

Switzerland and the international organisations : lecture delivered at the London Rotary Club on January 25th, 1956

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Switzerland, Austria, Belgium, Germany, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and some other countries will apply their former second and third class rates for the new first and second class respectively.

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Tickets issued during the month of May, 1956, dated for travel after June 3rd, 1956, will be issued at the new fares. Tickets are not issued more than one month before date of departure.

Single and double berth compartments in Wagons-Lits and D.S.G. (German) sleepers will be available only to holders of first-class tickets. whilst sleeping-cars with three berths per compartment will be available for second-class ticket holders.

Courette accommodation (generally six places per compartment) will be available to second-class ticket holders.

The old third-class Swiss rolling-stock with wooden seats, which will have to be used for the future second-class, will, in due course, disappear (at least from the main lines), since all new carriages being built are provided with upholstery or padding.

Switzerland's Housing Market

Recently compiled statistics show that more than 31,000 new apartments were constructed in Switzerland in 1955, 2,000 more than in the preceding year. Building permits for more than 40,000 have been granted for 1956 and it is thought that this year will see a continuation of the construction climb in Switzerland.

SWITZERLAND AND THE INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS

Lecture delivered at the London Rotary Club on
January 25th, 1956, by the Swiss Minister,
Monsieur A. Daeniker.

By choosing "Switzerland and the International Organisations" as the subject of my address, I want to give you a short orientation of my country's special position in relation to the world at large.

I suppose many amongst this distinguished audience will find it paradoxical that some of the most important international conferences have been held at Geneva, although Switzerland is not a member of the United Nations. After their recent enlargement to 76 member States, Switzerland shares the position of exclusiveness with divided Germany, Japan, Vietnam, Korea, Outer Mongolia and the People's Republic of China. In contrast to those other States, Switzerland keeps aloof of her own free will and has never even applied for membership. At the same time she adheres to most of the Sub-Agencies of the United Nations and she participates like any UNO member in the Organisation of International Justice. Switzerland, which many consider the heart of Europe, and whose federal structure has often been called an example for European unification, is not a member of the Council of Europe. Switzerland, a financial centre of the Continent whose currency throughout the vagaries of the last 25 years has solidly been based on convertibility, has not joined the Bretton Wood Agreements, which led to the creation of the International Monetary Fund and the Bank of International Development and Reconstruction. Switzerland is not a member of GATT, another name closely connected with Geneva, where most of its meetings have been held, although she takes a prominent part in OEEC and EPU and has spared no effort to promote the liberalisation of trade and payments in Europe.

Let us see whether we may find a guiding line to explain this situation, which seems contradictory and could easily lead to a misunderstanding of our policy.

A small State with a population of less than five millions, situated on the crossroads of Central Europe, must obviously be interested in any international organisation destined to maintain peace and to guarantee by efficient collective measures the security of all against aggression. Particularly the principle of settling international conflicts by mediation, arbitration or judicial means was actively promoted by the Swiss Government since the beginning of this century. During the period between the two world wars Switzerland has concluded treaties of mediation and arbitration with a great number of States and has subscribed to compulsory jurisdiction in international disputes.

When in 1920 the League of Nations was founded, the Swiss people welcomed heartily this first attempt to replace arbitrary rule in world affairs by collective security. Switzerland was the only State which submitted the question of adherence to the vote; our people accepted the proposal with a large majority. We joined, however, with the explicit reservation that our time-honoured "maxime d'Etat" of permanent

neutrality should be respected. Since the middle ages the Swiss cantons had followed a policy of permanent abstention from foreign quarrels, which proved a blessing not only when religious cleavage threatened to undermine our national cohesion, but also later on, when powerful national States grew up along our frontiers. Neutrality was the protective shield which alone enabled us to preserve the harmony among the members of our Confederation, which, from the beginning, were of different political standing and which, as you know, still belong to different religious beliefs and languages. Neutrality means that, in war and in peace, we abstain from taking sides and from entering into political or military commitments. Our willingness to protect our neutrality and our territory by force of arms, helped to maintain the balance of power on the European Continent; by defending the key position of the alpine massif we protected the flanks of any army operating in the adjacent regions of the Continent. That is the reason why the Act of Paris of 1815, as well as the Treaty of Versailles of 1920, recognised the perpetual neutrality and integrity of Switzerland and admitted that her independence from foreign influence is in the true interest of the whole of Europe. The Swiss people would never have been willing to sacrifice a principle which had guided them so providentially through centuries, if they had not been able to adhere to the League of Nations under a qualified membership, which allowed Switzerland to abstain from military action and only obliged her to participate in collective economic and financial sanctions.

After the failure of collective sanctions against Italy in the Abyssinian conflict, even this differential neutrality was discontinued and Switzerland returned to full neutrality although remaining in the League.

(To be continued).

NOTICE

1st OF AUGUST BADGES

The Consulate has pleasure in announcing that the 1st of August Badges have arrived.

This year, the proceeds from the sale of these badges will be devoted to supporting the activities of Swiss Women's Associations in professional and social fields.

As in the past, they will be sold through the usual channels at 2/- each.

Should anyone not be able to take advantage of the opportunity to purchase them through the kind services of our compatriots who distribute them, the Consulate will be happy to fulfil requests.

GENERAL MEETING

All members are cordially invited to attend the Annual General Meeting, to be held at Mr. Risi's Place, Ngaruawahia (opposite the military camp), on Saturday, the 7th of July, at 2 p.m. At the same time a special general meeting is to be held to vote re the alteration of rules as provided in Art. 12 of the Society's rules. The principal points are to make the scope of the Society more universal, so as to embrace also social and cultural activities, as exposed by the president in previous reports. The rules will have to be changed accordingly. At the same time it is suggested to call the Society "The Swiss Society of New Zealand." It is important that as many members as possible attend this meeting, which will be held at Mr. Risi's place in the Waikato, so as to allow the maximum number of members of southern districts to attend.

NOTICE CONCERNING SWISS CALENDARS FOR 1957

To enable our compatriots to procure a pictorial calendar from Switzerland for 1957, the Consulate is prepared to pass a collective order. Applicants are asked to write to the Swiss Consulate, P.O. Box 386, Wellington, C.1, and to remit at the same time the amount in question. The following calendars are offered:—

- (a) THE ALPINE CALENDAR, 1957 (Stehli); price 12/-.
- (b) SWITZERLAND, 1957 (Novos); price 12/-.

Orders for these calendars will be accepted UNTIL JULY 1st, 1956.

CORRESPONDENCE: Please address to the Secretary,

Mr. E. Gilgen,
P.O. Box 2875, Auckland, C.1.

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