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The Swiss Observer

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The Official Organ of the Swiss Colony in Great Britain

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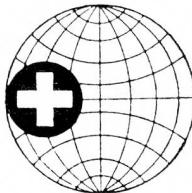
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“FIFTH SWITZERLAND”



FEDERAL COUNCILLOR SPEAKS ON EDUCATION IN SWITZERLAND

The Government's representative opened his speech in French by expressing compliments and best wishes from the Federal Council. He said that it was admiration and respect which induced the Government to be represented at these Assemblies of the Swiss Abroad, whose success was due to those taking part, but to a large extent to the Nouvelle Société Helvétique and its Central President, to the President of the Commission of the Swiss Abroad and finally to all those who contribute in an unselfish and disinterested manner to the organisation to whom Switzerland owed so much.

Next, Monsieur Celio referred to the tragic events in Czechoslovakia and the need for mutual help in these turbulent times and to adapt and strengthen Swiss institutions, to be vigilant and farsighted. He expressed satisfaction that the Swiss abroad, too, were fully aware of their tasks and mentioned as an example that the Solidarity Fund of the Swiss Abroad had doubled its membership within a year. He hoped that the troublesome times in which we live would induce others to join who had hitherto remained aloof.

It seemed particularly suitable to talk about what the State did for education in a town and Canton like Schaffhausen whose cultural interests were of the highest. The theme of his speech, said the Federal Councillor, was well in keeping with the ideals and tasks of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique. Who would have thought that problems of education, training and culture in general would one day take on an explosive character and have repercussions in public institutions and even question fundamental structures of the State.

Whilst condemning excesses, disorder, revolt against modern structures, we could not disregard the deep sources of a *malaise* which not only affects the students, but the whole society. Already Poincaré realised that science could not give us happiness, but that man could be happy even less without it. The problem was on two levels, on the one hand to utilise aptitudes and on the other structure, methods and programmes of teaching and training. He went on:

“Il y a certes un rapport étroit entre l'essor économique d'une nation et la part du budget qu'elle consacre à ses institutions scolaires. Le développement de l'instruction est toutefois fonction à son tour de la croissance économique. Cependant, dans une économie moderne, les

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investissements productifs doivent commencer par la mise en valeur des aptitudes encore inutilisées, car il ne fait pas de doute que le développement économique, surtout en Suisse, nécessite à tous les échelons une main-d'œuvre de plus spécialisée et qualifiée. Le moteur de la croissance économique n'a plus son origine, comme autrefois, dans les matières premières ou les sources d'énergie, mais plutôt dans une saine politique de l'enseignement et dans la qualification professionnelle. En effet, la proportion des emplois n'exigeant pas de formation professionnelle se réduira toujours plus à l'avenir en faveur des cadres supérieurs et moyens. Ceci est d'autant plus vrai que le taux de perfectionnement et de renouvellement des produits atteint un rythme qui était inconnu avant la guerre. Ainsi, l'effort de la recherche scientifique a pris une importance capitale dans le développement de l'exploitation industrielle.”

Monsieur Celio continued, reflecting upon the industrial advancement of the United States. It would be useless to deny that the technological difference between Europe and America was to a large part due to efficiency of management methods and level of technological research. The American success was very much the result of proper and systematic use of aptitudes. The real threat which weighs on European society and its present weakness are largely due to insufficient schooling and antiquated management methods, as well as backwardness in technical development. “If Jules Ferry could say to the French Chamber in 1889 that education was a duty of justice towards the citizens, we may add today that beyond the duty of justice towards the individual, education and training are a national duty”.

The Federal Council had realised this and had expressed it in the governmental statement earlier this year: “In this field, Switzerland will have to make a big effort. One discovers with uneasiness that the proportion of university graduates is below the Western European average, and that this difference has a tendency to increase. This state of affairs must be corrected.” And further on, the statement said: “Nevertheless, an increase in teaching staff and the creating of more university colleges will not solve all the problems. At present, the selection of gifts and talents is not given enough attention at schools. That is where preparation for university is needed to a much larger degree, especially from working class and rural

communities, at the moment far too little represented at universities. A reform of university programmes and the development of orientation of professors and students has the same aim". The Swiss authorities were aware of the problem and determined to improve matters, to play a more active part in conjunction with the Cantons to bring about a new conception of public education. This meant in figures that the number of universities had to be increased from 2.5 to 3.5% relative to the active population.

The speaker had some reserves on the subject, and he said that it would not do that university graduates had the right to direct society simply because of their education. The real needs of the country were not limited to the universities. If acted too precipitantly in this direction, it might mean intellectual *chômage*, a stand-still which could become dangerous even in politics. But there was no doubt that a democratisation of studies and a reform of our teaching structures were necessary, even a reform of society.

One must not identify youth, Swiss youth in particular, with the extremists who like barricades. Whatever we thought of these, said Monsieur Celio, it does not exempt us from finding improvements to the structures of our society. Today's structures no longer correspond to the needs of our time.

Monsieur Celio said that the reform of scholastic structure should in the first place aim at a closer contact between teachers and students and to modernise the teaching methods. The aim of the modern university was no longer to transmit knowledge *ex cathedra*, but to promote research and to stimulate the taste for culture and study. A certain rationalisation was needed, especially at the beginning of student life. In this direction it was also important to try and find ways and means to stop students from breaking off their studies due to lack of selection and information (30 to 40% at present). Specialisation should be open to all those who have proved that they are capable to devote themselves to research. Students must have the right to be heard and listened to, and Federal Councillor Celio wondered whether a college or university should not have a non-teaching permanent head who could deal with all problems of organisation, management and administration.

Then the speaker went back to the main theme, the efforts of the Confederation for a training system suitable to today's needs, and continued in German: Jakob Burckhard had said that in order to reach little, history needed enormous events and a quite disproportionate noise. With this the speaker did not mean the noise organised in the streets these days. Not much would be gained in Switzerland with that, on the contrary, the elector who had the last word in Commune, Canton and Confederation was only made suspicious and would reject proposals. The average Swiss liked debate and preferred orderly confrontation to excesses.

Education and training in Switzerland was largely a matter for the Cantons. Perhaps in no other field did these have so many special competences as in educational matters. This had many disadvantages, especially noticeable at a time when inhabitants often change their place of residence. Certain planning on a national basis was necessary in order to bring education and training into line with other progressive countries. Language problems had to be taken into account. Interference would bring political difficulties. Even if the Cantons carried the main responsibility, it did not mean that the Confederation should stand aside. In the Constitution of 1874, there was the Education Article 27 according to which the Cantons

have to arrange for sufficient primary schooling under State control and free of charge. As the Cantons handled this in different ways, the Confederation had to use subsidies to level things out (since 1902). Mountain Cantons and Cantons with linguistic minorities thus got special and valuable support.

The interchanges between the three parts of Swiss economy — primary production, industry and services, the changes in the social structure and of labour had compelled the Confederation to support vocational training in industry, trade, commerce, agriculture and domestic service. Great efforts had helped to improve the decreasing number of technicians. New higher teaching institutions were being erected and the existing ones enlarged. 80m. francs p.a. was being spent by the Confederation on vocational training, 63m. for trade and commerce, 7m. for agriculture and forestry, 8.5m. for domestic training and 1.5m. francs for general nursing.

The largest efforts would have to be made to improve university facilities. There had been criticism, however, that by doing this, even more good people would be taken away from trade and agriculture, though an increase from 2.5 to 3.5% in university graduates could hardly be called "over-intellectualisation".

Monsieur Celio gave some figures: to train a medical man cost 30,000 francs p.a., a lawyer only 3,000, whereas an ETH student (technologist) costs an average of 10,500 francs. To train a qualified worker, or *Kaufmann* costs the State 14,000 francs, including primary schooling.

The 80 million francs — 25% of total spending by the Confederation seemed to be adequate. The Cantons had to pay for the middle and grammar schools for which the Confederation merely contributed for scholarships amounting of 4m. francs p.a. Since 1963, the *Bund* had also subsidised technical colleges up to 50% and new building programmes, amounting altogether to 8.4m. francs. It had become clear that the so-called University Cantons carried heavy burdens, not least because they offer generous facilities to citizens from other Cantons, and the Confederation had to level this out by other means.

Intensive study — largely by Prof. Labhardt and his Commission of Experts — had shown that within 10 years, the number of students rose from 16,000 to 36,000, which meant vast sums for buildings, apparatus and machinery. Between 1960 and 1966, expenses more than doubled, i.e. from 160m. to 400m. francs p.a. It was estimated that over a milliard would have to be spent every year by 1974.

All this induced Parliament to support the cantonal universities from 1966 onward. In June last, a federal law regarding university promotion had been passed visualising a sum of 1,150m. francs within 5 years, of which 500 m. would be spent on help towards administrative expenditure, and 650m. on subsidies for buildings, instruments and machines. New universities and institutes were planned, and the Swiss Science Council was acting as co-ordinating body. National Councillor Reverdin had stressed the importance that *die Hochschule Schweiz* remain intact. Cantons had to examine their universities and teaching methods, and academic professional guidance services must be improved. That would not be easy. The Confederation did not intend to superimpose a strict university policy on the Cantons, but it would be necessary to remain vigilant and adapt methods and means constantly. This depended not so much on legislation but on the spirit reigning at the universities.

The Confederation had taken over EPUL in Lausanne, the *Romand* Technological Institute, which would mean relief to the Canton of Vaud, but give new burdens

to the Confederation. Expenditure at the Federal Institute of Technology (ETH), run by the *Bund* since 1854, had gone up tremendously. Total expenditure for building and administration had risen from 46m. francs in 1960 to 167.7m. francs in the budget for 1968. Current expenditure had gone up from 20m. in 1960 to 63m. this year. The Institute for Reactor Research cost 27m., and that for Nuclear Research 12m. francs p.a. A further 17m. francs would be spent on the EPUL as from 1969. Total expenditure on vocational training (by the Confederation) amounted to 312m. francs in 1968 — an increase of 202% since 1963 when the total had been 103m. At that time, the Confederation did not give any subsidy to cantonal universities.

The largest amount of financial help within scholastic and vocational training expenditure fell on universities and other academic institutes. The next-highest group was vocational training, especially trade, commerce and agriculture. The absolute total here had practically doubled from 37 to 80m., although the share of this group had fallen from 36% in 1963 to 26% in the budget of 1968.

Next to the 312m. spent on universities and technical colleges, the 10m. francs by which the Confederation subsidised the primary and secondary schools, looked modest. But the biggest share spent on the ETH was justified, seeing that its activities not only served Switzerland, but also students from other lands, which, said Federal Councillor Celio, contributed much to the goodwill abroad, just as the efforts by the Swiss abroad did.

Next the speaker mentioned the Swiss schools abroad, most of them created on private initiative, some over 100 years old. He thanked all those who devoted themselves to these schools, a valuable element of solidarity amongst the Swiss abroad. The efforts which the Confederation was making in the interest of the young Swiss abroad was also considerable, and he mentioned the valuable work of the "Ausbildungswerk für junge Auslandschweizer" carried by the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad, "Pro Juventute" and "Schweizerhilfe". This service helps young Swiss living abroad (10 to 25) with advice and loans and scholarships, either for study or vocational training. The question arose whether one could not widen the circle of these young Swiss who could thus profit and whose ties with their homeland could be strengthened in the process. (*Anyone interested should apply for information to the Secretariat for the Swiss Abroad, Alpenstrasse 26, 3,000 Berne. ED.*)

Monsieur Celio then praised the theme of this year's Assembly and expressed pleasure that the young people were given a chance to have their say. For it was they above all who had to come to terms with this epoch which would one day go down in history as the era of great scientific progress and of numerous inventions. A period of progress, but of great problems, too, not only at universities but also in industry. This brought great social and human problems, almost insoluble. U.S.A. spent 20 milliard of francs every year on research. Biology, nuclear physics and space research were the main branches. But research had taken on great importance also in social sciences, if only to balance humanity with technology. Science used to be the field of individual scholars, today it was the concern of highly specialised groups with vast means at their disposal, a fact which made it difficult for small countries to keep up, for they had no industrial colossi, and because the organisation of the big ones had great attractions for young people.

For Switzerland it was the problem where to participate, where to refrain and where to take part only at international level. Improved co-operation between industry and State was desirable. Universities were the place where the efforts of State, industry and science could meet. We were only at the beginning, and the young (and sometimes the older ones) in their impatience had to remember that one could not only demand, one also had to pay and take the consequences which were not negligible for such a small country.

Thus, Swiss at home and abroad had to make great efforts. Both had to prove themselves in everyday life and keep their faith in the small State. More than ever, the Swiss abroad were united with those at home, not only at the congress in Schaffhausen, but throughout the year.

The Federal Councillor finished his address in Italian stating the value of the human factor above all. It was, he said, the moral values which in the end mattered and helped to bring about the wellbeing of society and world peace.

(Condensed and translated by the Editor.)

ANGLO-SWISS NEWS ITEMS

The Federal Council has empowered the Swiss National Bank to take part in further assistance to the Pound with 100 million dollars. According to the Federal Decree of 1963, the Confederation guarantees cover.

The Overseas Section of the British Society of Chemical Industry held a congress in Basle at the end of September. Prof. Hans Dahn welcomed about a hundred representatives from eight countries.

Lady Baden Powell, widow of the founder of the scout movement, opened the Fifth European Scout Conference at the Agricultural Technical College at Zollikofen near Berne.

The Swiss Society of Psychosomatic Medicine elected Dr. Michael Balint, London, as Corresponding Member, when they met for their "7.Silser Studienwoche".

The new Director of United Press International in Switzerland is Mr. F. Cyrus in succession to Mrs. Pierre A. Graenicher who has been transferred to London.

As from 18th October, Switzerland took up the giro transfer facilities with Great Britain and Northern Ireland, at the same time closing down the ordinary transfer service. Holders of postal cheque accounts in Switzerland can now transfer money to giro account holders in G.B.

The British Commonwealth Minister Lord Shepherd paid a visit to the International Red Cross Committee in Geneva.

The Chief of Department for Hydrography of the Federal Office of *Wasserwirtschaft*, dipl. Ing. E. Walser, Berne, has been invited to give lectures on hydrography in Switzerland by London University, the Scottish Group of Hydrologists of the Institute of Civil Engineering in Edinburgh and the Strathclyde University of Glasgow.

The makers of "Vyella" intend to enlarge their works' capacity and to equip at least two new weaving factories with over 800 Sulzer weaving machines. Vyella International will spend some £25 million in the next three years on expansion.

One of the youngest Professors in Switzerland is an Englishman who has been appointed director of Zurich's Botanical Gardens and Professor of Botany at Zurich University. Prof. Christopher Cook studied at Cambridge and lectured at Liverpool University. He answered an advert in a paper and got the job.

(A.T.S. and "Weekly Tribune" Geneva.)