for attending church or for a special open-air service?

At the same time as the festival, and going on for another week or so, an exhibition of Swiss national costumes was held in over sixty Thun shop windows.

[A.T.S.]

FOOTBALL — WORLD CUP 1966

We all hope to see a Swiss team in London next year. But the path to the World Cup in London in 1966 is long and difficult. Switzerland has to play the qualifying matches in Group V which is made up as follows: Northern Ireland, Holland, Albania and Switzerland.

After losing one match against Northern Ireland, the national team has won three times consecutively, once against Northern Ireland and twice against Albania. The latest table for Group V is:

	P.	W.	D.	L.	Pts.
Northern Ireland	5	3	1	1	7
Switzerland	4	3	0	1	6
Holland	4	2	1	1	5
Albania	5	0	0	5	0

Matches still to come are Holland v. Switzerland on 17th October, Switzerland v. Holland on 14th November, Albania v. Northern Ireland on 21st November.

Dec.