

Technical co-operation

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

Objekttyp: **Article**

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

Band (Jahr): **- (1965)**

Heft 1472

PDF erstellt am: **29.04.2024**

Persistenter Link: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-687497>

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The Swiss Observer

FOUNDED IN 1919 BY PAUL F. BOEHRINGER.

The Official Organ of the Swiss Colony in Great Britain

Advisory Council: R. J. KELLER (Chairman), GOTTFRIED KELLER (Vice-Chairman), DR. E. M. BIRCHER, O. F. BOEHRINGER, J. EUSEBIO, A. KUNZ, A. STAUFFER, G. E. SUTER.

EDITED BY MRS. MARIANN MEIER WITH THE CO-OPERATION OF MEMBERS OF THE SWISS COLONY IN GREAT BRITAIN

Telephone: CLERKENWELL 2321/2.

Published Twice Monthly at 23, LEONARD STREET, E.C.2.

Telegrams: FREPRINCO, LONDON.

Vol. 51 No. 1472

FRIDAY, 26th FEBRUARY 1965

TECHNICAL CO-OPERATION

It is significant that in the course of the last few years, United Nations Technical Assistance has changed its name and become Technical Co-operation. The countries which received assistance were "under-developed", and the same countries with whom technical co-operation exists, are now called "developing".

The theme of the last Assembly of the Swiss Abroad in Lausanne last August, was "Switzerland and the Developing Countries". The theme was chosen with a view to the Switzerland of tomorrow, so impressively portrayed at the EXPO. Ambassador Dr. A. Lindt, Delegate of the Federal Council for Technical Co-operation, spoke on the main subject from the official viewpoint. He began with the sober statement that Switzerland herself had been an underdeveloped country not so long ago. Emigration had been the only thing for many young Swiss at that time. Today, the underdeveloped country had herself become highly industrialised and was on the giving side of technical assistance.

Earlier the Swiss abroad themselves had a share in the demands of the underdeveloped countries. Co-operation in this field used to be mainly commercial. The changes in power relationships had also brought about a change in co-operation. The "third world" which was born through the formation of a large number of new states is still marked by an incredibly low standard of living. But it is no longer willing to accept this state of affairs with resignation. The rich part of the world cannot remain indifferent. For whatever reason the industrialised countries give help, the fact remains, Dr. Lindt said, that communal action is being taken. "This reminds us of the measures taken to protect against the danger of avalanches, an avalanche which threatens the whole world."

On one hand are the optimists who believed that the developing countries would become like we are. They have been disappointed. On the other side are the pessimists who spoke of help being poured into a bottomless pit. Both attitudes are mistaken, Dr. Lindt believes. "Every development is a process of fermentation with the inherent possibilities of evolution or revolution." If nothing is done to help, the chances are greater that these countries slide into chaos. The possibility for Switzerland to stand aside cannot seriously be considered. She is compelled to co-operate by the Swiss humanitarian tradition. The fact that the Swiss are a neutral country and have peaceful relations with all states, predestines them as helpers.

Ambassador Lindt explained that the Swiss were a sober race and their schemes and projects possibly modest, but realistic. He also referred to the Swiss abroad whose

communities were at times also enriched by Swiss experts going overseas.

Another speaker at the Assembly in Lausanne was the General Manager of the PTT, Mr. Ducommun. The Swiss postal authorities have sent dozens of experts who are capable of installing modern telecommunication systems. The PTT also train *stagiaires* from developing countries in Switzerland. He was, however, not altogether in favour of the *stagiaire* schemes, as young people get uprooted and don't always want to go back.

As the theme of the Assembly in Lausanne had the sub-title "as seen from the viewpoint of the Swiss abroad", it was natural that a number of Swiss from overseas spoke of their experiences with technical co-operation. The speakers included representatives from France, Lebanon, Ghana, Parana, Kongo, Mexico, Ivory Coast, Casablanca and G.B. (Prof. Inebnit of Leeds spoke in favour of an international centre in Switzerland for training teams for voluntary service). The sum total of the views expressed was that no spectacular results must be expected and that much painstaking and constructive work is needed if the effort is to be successful.

In addition to the Delegate for Technical Co-operation who, as former U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees is well suited for his post, there is the Committee for Technical Co-operation, which consists of representatives of the interested departments, the Commission for Technical Co-operation (25 personalities from outside the administration), the Conference for Technical Development Assistance (a non-limited number of representatives of organisations and individuals concerned with technical assistance and co-operation).

We must also remember that the man in the government (Political Department) to whose office the service for T.C. belongs, is himself an expert: Federal Councillor Wahlen was an official of FAO from 1949-1958. From the high office of Deputy Director-General, he was elected into the Federal Council in 1958.

Basically, Switzerland gives four types of assistance: direct grants or loans under bilateral agreements (Turkey, Argentina, Brazil, Yugoslavia); scholarships; delivery of material; and sending out of experts. The governmental schemes are supplemented by those of voluntary agencies, such as SHAG (Schweiz. Hilfswerk für Aussereuropäische Gebiete), HEKS (Hilfswerk der Evangelischen Kirchen der Schweiz), Schweizer Caritas Bund, Schweizerisches Arbeiterhilfswerk, Swiss Red Cross. Their efforts covered fifteen countries in 1963.

Considerable help is given by private concerns. In Rueschlikon, which considered private T.C. in Switzerland

by firms like Migros, Motor Columbus, Fédération Horlogère, Swiss Plumbers' Federation and many others.

It would be beyond the scope of a short article to enumerate the many examples of T.A. Switzerland gives or to name the many experts sent out to countries in Africa, Asia, South America and the fringe of Europe, the doctors, nurses, teachers, economists, geologists, agronomists, experts in insurance, tourism, statistics, etc.

Many of these experts go out in the service of the United Nations Specialised Agencies. From July 1961 to February 1964, 163 experts were put at the disposal of U.N. There is no lack of young people, trained and untrained, and that is creditable, considering the shortage of labour generally.

In 1961, Switzerland created the Federal Office for Development Assistance, and the same year, Parliament granted 60 million francs. Last December, a further 90 million francs were voted by the National Council. It is intended to double the contribution to the Missions (at present 2.2 million francs). More scholarships are to be given to candidates inside a particular country. From July 1961 to February 1964, 645 scholarships were awarded, 601 in Switzerland itself. These do not include university grants. In its message, the Federal Council pointed out that due to valuable experience gathered in international bodies as well as in Swiss organisations, better and more intensive work could now be done. It would be necessary to utilise the human and technical potential in all relevant institutions to the full. Bilateral assistance, the message said, was more important than multilateral help. Private schemes would again be assisted by the Confederation. The will to help was strong amongst the Swiss people as soon as it was clear that help really reached the poorest social strata in a developing country. If the trial scheme "Volunteers for Development Work" proved successful, it would be extended. It is also planned to consider Latin America more than hitherto. Incidentally, the administration cost of 1.3 million francs p.a. is not included in the 90 million francs.

On 11th February, the Conference for Technical Development Assistance held its annual meeting in Berne, at which Federal Councillor Wahlen addressed the members. Prof. Dr. H. Gutersohn, Chairman of the Commission for Technical Co-operation, gave a report for 1964. Money alone was not sufficient, he said, far more important and difficult was the problem of suitable use of the funds available. 26.3 million francs were spent in 1964 out of federal means (9.9 m. on multilateral and 16.4 m. on bilateral aid.)

There were five combined federal projects (Nepal, India, Rwanda, Turkey and Tunisia). These varied from dairy centre, vocational training school, co-operative for coffee marketing, agricultural college, to various schemes for helping the Tibetan refugees in India and Nepal. These projects include all kinds of assistance (experts, scholarships, material, capital). There were 82 individual and 259 group scholarships, in addition to 234 university grants. Furthermore 50 travel stays in Switzerland were financed. 91 experts were sent to various countries, and the material delivered cost Fr.380,000.—. For the voluntary scheme, 23 Swiss came forward.

Various aspects of T.C. were discussed by the Conference, and one of the points made was that the choice of the right expert usually decided *a priori* the success of any project. The possibility of professional experts was not considered desirable, but it was felt necessary to offer experts reasonable positions on their return.

Dr. Lindt addressed the meeting and wanted more intensive publicity and information of the public. He considered T.C. as an integral part of Swiss foreign policy. Federal Councillor Wahlen supported this point and explained that Switzerland's interest in Technical Co-operation was for economic and political reasons. The idea, he said, that Switzerland wanted to take a special position in the United Nations Organisation for material considerations must never occur, and for this reason multilateral help was not to be neglected completely.

During the past ten years, the free world has contributed in various forms the vast sum of fifty-three milliards of dollars. The former Federal Councillor Max Petitpierre said in a lecture in Zug in 1963:

"The body economic developed during the nineteenth century and at the beginning of the twentieth century, in an atmosphere of freedom from control or interference. This atmosphere, deliberately created, enabled private enterprise to become what it is today, thanks to the initiative, courage, imagination and ability of those who founded business concerns and brought them to prosperity.

"Today the body economic must take into account a further factor — not new, but newly important: this factor is interdependence, which has not destroyed the atmosphere of freedom and is not hostile to it, but is an essential element in the complex framework within which private initiative operates. This interdependence exists as between problems, as between countries and as between continents. Somebody has written that today for the first time all men have the same history and all nations face world-size problems. In Europe every country, and almost every business concern in every country, is affected by the efforts being made to unify the continent economically, and later perhaps, also politically. Within nations former doctrinal differences between right and left have been replaced by a general search for satisfactory answers to economic and social questions.

"Our very future depends on the progress made towards solving a host of problems which are the background against which we work."

That Switzerland is resolutely determined to help in this solution is proved amply by her share in Technical Co-operation, the great adventure of our time.

(Sources include Agence Télégraphique Suisse, "Basler Nachrichten", "Tages-Anzeiger", and "Swiss Industry and Trade".)

SWISS CONTRIBUTION TO SPACE RESEARCH

A great many people think that the scientific and technical potential necessary for space research is the sole prerogative of the big powers and that Switzerland is not in a position to make any appreciable contribution in this field. Now Switzerland is, on the contrary, fully capable of co-operating in this research, as is proved by a number of her scientific and technical achievements. In this connection let us mention the very high vacuum space chamber recently built by a Swiss firm. This chamber in the form of a cylinder 16 ft. 5 ins. long with a diameter of 6 ft. 6½ ins. will make it possible in particular to perfect and try out electric engines for space vessels, under conditions similar to those existing in outer space. The chamber has been made for the German Space Research Institute at Braunschweig, and the experiments which will be able to be carried out with it should make an important contribution to the development of space travel. [O.S.E.C.]