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The Swiss Observer

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SWITZERLAND AND THE WORLD

Looking back to 1967 — the pattern evolving for 1968

ECONOMY

The past year realised a number of important economic aims and aspirations Switzerland had, whilst some problems have remained unsolved. The year began well with President Johnson's courageous decision which brought import tariffs for watches back to their original level. With that, President Eisenhower's decree of nearly 13 years previously, using the "escape clause" to increase duty on watches by 50% was scrapped. The favourable outcome was the result of years of determined effort by Swiss economic diplomats. They were helped by the bold undertaking of the Kennedy Round, the biggest ever arranged customs and trade conference of Gatt (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade), which came to an end on 30th June after nearly five years. Dramatic events and basic compromises had preceded the solemn closing ceremony chaired by Federal Councillor Schaffner.

The Kennedy Round gave Switzerland valuable and essential relief benefiting both industry and agriculture. With its most important partner, the European Economic Community, customs reductions were agreed which in the economic sector reach some 38%. This brings the Common Market tariff for Switzerland down from 11.5 to 7%, though it must be remembered that the Kennedy Round results will be spread over five years, affecting 46 countries. The first reductions came into operation on 1st January.

For agriculture, adequate agreement was reached regarding the few Swiss exports like cheese and cattle. When Federal Councillor Celio opened the 25th OLMA (Eastern Swiss Agricultural and Dairy Exhibition) in St. Gall last October, he called Swiss agriculture a stabilising and levelling factor in Switzerland's economic world position.

A remarkable result deserves mention: during the long and difficult negotiations between Switzerland and the Common Market, a friendly and neighbourly relationship has developed which will stand in good stead in the future. Furthermore, the results of the negotiations have reduced considerably any discrimination against Swiss exports to EEC countries.

Unlike Great Britain, Ireland and the Scandinavian countries, Switzerland did not undertake any new steps to join the Common Market. Federal Councillor Schaffner declared in Parliament in June that Switzerland considered her application to start negotiations, which she made in 1961, as pending, and that she counted on being included in any general collective settlement of the European integration problem. She had no preconceived idea as to the exact shape and form, except that such achievements as

the industrial tariff reductions amongst EFTA countries should not be discarded.

From the Federal Council's report on economic measures vis-à-vis foreign countries, one could learn that a joint commission had prepared a working schedule regarding the remaining tasks (as laid down in the Treaty of Rome) for the rest of the transition period ending 1970. The joint agricultural policy, customs union, freedom of labour and competition policy have been widely developed within the Common Market. Switzerland keeps a vigilant eye on any decisions which would be detrimental, so that possible intervention could be undertaken immediately.

Regarding the "Third World", the developing countries, Switzerland has not remained inactive. The second Conference for Trade and Development, UNCTAD, has been prepared and is taking place in New Delhi in February and March. The Swiss delegation is headed by Ambassador Dr. P. R. Jolles, Minister P. Languetin and the Swiss Ambassador in India, Dr. R. Faessler.

Early in December, the Ministerial Council of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) met in Paris. Main subjects on the agenda concerned economic policies of member States and their relations to the developing countries. Federal Councillor Schaffner led the Swiss delegation. Integration was the subject at a meeting in December, also in Paris, of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe; Federal Councillor Spuehler represented the Confederation. A few days later, Federal Councillor Gnaegi headed the Swiss delegation at a Council meeting in the French Capital of the Conference of European Ministers of Transport. Main subjects: financial position of the railways, technical road safety needs and hours of driving by professional drivers. Federal Councillor Spuehler gave a message on Human Rights Day on 9th December, although, Switzerland not being a member of the political organisation of United Nations, she was not a signatory to the proclamation in 1948. Nevertheless, she supports the ideals involved. Remains to be mentioned the celebration which Federal Councillor Schaffner and the Geneva authorities organised on 22nd November to mark the 20th anniversary of GATT. Two days afterwards, Monsieur Olivier Long, Swiss Ambassador in London, was chosen as new Director-General of GATT by its member nations, a great honour for the Confederation, as well as for Monsieur Long.

Early in January, the American delegation headed by Under-Secretary of State Katzenbach also visited Switzerland to discuss matters of mutual interest to both countries,

amongst them balance of payments questions, etc. A few days later, Federal Councillor Schaffner's famous speech regarding further liberalisation of world trade was officially asked in writing by Senator Robert Kennedy to be put on record in the minutes of the U.S.A. Senate. This honour was due to what the Senator calls "Mr. Schaffner's key position in international economic policy".

NEUTRALITY

In any plans for an integrated Europe, Switzerland's neutrality will have to be considered. The head of the Federal Military Department, Federal Councillor Celio, declared in November that a contingent of Swiss U.N. "Blue Helmets" was not compatible with Swiss neutrality. He gave a much-discussed address on the subject of total defence at the invitation of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique, Switzerland's foremost forum for discussing national problems. His statement was criticised in particular by the "Action Committee for Switzerland's entry into UNO". They say the former Federal Councillor Wahlen had already stated in 1966 that ways and means could be found which would allow Swiss "Blue Helmet" troops to be withdrawn immediately from anywhere, should hostilities break out in any given spot. Federal Councillor Celio, however, is in favour of special teams which would be used in catastrophes both in Switzerland and abroad. This would not only be a step towards UNO, but also a proof of Switzerland's humanitarian solidarity.

At the end of December, the Federal Council modified its decision of 28th March 1949 regarding export of arms. From now on, production, acquirement and distribution of war materials are under the Confederation. Import, transit and export are prohibited without permit. Thus even stricter control than hitherto has come into operation.

In November, the Swiss Government asked the Political Department to hand a memorandum to the Ambassadors of USA and USSR, which contained the Confederation's attitude to the atomic non-proliferation treaty (submitted to the 18-power conference in Geneva in August last year). The note contains no definite yes or no regarding Switzerland's signing of such a pact. The Federal Council simply asked for elucidation of some of the points and expressed some wishes especially regarding supervision and development of atomic power for peaceful use. The Swiss Government are fully aware that such an agreement, however effective, is no genuine disarmament. It would confirm the monopoly position of the two super powers and would be without any effect on the third giant, China. Negotiations could lead to a lessening of tension, but should they fail, the consequences would be disastrous. According to agreements regarding co-operation in the field of peaceful use of atomic power with U.S.A., Canada and Great Britain, Switzerland's peaceful atomic installations are already inspected by the Agency for Atomic Energy. Federal Councillor Spuehler stated in Parliament that militarily, Switzerland would never be able to join the nuclear powers for economic reason.

SCIENCE

In other scientific fields, Switzerland co-operates at international level. When Federal Councillor Tschudi opened the Congress of the International Union for Geodesy and Geophysics in early autumn, he stressed that Switzerland had no capital which combined political, cultural and economic life. The 2,000 scientists who attended the Congress were spread over Berne (oceanography and hydrology), Lucerne geodesy and meteorology), Zurich (seismology, physics of the centre of the earth and vulcanology) and St. Gall (geomagnetism and aeronomy), and this is why the Federal Councillor ex-

plained the Swiss federalistic system which has resulted in an evenly spread economic development in the various parts of the country and allowed a much more marked extension of cultural activities than in many other countries. He said that the work of the Congress would help to solve some of the world problems, not least that of hunger. Switzerland belonged to one of the pioneers in these fields, for instance, by her exact maps of mountainous regions, by her production of precision instruments, by glacier research, climatic studies, etc.

HUMANITARIAN ACTIVITIES

Switzerland's Red Cross activities are fairly well known. Realising the ever increasing burdens of the International Red Cross Committee, the Federal Council increased the present contribution of 1 million francs p.a. to 2½m., and to grant a new loan of 10 million francs.

Red Cross activities have been stepped up in connection with the Near East conflict, and help has been given to both sides with dry blood plasma, blankets, clothing, money for tents, food, soap. Thirty delegates and more have been in the field helping local organisations with looking after refugees. The Swiss Red Cross has also given money to the Swiss children's village Kirjath Yearim in Israel, founded in 1952 by Swiss, where there are about 100 children mainly from bad family backgrounds and mostly from Arab countries. Incidentally, the amount collected in Switzerland for the "Pro Israel" Campaign totalled nearly 4 million francs. Most of the money has been allocated to the rehabilitation centre for invalids (Beit Halochem).

In Vietnam, too, the Red Cross has been active. The Swiss Government donated the money to build a children's pavilion at the civil hospital at Da Nang in South Vietnam. A Swiss medical group is in charge of it, and the Federal Council has granted another sum for the upkeep. Since April 1966 already, a Swiss medical mission has been working at Kontum hospital under the auspices of the Swiss Red Cross and with financial support from the Confederation. The Government also granted another quarter-of-a-million francs for medical material to the Red Cross in Hanoi. Vietnamese children have been admitted in Swiss families and are being brought up by foster parents. The "Centrale Sanitaire Suisse", too, has sent large quantities of surgical instruments and drugs to Vietnam.

Early in the year, a French T.V. message said that the Swiss Government had offered their services as mediators in possible negotiations in the Vietnam conflict. The Political Department stated that the message was probably based on a declaration by Federal Councillor Spuehler that Switzerland would always be ready to offer her services if she were approached. There was no new development in the attitude of the Federal Council.

The Red Cross has also come into action in the recent earthquake catastrophe in Sicily. Gifts in cash and kind were received by the Swiss Red Cross from all parts of Switzerland in answer to their appeal. Individual towns donated money ranging from Fr.50,000.— from the Municipal Council of Zurich to Fr.5,000.— from smaller places like Grenchen, etc. The "Hilfswerk der Evangelischen Kirchen der Schweiz" (HEKS) collected 200,000 francs within a few days. At Burgdorf, schoolboys sold Sicilian oranges in aid of the victims and got 2,500 francs. Quite a problem was caused by the large numbers of refugees who wanted to get into Switzerland. For obvious reasons, the Government had to prevent a spontaneous influx of uncontrolled refugees. But they have given permission to families and individuals if they came from the actual area of disaster and had somewhere to go to in

Switzerland, Eastern Switzerland, Lucerne and Aargau have received the largest numbers of refugees.

At the end of January, another group of 62 children from bad homes or camps arrived in Lucerne; most of them came from the suburbs of Paris and will be looked after by Swiss families for three months.

The International Red Cross Committee contacted the Red Cross in North Korea regarding the "Pueblo" affair.

And finally, the Federal Council submitted a message to Parliament in December stating that Switzerland should take part in the first World Exhibition in an Asiatic country in Osaka in 1970.

(Based on news and reports received by courtesy of Agence Télégraphique Suisse.)

RECENT FEDERAL APPOINTMENTS IN SWITZERLAND

The Federal Parliament in their winter session also elected President and Vice-President of the Federal Tribunal in the persons of Dr. Adolf Boner, former Solothurn National Councillor (1939 to 1959) and the Vaudois Dr. René-Frank Vaucher respectively. The new Federal Judges are Cantonal Judge Henri Fragnière (Sion), *Oberrichter* Prof. Dr. Arthur Haefliger (Olten) and *Oberrichter* Dr. Erhard Schweri (Horgen).

As new Federal Insurance Judge, the Federal Assembly elected Dr. iur. Theo Bratschi (Lucerne). The Federal Council appointed Dr. Felix Weber as delegate for special administrative questions, and Dr. Walter Buser, chief of the legal and information service of the Swiss Ministry of the Interior, and Lic. iur. Jean-Marc Sauvant, *Adjunkt* of the Federal Chancellery and translator of the Council of States, as Vice-Chancellors.

The Federal Council decided to change the Consulate in Tripoli into an Embassy; the Swiss Ambassador in Tunis remains accredited to Libya. Diplomatic relations have been taken up with Singapore and the Consulate has been changed to an Embassy. The Swiss Consul will act as *Chargé d'Affaires ad interim*.

The Swiss Consulate in Kobe, Japan, has been closed and a Consulate-General has been opened in Osaka. Consul Louis Scalabrino, at present in Mulhouse, has been appointed Consul-General.

Monsieur Celestino Ferretti (Rome) has been appointed Consul in Curitiba (Brazil) in succession to the retiring Consul Hans Kiefer. The Federal Council has decided to separate the two offices of Consul in Strasbourg and permanent representative on the Council of Europe and has promoted Monsieur Gagnebin to Ambassador as representative, and Monsieur G. Guibert, his assistant, to Swiss Consul in Strasbourg.

The new Federal Attorney is Dr. Hans Walder (from Eglisau and Glattfelden) in succession to the retiring Dr. Hans Fuerst. The new chief of information is *Fuersprech* Dr. Oscar Dueby and the new Federal Tribunal Clerk Edouard Nicole (Vaud), whilst Dr. Louis Klingler (St. Gall) succeeds Dr. E. Eggenschwiler as Director of the *Bundesgerichtskanzlei*.

[A.T.S.]

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Belgrade	Dusseldorf	London	(Majorca)	Warsaw
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Algiers				

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