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Autor: [s.n.]
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SWISS POSTAL, TELEGRAPH AND TELEPHONE SERVICES

(Continued)

"If private industry sometimes voices criticism of the staff increases in public enterprises, the fact is easily overlooked that the volume of traffic has grown at a considerably quicker rate during the past ten years than the number of employees. I may perhaps quote some examples to illustrate this point:

"In the telephone service, 12,000 staff members are employed at the General Directorate and the seventeen Regional Telephone Directorates. Thanks to the fully automatic working and the strict rationalisation of the service, the "output" per worker ranks first in world statistics. In Switzerland, there is one employee to about 175 telephones, while the private US telephone company I.T.T. requires one worker to eighty-five telephones. Telephone staff requirements in the United States are thus double those of Switzerland.

"On the postal side, developments necessarily are less spectacular. But even here productivity will rise as soon as the rationalisation measures are fully effective. It would not be fair to expect radical changes in the postal services overnight. But even so we need not be ashamed of the results already achieved. If we compare the volume of traffic handled per worker in different years, we see that even in the postal service things are on the move. While in 1955 a postal employee handled 95,809 items, the figure for 1964 is 104,387 items, that is, a 9% increase in output.

"This leads me to the last and, for the present, most important aspect of the Post Office, its **financial situation**.

"For years, or rather for decades, the PTT were a healthy business enterprise yielding good profits and capable of making regular and ever higher yearly contributions to the Federal Exchequer. During the last few years, unfortunately, returns have dwindled more and more. Whereas in 1961 there was still a profit of 93 mio francs, it fell to 66 mio in 1962 and to 49 mio in 1963. The 1964 figure: a bare 2.4 mio francs.

"But let us have a closer look at the figures for 1964 arrived at by cost accounting methods, which alone can furnish reliable cost data:

- the postal deficit has passed the 100 mio mark and has risen to 128.3 mio francs,
- the profits of the telecommunication services have fallen back to 111.2 mio francs,
- for the first time the PTT have operated at a loss, as shown by our account of costs.
- in some branches of the postal service the receipts

barely cover the third or fourth part of the costs (handling of cash-on-delivery items, money orders, newspapers and magazines),

- in the telecommunication services the total proceeds decreased by 12.6 mio francs.

"Some further details may be of interest:

- the profit of letter handling is counterbalanced by the 46.8 mio francs deficit due to newspapers and magazines,
- with a loss of 9.6 mio francs, printed papers and samples of merchandise contribute to the overall deficit of letterpost.

"The exact figures of the 1964 account of costs are as follows: Letterpost, overall 25.2 mio francs deficit, Parcel post 63.8m. def., Remittance and Banking Services 20.0m. def., Newspapers and Magazines 64.8m. def., Postal Coach Passenger and Goods Services 19.3 m. def., Telephone Service 113.4m. profit, Telegraph and Telex Services 2.7m. profit, Wire Broadcasting Service (over the telephone network) 2.5m. def., Radio Broadcasting Service 4.5m. def., Television Service 2.1m. profit.

This gives us the following total figures: fr.128.3 mio deficit in the postal account of costs, fr.111.2 mio profit in the telecommunications account of costs, fr.18.1 mio overall deficit.

"And what are the prospects for 1966?

We presume that the heavy deficit of the operating account will be more or less offset by the surplus in the account of extraordinary expenditures and receipts. It can already be said that it will no longer be possible to make the traditional yearly contribution to the Federal Exchequer for 1965. The PTT reserve fund at present only contains 24.3 mio francs, so that the balance necessary to add to the modest profit in order to reach the traditional yearly contribution of 70 mio francs is simply not available — quite apart from the fact that it is rather questionable practice to make contributions taken from the reserves. If a small profit results for 1965, the wisest course will be to carry it forward to new account in order to help reduce the net loss expected for 1966.

"For 1966 we anticipate a deficit of 57.1 mio francs, corresponding to 3% of the proceeds. (The maximum deficit so far was experienced in 1920, when it amounted to 24.3 mio francs or 16.4% of the receipts.) If we add to this deficit the 70 mio francs traditionally to be delivered to the Federal Exchequer, we arrive at a deficiency of 1127 mio francs, which would be needed to come out even — without setting aside any amount as a reserve.

(To be continued.)

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