

# Swiss parliamentary elections

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used. Since soya-bean straw surpasses several times the nutritive value of oats it is possible to use it as feed for horses.

Before the war Switzerland used to import 800,000 tons of feed for cattle per annum. These imports have diminished considerably since the outbreak of hostilities, and during certain periods have been completely interrupted. Thanks to home production and to the measures taken by the government which include the building of silos costing 40 million francs, Switzerland expects to be able to provide sufficient feed for her cattle.

Even in normal times empty lots or unused land were a rare sight in Switzerland. Now, in harmony with the intensified cultivation program, industrial firms and the railways, especially the government-owned lines, have placed any and all of their idle property in the service of the nation. Last year personnel of the Swiss Federal Railroads drained almost 50 acres of wasteland, boosting the total area now cultivated by these employees to an approximate five hundred acres. Principal crops were potatoes, a variety of vegetables, maize and cereals in general. Hazel-bushes were planted on very steep railroad banks.

In view of the increased cultivation program a Federal decree in 1942 ordered farm labor for all young people, students and otherwise, from 16-20 years of age, either in groups or single, at planting and harvest times, and when necessary, between such periods. This measure has worked out well and has eliminated any possible waste. Soldiers, too, are ordered to assist farmers when the necessity arises.

In order to insure a proper distribution of available supplies a strict system of rationing prevails in Switzerland. In addition, a swift and efficient conservation of harvested crops, by means of excellent dehydration equipment, has also been made possible. Everywhere there are modern plants, either subsidized by the Federal government or individual localities and districts, where farmers for a modest fee can have vegetables, grass, sugar-beet tops, cereals, grape seeds, etc., dried electrically.

The need for oil for domestic purposes is particularly acute in Switzerland. Already early in the war it was discovered that tobacco seeds yield 40% of a good quality oil which can without previous refining be used for cooking. As a result Swiss tobacco planters were given instructions by the government to let part of their crops mature into seeds. Other Swiss sources for oil are beech-nuts, also the seeds of poppies, rape plants and grapes. The oil value of grape seeds is a recent discovery which is being systematically exploited in Swiss vineyard regions.

Entirely new and startling are the results of experiments made with coffee grounds. It has been found that they, too, yield valuable oil. All users of coffee in Switzerland, householders, hotels, restaurants and institutions have consequently been ordered to save them and dry them for government use on a warm stove, or in the sunshine. The old adage "necessity is the mother of invention" has thus proved itself again and again in Switzerland.

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#### SWISS PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS

The election held for the National Council (Conseil National, Nationalrat), on October 30 and 31, resulted in the following distribution of seats:

Socialists	56	formerly	45
Liberals (largest group in the Old Council)	47	"	50
Catholic Conservatives	43	"	41
Farmers, Tradesmen and Citizen's Party	22	"	22
Independents	6	"	10
Liberal-Conservatives	8	"	8

Democrats	5	formerly	6
Young farmers (leftists)	3	"	3
Free Independent	1	"	1
Zurich Evangelical	1	"	1
No Party (Basle countryside)	1	"	-
Farmer (who will line up with the Catholic-Conservatives)	1	"	-

194

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It is to be remembered that the government coalition is formed by the Liberals, the Catholic-Conservatives and the Farmers, joined by the Liberal-Conservatives, although the latter are not represented in the Federal Council. This coalition will therefore be able to count on 120 representatives in the new house of 194 members. The Socialists, 56 in all, will make up about three-fourths of the opposition.

For the first time in the history of our parliament, the Cantons of Zug, Glarus and Fribourg have elected a socialist congressman. Thus, the National Council which will assemble for its session on the first Monday in December has a great many new members. 39 old representatives had withdrawn their candidacy and 15 candidates were not re-elected. With the 7 new seats it makes 70 new members of the National Council, or about one third of the whole.

It is a political tradition in Switzerland, that there shall be no wholesale governmental changes such as some countries call ministerial crisis. The composition of our executive branch, the Federal Council, is not directly affected by vote of parliament or elections. However these manifestations of the popular will, provide indications that must be taken into account. This is why the important advance of the Socialists in the election held on October 30 and 31 bring up the problem of admitting into the Federal Council representatives of the present opposition. The idea is of course to find a practical solution at the time of a vacancy in the council, but only then. For the moment only the question of principle is being discussed in the Swiss Press. Here are a number of opinions on this subject; first of all from the Gazette de Lausanne over the signature of Pierre Grobet. Mr. Grobet writes; 'Is it desirable that a party which has 27 percent of the nation's representatives and carries proportionally the largest number of votes in a general election should be precluded from responsibility in State Leadership? Is it normal, that a political cohort to which a so important part of the people have given their support should not be admitted to share in governmental activity? Those for whom this prospect is not pleasing, must only blame themselves for the situation in which we find ourselves today and which would have been spared us had everyone done his duty.'

Public opinion in Switzerland, as far as home politics are concerned, is giving attention just now to the results of the federal election of October 30/31st. The first comment has now appeared in the Suisse Romande Press.

Under the caption "A push to the left", Monsieur Pierre Beguin writes in the liberal-conservative "Journal de Geneve" that we shall have to admit the reality. The socialists, well served by their policy of collaboration, are the victors of the day and the radicals have emerged from the fight weakened. As everybody knows, it is contrary to our tradition to modify the governmental team following a popular election. It is therefore too early to envisage a light consequence of Sunday's polling. And yet it must be taken for granted that the socialists will take the results as a justification to make claims next December to one or two seats in the federal council and that the radicals, much too weakened, will barely be able to maintain their pretention that they should hold a majority of the seats in this same council.



As for the opinion of the socialists, collaboration brings up the question of principle and the matter of an agreement upon a minimum program strongly inspired by the party's doctrine.

The socialist "Volksrecht", states clearly: 'Something is sure, the just demand of the Socialist party for an immediate introduction of an old age insurance, the plan for work at any price, and the suppression of old special privileges for trade and industry must be accepted or else we must remain in the opposition and continue the fight with people for these aims. In four years or less we shall see how things have developed.' The same newspaper, gives this warning: 'Concessions merely of a formal character give little hope for success.'

Such are the first elements of discussions in Switzerland's press, which certainly will be taken up by Parliament just as soon as the new chambers come together.

#### WARTIME - TRADING IS NOT EASY!!

In some of the New Zealand newspapers appeared an article on the measures taken by Britain to prevent trading with the enemy. In this article, the Swiss firm of Sulzer Brothers, which is well known all over the world, was also mentioned, as being placed on the blacklist by the British Ministry of Economic Warfare, apparently for refusing to sign a certain undertaking.

In order to safeguard our industry from the accusation of exporting arms and machinery which can be used in actual warfare, the Swiss Government issued a decree and replied in a communique to the accusation against the firm of Sulzer Brothers; which read as follows:

"The Swiss Federal Council has forbidden business houses to make contracts with foreign governments or their representatives. Unilateral declarations to foreign governments binding contractors to import or export goods is also banned. A maximum fine of 30,000 Swiss francs is imposed, plus two years imprisonment. The same penalty if the ban is broken through negligence.

On November 5th, the Swiss Government issued a communique replying to British charges against the Swiss armament firm of Sulzer Brothers at Winterthur. It was announced in London that this concern had been put on the blacklist by the Ministry of Economic Warfare. The Swiss communique states that during the war the firm Sulzer has exported neither arms nor munitions, the entire output of its armaments division is being used to supply the Swiss Army and it is only operated on contract from Swiss authorities. It is therefore inappropriate to describe this factory as an arms factory when referring to its exports. Contrary to certain statements, the Sulzer firm, since the outbreak of the war, has exported neither submarine engines nor spare parts for vessels of this character."

The inscription of the firm of Sulzer upon the black list is of a nature which may influence the firms of the Metal and Machine Industry in their future export possibilities given by the Swiss authorities. These possibilities are based upon agreements made with both belligerents. Because the firm of Sulzer declined to sign an undertaking not to form any engagements which submit Swiss export to foreign control, its name has been inscribed on the blacklist despite the fact, that throughout the war it has exported, in conformity with the instructions of the Swiss authorities, only those products which were produced under peacetime conditions.