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THE 1954 YEARBOOK OF THE N.S.H.

Once again are we allowed to greet the appearance, in its elegant garb of black and gold, of the National Yearbook published under the auspices of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique. It is the 25th issue and marks, at the same time, the 40th anniversary of the foundation of the N.S.H.

As in previous years, the present volume consists of a collection of essays, contributed by prominent Swiss writers, on various subjects affecting the welfare of Switzerland, subjects such as internal and external politics, economic problems, agriculture, social questions, national defence, the Press, and so forth.

It would take up too much space to do justice, in a short review, to every one of the essays. May we comment, very briefly, on some of them, selected at random.

The national armament programme and the financial problems arising from it are exhaustively dealt with by Dr. W. Gruetter, Berne. The figures are eloquent: the 1950 budget amounted to 505 million francs, the estimates for 1954 provide for an outlay of 753 millions, a heavy burden for so small a country.

Viniculture, a subject of no little importance in the national economy, is examined by Dr. W. Gasser-Staeger, St. Gall. His analysis discloses the fact that within the last 50 years a very considerable decrease in the consumption of wine has taken place. Thus in the decade 1893-1902 the annual consumption per head was 88.8 litres; in the years 1945-1949 it had fallen to 36.7 litres. Against this reduction must be set a marked increase in the sale of eating grapes and the increasing popularity of non-alcoholic grape juice. Most of the wine grown and consumed is white wine, a large proportion of the red variety being imported.

Ernst Widmer, Oberzolldirektor, Berne, writes on the administrative side of the customs service, the training of the personnel (4488 people) and the many implications of tariffs and international agreements.

A brilliant article on the position of Switzerland in the international community is contributed by Professor W. E. Rappard, Geneva. Other studies are signed by such authorities as A. Picot, J. Bourquin, Werner Kaegi, E. Zellweger, Hugo Faesi, Ph. Schmid-Ruedin, H. Biaesch in collaboration with Th. Chopard, Remo Bornatico, Henri Roh, W. Ryser, J. J. Senglet, A. Schoop.

E. Moergeli is the compiler of the customary political chronicle, covering the period October 1952 to July 1953. On behalf of the N.S.H., on the occasion of its jubilee, special messages are contributed by A. Laett, L. Gautier, H. Nabholz and Alice Briod.

To the Swiss residing abroad, the lively and absorbing account on the Secrétariat des Suisses à l'Etranger, written by Alice Briod (whom Mr. Motta called "la petite maman des Suisses à l'Etranger") should be of special interest. She describes, in a well-written and witty survey, the vicissitudes of the organisation. There was a time, she writes, when funds were so low as to make it doubtful whether the Secrétariat could carry on. The situation was saved by a timely legacy from an unknown lady who bequeathed 500,000 francs to a Zoological Garden and 10,000 francs to the Secrétariat.

It comes as something of a shock to learn that the Yearbook has been, for many years, produced at a loss. By its very nature, a book of this kind is not likely ever to become a "best-seller" but it is a pity that so fine a publication cannot be made to pay its way when so much trash is being printed and, presumably, sold at a profit.

We regret to read in Dr. Laett's valedictory message that he is about to relinquish the Editorship of the Year Book after exercising this function for 25 years. Brilliant writer, scholar, historian and a great patriot, Dr. Laett deserves the highest praise for the services he has rendered to the N.S.H. and to his country.

To all our readers and to all who may take an interest in the cultural and social development of the Swiss people, the Yearbook of the N.S.H. is warmly recommended.

J.J.F.S.

OUR NEXT ISSUE.

Our next issue will be published on Friday, March 12th, 1954. We take the opportunity of thanking the following subscribers for their kind and helpful donations over and above their subscription: A. Baenziger, A. Wegmuller, Miss H. Sidler, E. Kern, A. J. Gomiero, R. Ryf, Miss B. Sandmeyer, R. de Cintra, M. Lienhard, W. Meier, A. C. Boller, E. A. Mermod, R. Mathez, Max Ernst, R. Schmid, J. Margot, Willy Deutsch, E. Oggier.

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