

Switzerland and the Near East

Autor(en): **[s.n.]**

Objektyp: **Article**

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

Band (Jahr): - **(1967)**

Heft 1532

PDF erstellt am: **15.08.2024**

Persistenter Link: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-695868>

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Federal Authorities, and they visited the Sulzer Brothers' Works, the town Rapperswil, made a tour of the Lake of Lucerne, a visit to Muerren and the Schilthorn, Heimiswil, Interlaken, Bienne, Moutier, Basle and Zurich.

The Federal Council at Work

Early in August, the Federal Council published a message to Parliament asking for a loan of 52 million francs (50 years) to the International Development Association. On 9th August, President Bonvin received a group of the American Civil Air Patrol, who had been initiated in Switzerland into Alpine gliding.

On the advice of the relevant body, the General Management of the PTT, the Federal Council has declared to be in favour of the German Pal-System in coloured television. One of the most important considerations was that the 800'000 TV receivers at present used in Switzerland would not become redundant on the introduction of colour television.

On 21st August, the Government visited the Nuclear Power Research Station at Lucens and, next day, considered pay increases for federal personnel. This will be as little popular with the public as the five-day week proposals. The Federal Council also announced that a contribution would be paid to the Foundation for Federal Co-operation which is being created in Switzerland. The Annual Ambassadors' Conference took place in Berne at the end of August under the chairmanship of Monsieur Spuehler.

The new Swiss Cardinal, His Eminence Benno Gut, was received by members of the Federal Council and entertained to a luncheon attended by personalities from all denominational groups in Switzerland. On 29th August, the Government decided to reject a request by the South Vietnamese Foreign Ministry to send Swiss observers to the South Vietnamese general elections; the reason for not accepting was that the matter was one of purely internal concern. The Federal Council also decided to confiscate Communist propaganda material which had been sent from various countries and which was mainly destined for foreign workers.

It was also decided to take immediate steps to lower the price of butter and Gruyère cheese. The ratification documents concerning the French-Swiss double taxation agreement have been exchanged; the agreement will be retrospective to 1st January. "Die Volkswirtschaft", a monthly periodical issued by the Federal Department of Public Economy since 1932 (edited by BIGA), has been modernised; it is expected to be used more for specialised articles.

The Parliamentary Commissions have taken up their work again after the summer vacations. An interesting clarification has been given of a point brought up by National Councillor Breitenmoser (Basle) regarding the eligibility of women to the Council of States or rather whether they would be admitted to sessions of the Federal Assembly. The answer is "Yes", and it applies to the Cantons of Baselstadt, Vaud, Neuchâtel and Geneva where women can be elected to the Council of States.

(Compiled from news items received by courtesy of Agence Télégraphique Suisse.)

SWITZERLAND AND THE NEAR EAST

More help has been given by Switzerland to the victims and refugees in the Near East. 3,500 blankets were sent to Arab refugees early in July, and Swiss Red Cross Delegates work in Arab countries occupied by Israeli; the Committee has also formed a group to take care of repatriations; delegates have stated that Israel is giving every assistance. By the end of August, already over 200,000 messages to and from separated families were passed on by the International Committee of the Red Cross. The federal authorities have given further assistance, and the Federal Council have agreed to put Col. Zuest, medical practitioner at Frauenfeld, at the disposal of UNO for supervising the cease fire. Ambassador Ernesto Thalmann, Head of the Section for International Organisations of the Federal Political Department, has been lent by the Federal Council, to collect information about the conditions in Jerusalem, needed by U Thant for a report to the UNO Security Council.

News of help campaigns from Switzerland include a collection started by a reader of the "Gazette de Lausanne" (nearly 17,000 francs), an auction of valuables, mainly antiques, in Geneva and in aid of Jerusalem (over half a million francs), a charity concert at the Tonhalle in Zurich (Fr.22,500.—) and the Zurich "Pro Israel" drive (well over 600,000 francs). The Swiss Red Cross collected a similar amount by 1st August. Some of this money has been used for the purchase of blankets, condensed milk, soup powder, soap, clothing and blood plasma.

The Swiss Zionist Federation officially thanked the Swiss people for their spontaneous help. Swiss Jewry collected 36m. francs.

Invited by the organisation "Experiment in International Living" (recognised by UNESCO) a group of young Israeli spent some time in Switzerland in August; the Swiss group sent to Israel had to return prematurely on account of the war. [A.T.S.]

