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"THE STATE OF THE CONFEDERATION"

THE FEDERAL COUNCIL REPORTS

(Part One)

THE Federal Constitution demands that the Federal Council (i.e. the Government) report every year on its activities during the previous twelve months. The report is to give a picture of the state of the Confederation at home and abroad. Up to now, this statement was limited to the work of the individual Federal Departments and did not produce any general synthesis of conceptions and propositions. Acceding to the demand made during recent years by Parliament and the Press, the Federal Council has, for the first time and by the way of an expedient, issued a special expose on the "State of the Confederation." This document of fifteen printed pages was published early in April and deals with the situation at home as well as Switzerland's position in the world.

The Federal Council stresses the need to find an adequate and workable form of political existence for the small and neutral state that is Switzerland. The following is a summary of the report.

The post-war epoch is obviously nearing its end and mankind faces a new era with new problems. The immediate past is characterised by three things: economic reconstruction, the formation of political blocks with the background of "atomic balance" and the end of colonial power. A new kind of nationalism is arising. The world is no longer dominated by two great powers; pluralistic diversities more and more determine the political arena.

Switzerland confronts the changed world with perpetual neutrality. This policy is supported by the Swiss people's readiness for self-defence, as well as by considerable spending for defence purposes by the Confederation. Switzerland's armed neutrality and her policy of non-alignment resolutely adhered to, serves more and more as a basis for active participation in international life. Though Switzerland is not yet a member of United Nations, she takes an active part in its many specialised agencies. Repeatedly she has supported actions for peace.

As a country extremely dependent on the exchange of goods and services, Switzerland has very close relations with the world, particularly with her European neighbours. Every initiative to reorganise international trade is of immediate and vital importance to her.

Seen collectively, Switzerland's policy is characterised by three permanent aims: preservation of her independence, readiness for international co-operation; fostering of inner stability,

securing of markets and imports for Swiss economy; as well as ever-ready adaptation of means to the changing world situation.

On the "outer front," Swiss policy at present faces three sets of problems: her relationship with Europe and the Atlantic Community, with the Communist world and with the developing countries. Every contemplation of the relationship between Switzerland and the rest of Europe leads straight to the difficult problems of the future of the Occident. Economic measures taken by other nations compelled Switzerland to take up a position; first the setting up of the European Economic Community — which Switzerland did not join — followed by the creation of EFTA (European Free Trade Association) of which she is a member. Thus our country has to make a re-appraisal of her position again and again when faced with new developments.

The Federal Council refers to the complex situation of the Atlantic Community. It has been shown that such a community cannot be fully realised simply by having a federation of European states as counterpart to the U.S.A. The European question has become more acute by breaking the limited framework in which it has been treated hitherto; this for historical, political and economic reasons. The immediate problem in this connection is the ever-widening economic rift between the "Six" and the "Seven," and Switzerland with her close economic ties to European countries, will have to show a marked and active interest in the efforts towards a speedy closing of the gap between EFTA and the Common Market.

The extensive customs and tariffs negotiations of the "Kennedy Round" could, if successful, result in a considerable lessening of the contrasts and in better trade relationships not only between Europe and America, but above all inside Europe.

The Federal Council refers to the correct diplomatic relations Switzerland keeps with the countries of the Communist world. Her statute of permanent neutrality requires her to have varied representation in all parts of the globe. Trade with Eastern countries is not very extensive, though it cannot be denied that the Eastern European countries were at one time very valued trade partners of Switzerland.

Switzerland considers it her duty to contribute to the economic, technical and cultural development of the new nations. Technical Assistance is today in the centre of activity of many international organisations. Switzerland makes an increasing contribution every year to the programme of technical development of United Nations. But as ever, bilateral schemes in Switzerland's assistance to developing nations are of the greatest importance. Well chosen, well thought-out and financially stable individual projects is the type of help which corresponds best to the Swiss

character and the limited resources of money and personnel available to the country.

Swiss foreign policy is marked by its character of permanent vigilance, coupled with the determination to test and prove again and again the value of Swiss principles of state under the ever changing problems of contemporary history.

(By courtesy of Agence Telegraphique Suisse.)

(The Federal Council's report regarding home affairs will be published in the next issue of the "Helvetia.")

NEWS OF THE COLONY

Auckland Swiss Club

The Tessiner-Abend of the Auckland Swiss Club, held on 26th June, 1965, at the Edendale School Hall, Sandringham Road, Sandringham:

At 8.10 p.m. the Continental Orchestra, "KEITH MEICHLE AND HIS CANNOTS," started to play lovely dance music. There were not yet many people present; however, at 9 p.m. you could see a long queue standing in the entrance and the treasurer and his help were very busy with selling and punching tickets. Next time they can go for a competition with bus-drivers, having so much training after this evening! All seats were taken besides two empty tables in front of the band. Twenty-five guests entered their names into our new, red-coloured guest book—that is a nice start indeed!

The decoration was absolutely marvellous and we could see that experts had had a hand in the big flower baskets sitting in the middle of all tables. And what a lot of work it must have caused to "plant" all the palm trees and ferns, so that we really felt the atmosphere of Italian Switzerland. I enjoyed particularly the corner with the barrels that served as seats and the bigger ones as tables, of course with a big bottle of "Chianti" on them!

The barmen, half hidden behind the green leaves of a tree, hurried from the cases filled with beverages, to the customers to fulfil their wishes. The "Grotto Ticinese" with the red-blue striped flag in front looked quite picturesque, and we will soon be able to see the snaps, taken by the young photographer. Many times the flash of his camera was between the dancing couples who will be able to buy the photos later on. They will make a nice souvenir.

At 10 o'clock the famous Italian singer Silvio de Pra sang and played for us on his accordeon many well known songs, and of course "Never on a Sunday" was asked for and welcomed by many people. This musical feast lasted unfortunately only half an hour and our star disappeared too quickly.