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GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF SWISS GOVERNMENT POLICY

For the first time in the history of the Swiss Confederation, the Federal Council has published a "Government Programme". President Spuehler presented it to the Press, stating that it was no longer possible to master the problems exclusively by pragmatism. The need for stronger planning in State action had become evident in view of the fast growth of problems and the increasing impression that the authorities were no longer in a position to deal with the tasks, nor with the strong increase of financial needs, nor with the demand for an order of priorities. Parliament accepted the proposals by National Councillor Schuermann of Solothurn to ask the Government for a programme. The 45-page document will be put before the National Council in the present session and to the Council of State in September.

On going to press, we have just heard that the National Council has devoted a week to the discussion of the Programme. No fewer than 49 Members of Parliament spoke in the debate. The "Landesring der Unabhaengigen" proposed rejection of the document, but the National Council "took note" of it by defeating the proposal to reject it with 133 to 19 votes.

Its full title is "Guiding Principles for Government Policy in the Legislative Period 1968-1971". The Swiss system of government cannot be compared very easily with those of other countries. The Confederation is no uniform State ruled from above, and the Government is chosen by the people, i.e. Parliament. One of its characteristics is that no programme is expected, and no promises are made, but its mandate is one of the most generous in the world. According to the Constitution, the Federal Council is the "leading executive authority in Switzerland". The stress lies on executive, for it is extremely difficult to state how Switzerland is really governed. The power is well distributed between Government, Parliament, the Parliamentary Commissions which make all the important preliminary decisions, the Parliamentary Party groups, the Parties themselves, the "sovereign" people with their rights of Referendum and Initiative. A further point to be considered is the autonomous Cantons with their own fields of action. Then there are the powerful **Wirtschaftsverbaende,** the organised bodies of industry, trade and commerce and other vested interests.

Any Government Programme can therefore be nothing more than a catalogue of what Federal Politics will have to deal with in the coming years. As a novelty, the Federal Council has

arranged the programme according to the tasks ahead, and not according to Departments. It has deliberately evaded to present each Department better than the other, but has looked at the problems from an overall viewpoint.

First, it deals with the position of the Confederation. Foreign relations will as hitherto be guided by the principles of independence, solidarity and universality. The country is ready to take part in closer co-operation within Europe and in closing the gap between EFTA and the Common Market. Switzerland is convinced of the necessity of internationally co-ordinated promotion of economic growth in the developing countries. The country wishes to take an active part in international scientific co-operation.

With regard to national defence, the creation of a leading organisation for "Total Defence" **(Gesamtverteidigung)** takes first place. The territorial services is to be reorganised. Military training has to be reshaped and a national armament policy will be formulated. Civil defence must be extended. The problem of foreign labour will be kept under close supervision and measures taken to prevent a new increase in numbers.

Juridical questions and problems of organisation of the State are the next point. A better division of tasks between Confederation and Cantons must be made to take into account modern development, and one of the most important duties in this field is the planning of the land **(Bodenrecht und Landesplanung).** Constitutional obligations regarding legislation must be studied further, including clear distribution of competences, always safeguarding the rights and privileges of the citizens. The whole administrative apparatus must be overhauled.

Economic policy will concentrate on progress of productivity. One of the most important tasks in this sector will be to loosen the restrictions on foreign labour and to leave labour gradually to the rules of supply and demand in the free market. Improvement of production bases in Agriculture and the whole aspect of agrarian structure will be studied. Here again, more attention must be given to the law of supply and demand. A new conception of housing is visualised which does not propose rent relief, but favourable building conditions. The aim of supervising Switzerland's foreign trade remains unchanged — guarding of Swiss economic interests based, perhaps more than hitherto, on a multilateral trade policy. Relations with Western industrialised nations, new contacts with trading countries and improved trade relations with the developing countries will remain in the foreground.

Communications and energy policy will cover all aspects of power production, national road construction as planned, ration-

alisation on railways, improvement of telecommunications. A new PPT statute will have to be worked out.

In conjunction with the Cantons and, where necessary, with industry, a long-term educational and scientific research policy will have to be conceived. The promotion of cantonal universities, the extension of the Federal Institute of Technology (ETH) and the take-over by the Confederation of its **Romand** counterpart in Lausanne, the EPUL, are urgent problems.

Social welfare priority will be given to one of the greatest problems, that of old age. Further, cultural exchange between the various regions of the country should be improved. Extremely urgent, however, is legislation dealing with results detrimental to health, stemming from technical and industrial development.

Finally, regarding finance and currency policy, the most important task will be to bring about an equilibrium between revenue and expenditure by creating a new Finance Order and effective **Notenbankinstrumentarium** (the means with which the Swiss National Bank (Bank of issue) makes its policy work).

The critics of the Government Programme say that it is rather meagre. This may be so, as the Federal Council only mentions the tasks whose solutions are already on the way. It deliberately leaves out all those problems which may crop up in a few years and does not mention demands which are not yet ripe for discussion. All the citizen gets is a catalogue of what is already being done in Berne. And that is no doubt of some help to all those outside politics. It is no binding Government programme. It has not been submitted to the Parties. It has not been discussed by the Parliamentary Commissions. This seems right and logical, for the programme is non-committal and can never be more than a kind of "time table" as long as Federal Policy is guided by the rules of Referendum Democracy. Every real Government Programme is a political planning effort, and the incalculability of Direct Democracy would make nonsense of it.

The question is therefore natural — why such a programme at all? National Councillor P. Duerrenmatt says that its value lies in the enumeration of all the problems and tasks which have grown like an avalanche in the past years. It serves as a basis for political discussion and is sufficient to make the citizen realise what a mountain of practical problems have to be dealt with by the politicians. It also makes one think about the difficulty if not impossibility of bringing idealistic convictions into the maze of such problems. Mr Duerrenmatt wonders what the political bodies will make of it. If the Parties and the public take up the discussion, no blame, says he, should be put on the Federal Council. The Government has done no more and no less than could be expected of it.