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FRIDAY, 24th MAY 1963

SWITZERLAND WELCOMED INTO THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

On 6th May Switzerland officially became the seventeenth member of the Council of Europe. In a black limousine carrying the Swiss flag, Federal Councillor Wahlen drove up to the House of Europe in Strasbourg shortly before 9.30 a.m. He was accompanied by the future permanent representative, Monsieur Henri Voirier. The Secretary General of the Council, Signor Lodovico Benvenuti, welcomed the Swiss delegation and he expressed his joy at the Swiss joining the Council of Europe, a moment, he said, he had been waiting for ever since he became Secretary General. He considered this event as one of great importance to all Europeans.

The Swiss Foreign Minister, Federal Councillor Wahlen, then signed the official deed and gave a short address. He called the Consultative Assembly and the Committee of Ministers an excellent grandstand for European public opinion. He praised the excellent work done by the Secretariat and he stressed the importance of the Council, which was a community of states built up on equal principles of democracy and freedom.

Switzerland's membership thus officially sealed, she was accorded her place between Sweden and Turkey, and at 12.30 the Swiss flag was formally hoisted outside the House of Europe.

The following day, as is customary, Federal Councillor Wahlen made his first speech to the Consultative Assembly. In the name of the Federal Council and the people of Switzerland he thanked the Council for admitting the Confederation. He said that for anyone familiar with Swiss history it would not be difficult to explain why it had taken fourteen years for his country to join the Council of Europe. Over a millennium it had been Europe's fate to continually try to find itself. Many efforts had been made to unify the continent. But the great idea had been dashed again and again by the hard fact that might had always put itself in the place of right. Thus, European history, especially in our own century, had been one of disappointments, of blood and tears. In the Council of Europe there was now a body trying hard to bring about unity by subjugating might to right.

Switzerland, the speaker said, was not a homogeneous state defined clearly in the rich mosaic that was Europe. It was diverse as to race, geography, culture, language and religion. What has kept Switzerland together was the strong desire to keep her freedom. Now Switzerland had joined the Council of Europe she would go on adhering strictly to her neutrality, but she was ready to do her utmost to foster understanding and to safeguard peace. The speaker concluded by stressing that the mission of the Council was to bring the European nations closer together, but at the same time to respect their national individualities.

Switzerland will now be represented by the Head of the Political Department, Federal Councillor Wahlen, on the Committee of Ministers which sits twice yearly. On the Committee of Deputy Ministers, meeting monthly, the Consul-General in Strasbourg, Monsieur Voirier, who was recently elected by the Federal Council and accorded the title of Minister Plenipotentiary, will represent the Confederation.

Mr. Georges Bonnant of the Federal Political Department in Berne and Vice-Consul Voegeli in Strasbourg will act as deputies. The Swiss observers on the various commissions — some twenty of them — of experts will now become full voting delegates. Swiss participation on other committees is being prepared.

Switzerland's entry into the Council of Europe has been hailed in many quarters. In Bonn it was considered an impetus for Europe. Swiss democracy, fashioned in a long history, would be able to contribute valuable experience, and through it the Council of Europe would be given considerable help in its development. Nobody would question Swiss neutrality.

"Europe without Boundaries" is the name of a travelling exhibition which the Council of Europe is sending through the German-speaking part of Switzerland. It started in Berne on 11th May, then went to Lucerne, where it will remain till 2nd June. From 4th to 12th of next month it will be shown in Zurich. Later it will open in St. Gall and in October it will be held in Basle.

The aim of the exhibition is to give an impressive picture of the many aspects of the Council's activities.

A seminary on "Switzerland in Europe" was held at the beginning of May by the Catholic Students' Union at Grangeneuve near Fribourg. Over 150 Italian- and French-speaking students took part.

Also about Europe but from a slightly different angle Prof. Salvador de Maderiaga (Oxford) spoke at a meeting at Kilchberg (Zurich) early in May. He said Europe's spirit was permeated by two great doctrines, that of Socrates, which was based on the conception of truth, and that of Christ, which was marked by the love of one's neighbour. The strength of these two traditions resulted in intelligence and will-power having become the two most important characteristics of the European. Europe was therefore the continent of individuality, which explained its leading role having lasted for centuries.

The speaker went on, explaining that freedom of thought and respect for the human person were the reason why the totalitarian systems had been doomed to failure. Europe's duty was to work for the freedom of all European states and the unity of the whole continent. In conclusion the eminent speaker advised against a European Parlia-

ment, but rather a Senate elected by the National Parliaments. As capital he suggested Vienna.

On the same day as Switzerland entered into the Council of Europe the delegates' meeting of the Swiss "Europa Union" took place in Neuchâtel. The assembly passed a resolution in which it applauds Switzerland's entry, which it has been advocating for years. It also expresses its conviction that Switzerland's contribution will further the aims of the Council. It urges the Federal Government to sign the various conventions so that Switzerland can play her part fully. It also asks the Federal Council to create the

necessary preliminary requirements for Switzerland to join the European Human Rights Convention.

The resolution points out that the French veto against Great Britain's entry into the Common Market has shown that Europe will not unite as long as it is not done on a democratic and federalistic basis. For Switzerland to work towards the realisation of a democratic united Europe is of vital interest for us all.

(Based on reports from Agence Télégraphique Suisse, "Basler Nachrichten", and "Echo", the journal of the Swiss abroad.)

LANDSGEMEINDEN 1963

SWITZERLAND'S OPEN PARLIAMENTS

Of the twenty-two Cantons in Switzerland three are divided into "Half-Cantons", Basle into Baselstadt and Baselland, Unterwalden into Obwalden and Nidwalden, and Appenzell into the Protestant Ausserrhoden and the Roman Catholic Innerrhoden. Four of these "Half-Cantons" and the Canton of Glarus have retained the system of the "Landsgemeinde", the purest form of direct democracy. This People's Parliament which looks back on a history of more than five centuries demands the presence of all voters in order to discuss affairs of state and elect the government.

On the last Sunday in April the "Landsgemeinde" of Obwalden met at Sarnen, that of Nidwalden at Stans. The two parts of Appenzell met at Hundwil (Ausserrhoden) and Appenzell (Innerrhoden). On 5th May the "Landsgemeinde" of Glarus met in the Cantonal capital of the same name.

At Sarnen, nearly 1,000 electors took part, among them Federal Councillors Tschudi and von Moos, the latter himself as citizen of Obwalden. The Government of the Canton of Solothurn were official guests. For three hours the electors did their duty in voting for their government, accepting various credit demands and listening to heads of departments who gave information regarding the proposed constitutional amendments and bills which would be voted on by ballot on 12th May.

At Stans the government of Baselstadt were official guests, and Federal Councillor Wahlen and President of the National Council Guinaud were present with their wives. A picturesque procession walked through Stans to Wil, where Landammann Dr. Graeni opened the Parliament in beautiful spring weather. Two thousand citizens took part. The twelve motions put before the electorate were all accepted, ten of them without any discussion. The motions covered tax rates, proposals affecting Cantonal finances, revision of the educational statute, credits for roads and a new station at Stans and the Canton's contribution towards the National Exhibition. A counting of votes had to be taken after the showing of hands for and against was questionable. An Italian had made an application to accede to the "Landrecht". The final count showed that 619 voted against and 344 for his application for civic rights. A short divine service of thanksgiving followed the assembly at the Pfarrkirche at Stans.

The electors of Appenzell Innerrhoden, again in beautiful sunshine, met in the capital at lunch time. A procession of official guests, military and political personages, among them the government of the Canton of Schwyz, wended its way from the town hall to the Landsgemeindeplatz. The whole route was gaily decorated with flags and lined by dense crowds.

In his official welcome Landammann Dr. Broger talked about the history of Appenzell and its entering the Confederation 450 years ago and finally he surveyed world politics.

The business dealt with by the citizens in the "Ring" resulted in some surprises as the present Landammann's successor was not the candidate everybody expected to be elected, but a well-known local baker who was nominated from the "Ring" and then voted for by the majority. And there was a second surprise when the said baker and newly chosen Landammann was elected as Councillor of States to represent the "Half-Canton" of Innerrhoden on the Council of States in Berne.

At the "Landsgemeinde" of Appenzell Ausserrhoden which took place at Hundwil some 8,000 citizens assembled, each of them carrying a sword, sabre or bayonet as insignia of citizenship and manhood. Several thousand spectators had come on the beautiful spring Sunday to watch the impressive ceremony which was opened by the singing of the hymn "Alles Leben strömt aus dir" ("Lord, all life streams forth from Thee"). Landammann Kuendig welcomed the official guests, the youngest in office of the Swiss Federal Councillors, Bundesrat Bonvin, the municipal government of St. Gall and high officers of the Swiss Army.

Amongst the business items to be dealt with were the accounts for 1962 which the assembly accepted. The elections of government officials and judges went smoothly and the discussion of various insurance proposals caused no great upheaval. Of interest may be the decision to start a fund in preparation of the jubilee in autumn of Appenzell's joining the Confederation in 1513. The handsome amount of half a million Swiss francs (well over £40,000) was voted for.

The "Landsgemeinde" ended on the serious note of taking the oath.

A week later the last of the open-air parliaments, that of Glarus, took place at the Canton's capital of the same name. Six thousand electors assembled in the "Ring". Amongst the guests of honour were the government of Appenzell Innerrhoden, and the Ambassadors of Canada, the U.S.A. and South Africa, as well as military and Federal officials.

Landammann Feusi conducted the meeting, which lasted 3½ hours. A number of motions were accepted, sometimes after very lively arguments. These were particularly spirited when the revision of the hunting bill was up for discussion. Large sums were voted for the Cantonal hospital and the sanatorium of Braunwald. Finally, against the proposal submitted by the government, the "Landsgemeinde" decided not to keep shops open any more on the Sunday preceding Christmas. [A.T.S.]