

"Unprecedented" Swiss action

Autor(en): **[s.n.]**

Objektyp: **Article**

Zeitschrift: **The Swiss observer : the journal of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK**

Band (Jahr): - **(1975)**

Heft 1712

PDF erstellt am: **26.09.2024**

Persistenter Link: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-690471>

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ways treated like just one more Swiss canton. However, constitutionally, Liechtenstein is an independent democratic parliamentary monarchical democracy with a five-man government and a fifteen-man parliament of its own. There are no frontiers between the two states, since owing to a treaty dating back to 1923 Switzerland considers Liechtenstein as "Customs-Inland". Due to a further treaty of 1924 Liechtenstein has adopted the Swiss franc as its own currency, while a postal agreement of earlier date attached the Principality to the Swiss postal network — yet granting it the right to print and issue its own postal stamps. This latter privilege has, owing to its philatelic curiosity-value, become quite a considerable source of revenue for the Liechtensteiners. Further agreements between the two countries regulate the problems of social insurance, the alien's police and the rights of domicile. Up to a few years ago the revenues of the Principality were nearly exclusively derived from philately on the one side and the innumerable so-called letterbox-domiciles of commercial societies on the other. But thanks to a wise policy the structure of the Liechtenstein economy has undergone considerable changes during the last few years, with the result that between 1950 and 1970 exports have risen from 15 million to approximately 280 million francs per annum and the number of industrially occupied workers from 1,330 to nearly 5,000.

Liechtenstein is also making a great effort to become a holiday centre and boasts (for winter and summer holidays) a modern and well-equipped resort called Malbun. On visiting and driving through the Principality one gets the impression of a spotlessly clean place, populated by very friendly people, living in very neat and architecturally attractive houses. But one has to be careful not to put one's foot down hard on the accelerator — otherwise one is quickly back either in Switzerland proper or on the Austrian border.

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During the last week of September the Federal Council has taken a very important decision: to propose to the Federal Parliament that the Price-Watching System, which has been in force since 1973, but is due to end on the last day of December, should be continued for a further two years. There can hardly be any doubt about the two chambers of Parliament agreeing to this during their December session, particularly because the whole population of the country will then have the last word one year later in a nationwide vote. The system, as now proposed by the Government in Berne, will however be modified in so far as the surveillance of salaries, wages and dividends is to be abolished. A further novelty will be that the Federal Council is asking for the necessary power to exempt certain sections of the industry and economy from surveillance, but to

re-impose a watching brief, should this seem advisable. The system is, in other words, to become somewhat more flexible. Finally it is worth mentioning that the duty to mark all retail prices clearly, and the measures against abuses regarding rentals (tenants protection) are to continue. As I have already explained, quite some issues ago, how the price-watching system works in Switzerland, there is no need for me to go into all those details again. Nevertheless it can be said that the system works quite well and has certainly contributed to a measurable lowering of the price-inflation rate. And this is indeed a blessing.

'Unprecedented' Swiss action

The recent execution of several alleged murderers of policemen in Spain has, as everyone knows, produced world-wide indignation and a flood of protests and has induced some 14 governments to withdraw — temporarily — their Ambassadors from Madrid, ordering them to return home "for consultation". Somewhat later than most of the others the Swiss Federal Council

has followed suit. This, as far as Switzerland is concerned, constitutes an unprecedented act, as it has never happened before. It is, however, stressed in Berne that asking an Ambassador to come home "for consultations" is not, repeat not, the first step to a rupture of relations. It is, rather, a diplomatic way of showing disapproval, the depth of which is shown by the length of the period during which the Ambassador is not "en poste". In view of the nationwide — and worldwide — indignation the executions have caused, quite a few Swiss newspapers have termed the Governments diplomatic reaction a "futile minimum" and have now asked for more: namely a total stop on any arms deliveries to Spain. This, in spite of the fact that a stop on arms deliveries could cause quite some economic hurt in Swiss industries, could conceivably lead to some kind of retaliation. "Diplomatic words," says the Zürich Tages-Anzeiger, "are not enough — let us now have the courage to some deeds." Article 11 of the Federal Law concerning export permits for war material (1972) states that no such permits will be available for exports to countries "which do not respect human dignity". The Franco regime has, according to Swiss public opinion, shown gross disrespect of human rights and dignity.



SWISS JOURNALIST BACK HOME

Swiss journalist Bernard Feller has returned home after six years in London as correspondent for the Tribune de Genève, Tribune de Lausanne and 24 heures. He has moved to Berne to take up a new appointment as deputy editor of the Swiss Broadcasting Corporation's European and Overseas Services. Mr Feller was in broadcasting before coming to London. He spent five years in West Germany and Africa with Deutsche Welle, the overseas service of West German radio. Mr Feller is also a former member of the Advisory Council of the Swiss Observer.