

Switzerland's position on her 675th anniversary

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SWITZERLAND'S POSITION ON HER 675th ANNIVERSARY.

SUMMARY OF THE PATRIOTIC ADDRESS BY THE SWISS AMBASSADOR TO THE COURT OF ST. JAMES'S

Wimbledon Town Hall, London, 1st August 1966

Once again, Switzerland is distinguished by her incredible vitality, a fact deserving of congratulations. Admittedly, after an economic expansion unequalled in her history, Switzerland faced great perils: her economy was over-heated, inflation set in, too much foreign labour was flooding the country, and her balance of payments showed a dangerous lack of equilibrium. But certain measures taken at the beginning of 1965 have eased the situation to some extent. These were designed, in particular, to restrict the number of foreign workers and to limit the amount of building. If, in spite of restrictions, stabilisation of prices has not yet been achieved, the balance of payments, at least, has improved. Efforts are now being made trying to control inflation and to maintain the new, but precarious equilibrium achieved in Swiss economy. However, it is possible that a certain number of schemes and projects postponed because of the stringent measures may now be carried out, and this will mean the risk of another wave of expansion with all its attendant problems.

If harmony is to be maintained between what the Swiss would like to do and what they are able to do, a special effort will have to be made yet. To think only of the gigantic outlay for equipment which the Confederation will continue to face during the coming years in connection with roads, schools, hospitals, universities, nuclear research, atomic stations, etc. Swiss limited means of production will have to be used with great discernment and a carefully studied working brief.

But the ever-growing calls on the State to supply the needs of man in the society of a new age also pose political problems. Thus the Confederation has had and will have to fulfil, more and more, tasks which hitherto belonged to the Cantons. These changes have, of course, reinforced yet again the central power. But care has been taken to ensure that this only happens with those attributions provided for in the Constitution.

It is not surprising that in these circumstances the question should arise of a revision, partial or total, of the Constitution. Some people think it would be a good idea to take the opportunity afforded by the hundredth anniversary of the 1874 Constitution to recast our national charter. In particular, they are in favour of eliminating the denominational articles, introducing women's suffrage and reforming our system of direct democracy, the latter having become more difficult to apply in certain respects

in an age governed more and more by extremely complicated mechanisms.

In the military sphere, too, changes are necessary. The Federal Council has drawn up a new plan of action with regard to Switzerland's defence potential. It is based, on the one hand, on the forces available following the recent reorganisation of the Army, and on the other hand on the latest theories of atomic war in the light of the evolution of weapons of war. The concept of the *réduit*, undoubtedly justified in 1940, has had to be abandoned and replaced by a new disposition providing for the defence of the whole territory and protecting civilian population and armed forces, above all from atomic dangers.

* * *

Amongst the main problems of Swiss foreign policy are European integration, Switzerland's entry into the United Nations and aid to the developing countries.

Of course, Switzerland is always in favour of a policy of economic integration embracing the whole of Europe and deploring the gap which separates EEC and EFTA. However, she sees no chance of the countries of these two groups coming to an agreement in the immediate future. On the other hand, the Swiss economy has not had to suffer too severely, as yet, from customs discrimination on the part of EEC to whose territory Switzerland still sends a large percentage of her exports. Nevertheless, discrimination is constantly increasing, so the government is trying to mitigate it by means of negotiations, within the framework of the Kennedy Round, for a linear reduction of customs duties in all the countries of GATT.

The problem of Switzerland's entry into the United Nations has been widely discussed in recent times. The former Federal Councillor Professor Wahlen spoke last year of the possibility of sending Swiss "blue caps" to countries whose peace is threatened. The new head of the Federal Political Department took up the question again during the last session of Parliament. For the moment, however, Swiss public opinion does not seem ready to take this great plunge.

As to relations between industrialised countries like Switzerland and those in the process of development, she is constantly preoccupied with this question. Swiss aid to developing countries takes many forms. First and fore-

most, the Swiss collaborate in various collective assistance schemes organised by United Nations. In addition, private business does much to invest capital in those countries, and the Government helps to supply them with consumer goods and equipment by guaranteeing export risks, providing long-term credits, and giving the recipients facilities for consolidating their debts. Furthermore, Switzerland is carrying out a number of technical co-operation programmes: for example, numerous Swiss experts and volunteers, comparable to the members of the American Peace Corps, are at present working in Africa, Asia and Latin America. The developing countries, in their turn, send many apprentices, technicians and students to Switzerland.

* * *

If fate has been extremely kind to Switzerland up to now, she also has many problems to solve. But she is not the only one, and her problems are certainly less painful and profound than those of numerous other countries. With its immense technical progress and its radical political reorganisation, the whole world seems to have entered a phase in which the former values must be totally rethought. This is a magnificent task for a generation which is curious and full of imagination and initiative. Every Swiss is called upon to contribute to it. It concerns the Swiss outside her frontiers as much as those at home, especially this year when a new Article in the Federal Constitution is going to bind the Swiss abroad more closely to the life of their homeland. The First of August should remind the Swiss in Great Britain of it and make them aware both of their duties as citizens responsible for the wellbeing of their community, and of the splendid privilege of being members of a sovereign people.

Thanks are due, too, to Great Britain which, in such a generous and friendly fashion, affords hospitality to Swiss nationals and enables them to develop to the full their personal faculties and enterprises. Long may they prosper, both Britain and Switzerland!

MUSICAL HIGHLIGHTS IN LUCERNE

No other musical event in Switzerland has won such an international reputation and attracts so many lovers of music as does the "International Music Festival" in Lucerne which this year will take place between 13th August and 8th September. The Swiss Festival Orchestra will play in four symphony concerts under Paul Klecki, Bernard Haitink, Claudio Abbado and André Cluytens. The Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra under Max Rudolf will be heard in Lucerne for the first time in the fifth concert, while four further concerts are given to the Vienna Philharmonic directed by Herbert von Karajan, George Szell, Lorin Maazel and Georg Solti. Soloists of world renown will participate in these concerts. The general programme reaches a further climax on 30th August with a chorus concert which will combine the voices of the Belgian radio and the Zurich Chamber Chorus. The Chamber music programme comprises concerts by the Festival Strings Lucerne and the English Chamber Orchestra; an evening will be devoted to "musica nova", there will be two serenades at the famous Lion of Lucerne. Piano and organ recitals as well as a song recital and a presentation of young musicians round up the programme. The Municipal Theatre contributes to the festival by six performances of Jean Anouilh's "Majestés" (in German).

[S.N.T.O.]

SWISS POSTAL, TELEGRAPH AND TELEPHONE SERVICES

(Concluded.)

Mail delivery in 1965

Last year showed a further increase in the handling of mail: 1.34 billion letters, 26.3 million registered letters and 439.7 million items without addresses (printed matter, publicity material, etc.). In addition, 875.3 million newspapers were sent to subscribers. This meant that 8.6 million items had to be collected, sorted, transported and delivered per working day.

Parcels numbered over 119 million inside Switzerland and 5.5 million sent abroad, an average of twenty-two parcels per head of population.

It is interesting to note that 260,000 individuals, officials and authorities enjoyed postage-free privileges. This does not include military authorities and soldiers who, whilst on service, send and receive letters and parcels free of charge.

PTT Accounts 1965

On 18th March, the Federal Council sent the PTT accounts for 1965 to Parliament. The profit has again decreased as compared with the previous year. It is down to 19m. francs, ordinary and extraordinary accounts combined. The budget had predicted a profit of 40.7 million francs.

Revision of postal charges

On 1st April, a number of increases came into force, though a full revision is only possible by act of legislation which is at present under consideration. The increases concern a re-adjustment of what is permissible as "samples", express and forwarding fees, the renting of *Postfächer* and a stricter rule as to printed matter.

Federal Councillor Gnaegi gave a press conference at which the proposed total revision was explained. It is obvious that practically all charges will have to be increased, except those of the postal coach passenger service, which will have to remain in line with railway fares.

Other facts and figures

A group of English experts were in Switzerland last year to study Swiss PTT methods, and their recommendations in a report of 150 pages included re-organisation of the dispatch and delivery services. They estimated a possible saving of 55m. francs and of 1,500 staff. The latter averaged 43,430 during 1965, a reduction of 2.3% over the previous year.

Two mobile automatic telephone exchanges have been ordered ("52er-System" Hasler & Albiwerk Siemens) to be used as emergency and supplementary stations.

In 1950, the PTT owned 401 buildings. This figure has gone up to 1,121, and 27m. francs is the sum asked for from Parliament for new buildings.

The Executive Council of the World Postal Union held a meeting in Berne, attended by twenty-seven countries. It was decided to keep headquarters in Berne.

At the PTT Museum in Berne, a special exhibition "Sondermarken Europa 1956-1966" is being held until 4th September. The number of subscribers to the *Wertzeichenverkaufsstelle PTT* has doubled in two years to over 50,000.

(Apart from the address given to the N.S.H. in London by PTT Secretary-General, all news received by courtesy of A.T.S. and O.S.E.C.)