

Federal Mosaic

Objektyp: **Group**

Zeitschrift: **The Swiss observer : the journal of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK**

Band (Jahr): - **(1966)**

Heft 1504

PDF erstellt am: **19.07.2024**

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The entry into the Confederation took place after the difficulties had grown worse and worse. In 1802, Napoleon made the Canton a Republic, and eight years later it became part of the French Empire as *Département du Simplon*. When the Valais became tied to Switzerland, its troubles did not stop, and as late as 1844, the Canton was the scene of a civil war. It was only after the Confederation had been formed into a *Bundesstaat* that the Canton could start to catch up the delay in economic development.

The entry into the Confederation was to have been commemorated last year, but it was postponed on account of the Mattmark catastrophe. The celebrations have now taken place. Several thousand spectators assembled in Sion on 11th June for the first performance on the Valère castle hill of the pageant "Valais, Terre Helvétique", words by Maurice Zermatten, music by Jean Daetwyler.

On Sunday, 12th June, Federal President Schaffner gave an official address at the celebrations which had begun that day with an ecumenical church service. The Presidents of the Council of States and the National Council were present, as well as Federal Councillors Bonvin and Spuehler, representatives of the Army, the Tribunals, the Cantonal Governments and many other personalities. 800 guests attended the banquet, and a picturesque procession was held on Sunday afternoon.

Thus, the 4th August 1815 when the Diet had agreed to accept the Valais into the Confederation as twentieth Canton, has been duly recalled and celebrated.

(A.T.S. and "Basler Nachrichten".)

FEDERAL MOSAIC

In April, the Federal Council published a **report** on happenings inside and outside Switzerland in 1965. This was the second time such a review preceded the ordinary report on the Government's activities. The Federal Council referred to the image of Switzerland which, as had been stressed at the last Assembly of the Swiss Abroad in Solothurn, was no longer as unblemished as it used to be. To improve the image was a complex matter, but the Federal Council would do everything to support efforts in this direction, both inside Switzerland as well as in the Swiss communities abroad. The increased subsidy to the "Pro Helvetia" Foundation was a first important step. The report then went into details regarding the general political picture of the world and the changes which are taking place.

The principle of Swiss policy was still to entertain good relations with all the States in the world, regardless of their political direction, in fact to keep up Swiss neutrality and independence. The Federal Council is of opinion that the disadvantages of joining the United Nations are still greater than any resulting benefits, though co-operation with all U.N. Specialised Agencies would be continued and strengthened where aims and objects are compatible with Swiss neutrality. Entry into the Common Market was being considered and any chance of building a bridge would be taken. Assistance to the developing

Nations would go on, and co-operation with international organisations would be strengthened.

The two main topics in the Federal Council's report on happenings inside Switzerland were long-term finance planning and the development of the economic boom. The report claims that the measures taken by the Federal Council to stop the excess boom have been successful, and that this was shown in particular in the improved balance of payments.

The Federal Department for Finance and Customs have published the drafts for the two new laws regarding federal **finance administration** and **finance control**. Economic organisations and political Parties now have a chance to study them until September. Tighter controls and various changes are proposed. The question of new sources of revenue are to be studied. Taxes and customs come under review, especially in connection with EFTA, EEC and GATT.

A first group of **additional credits** to the 1966 budget has been asked for totalling 30.6m. francs, of which 12.5m. alone are for PTT services.

The **export risk guarantee** of the Confederation has been used to a larger degree in 1965. This is not surprising in view of the increase of exports from 11.5 milliard francs in 1964 to 12.9 milliard last year. The number of applications granted in 1965 was 3,070 as against 2,883 in the previous year. The amount reached a net total of Fr.1,249m. as compared with 2,883 in 1964. Damages paid amounted to Fr.210,000.— in connection with exports to Uruguay, Iran and the Dominican Republic.

The Federal Council decided early in May to grant a **new loan** of 108 million francs to **FIPOL**, the property foundation for international organisations in Geneva. This sum will be used for purchasing the building of the International Labour Office and for a loan to the same organisation for a new building. A message to Parliament will be published in due course.

The following **agreements** have been made between Switzerland and . . .

- . . . the Republic of Dahomey regarding trade, investment protection and technical co-operation;
- . . . France, the Netherlands, Sweden and Spain on double taxation; the agreement in force between Switzerland and Great Britain (1954) has recently been changed;
- . . . Germany and Austria regarding the use of water in the Lake of Constance;
- . . . Germany concerning improvements of the navigation of the Rhine including installations;
- . . . Roumania concerning goods traffic by road;
- . . . Liechtenstein regarding old-age and invalidity insurance (ratification).

[A.T.S.]