

Federal Mosaic

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Just over a century ago the celebrated scholar Louis Agassiz emigrated to the United States and was appointed to the chair of zoology and geology specially created for him at Harvard University. In the thirty years that followed, Professor Agassiz's students occupied all the chairs of zoology instituted in the USA.

Among the hundreds of scholars and scientists born or trained in Switzerland and now working in the USA, one might single out Fritz Zwicky, an armaments expert, and Felix Bloch who, in 1952, was awarded the Nobel Prize in physics. The most famous Swiss among the architects (apart from Le Corbusier, perhaps) is indubitably Othmar Ammann, to whom New York owes its George Washington Bridge, the Lincoln Tunnel and other important bridges.

These persons and others like them demonstrate quite clearly that Switzerland, itself a polyglott country, has a place in America, a land where so many different nationalities and influences have been welcomed and assimilated.

(“*Pro Helvetia.*”)

FEDERAL MOSAIC

Last year's President of the Confederation, *Bundesrat* Spuehler, represented Switzerland at the 43rd meeting of the Conference of Ministers of the Council of Europe in Paris, which examined the political aspects of European integration. Federal Councillor Bonvin led the Swiss delegation at the European Conference of Communication Ministers, also in Paris. On 1st January, the bilateral trade agreement between U.S.A. and Switzerland ceased to operate, a step which was possible on account of both countries now being full members of GATT whose multi-lateral agreements now cover their economic relationship. The International Sugar Convention should have been signed by the end of the year — 33 countries did so — but Switzerland is still waiting since EEC have not signed yet either. The Federal Council decided to examine the question further.

Formal Entertainment

After the Federal Councillors had been guests of the Diplomatic Corps at a Reception at the Bellevue-Palace and, in turn, invited the foreign Heads of Missions to the opera (“*La Traviata*”), the traditional New Year's Reception which used to be held on 1st January, took place on the 10th of the month. As usual, it was a colourful spectacle. The guests were headed by the *doyen*, the Papal Nuntio, who extended greetings and wishes to Government and country. The President of the Confederation, *Bundesrat* von Moos, thanked the guests (67 Ambassadors, 13 Ministers and *Chargé d'Affaires*, plus the Cantonal and Municipal Governments) who were then served Champagne.

Delegation of Duties

On 24th January, an attempt to relieve the Federal Council of some of their duties came into being. When a report was published in 1967 by the committee of experts, the public learned with some surprise and dismay that the Government had to deal with about 2,300 items at their meetings in one year. In order to free them for the real important business of political decisions, this new formula has been introduced, and in many cases, the individual Federal Councillors and/or their Departments are to deal with matters separately, rather than corporately.

The Federal Council will continue to use the address “*Liebe getreue Eidgenossen . . .*” (“Dear, loyal Confederates . . .”) on their circular notices from the “Federal Palace”.

Tax Amnesty

The Federal Council propose to create a special section for science and culture in the Department of the Interior. Of far wider significance is the tax amnesty which has been granted. A personal appeal signed by Councillor Celio has been sent out to every tax payer in the country. Since 1940 and 1944, the Confederation has not granted an amnesty on its own, and the proposed one in 1964 was rejected by the electorate. In February last year, a new proposal was accepted. Opinions are divided; some say that “forgiving the culprit, punishes the honest man” (Persian proverb); others realise that the several hundred extra millions which Cantons and Confederation expect to get, will mean that there is less likelihood of tax increases, and thus the amnesty serves the honest taxpayer, too.

Money Matters

As from 1st January, National Councillors and members of Parliamentary Commissions are paid increased allowances: next to a daily allowance of 70 francs, the overnight grant has been raised from 20 to 30 francs, and there is a new annual payment of 3,000 francs. Two million francs has been asked for technical improvements in the two Chambers (ventilation, translating facilities, better lighting, etc.). 620,000 francs has been granted for an agricultural development aid scheme in Kibuye (Rwanda). Nearly 5m. francs will be required for the purchase of a new building in the centre of Lausanne (telecommunication centre). 40m. francs is needed for a new research station for animal production at Grangeneuve (Fribourg). When the students at the Agricultural Technical College at Zollikofen graduate this summer they will be allowed to use the title “*Agro-Techniker.*”

Cheese once more . . .

A number of farmers some of them anonymously, have sent parcels of so-called “block cheese” which the farmers are obliged to take in return for milk deliveries, a measure intended to reduce the large stocks of cheese. A consignment of cheese was confiscated by the authorities in U.S.A. and Canada as traces of pesticides were discovered in the cheese. An investigation has been started. If milk production does not go back another 6%, milk control will have to be introduced by 1st May.

(Mainly by courtesy of *Agence Télégraphique Suisse.*)

TELEVISION IN SWITZERLAND

The Swiss Post Office recently issued its millionth television licence. An important landmark in the development of Swiss television has been reached. The first licence was issued in Zurich at the beginning of 1952. On 1st January 1958, i.e. at the beginning of the regular official Swiss TV broadcasts, there were 31,374 licence holders. From then on the growth became more and more rapid: the figure of 100,000 was reached during 1960, and the 500,000 mark at the beginning of 1965. It has taken less than four years to chalk up the second half million. 1968 also showed the biggest annual increase with some 140,000 new licences. Switzerland now numbers some 16.3 television licences per 100 inhabitants.

[O.S.E.C.]