

Official communications

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Official Communications

Six little questions concerning a big problem

Every year Swiss Technical Cooperation's Information Service has a stand at the big national fairs: Muba (Basle) in the spring, the Comptoir suisse (Lausanne) in the late summer, and OLMA (St Gall) in the early autumn.

This stand, which will move from fair to fair in 1977, will be in the form of a small square maze, measuring ten metres by ten. Six questions will be put one after the other to the visitor. If he gives a wrong answer he will soon find himself in a cul-de-sac, blocked by an explanatory panel, and will have to return to the point where he made the mistake. Better-informed visitors (doubtless the vast majority) will quickly arrive at an attractive café, where a cup of coffee from Rwanda – a country in which Swiss Technical Cooperation supports numerous projects – will help them to recover from the exertions of this 25-metre long «path of truth» . . .

We thought you would be interested to see these six questions and to try to answer them:

Question 1: Among the western industrialized countries: a) all without exception; b) only six, including Switzerland... give public development aid.

Question 2: By paying 42 francs in tax for development aid (which includes 14 francs for technical cooperation) the Swiss citizen makes: a) a great sacrifice; b) a relatively small effort . . . in comparison with contributors in the other industrialized countries.

Question 3: There are disadvantaged people in Switzerland, too: a) we do considerably more; b) we do much less . . . for them than for the Third World.

Question 4: The countries of the Third World finance their development first and foremost: a) by their own efforts; b) by means of aid from outside.

Question 5: Swiss Technical Cooperation's money goes: a) to strictly controlled projects; b) to governments who do what they think fit with it.

Question 6: The Confederation's activities and those of private Swiss organizations in the sphere of development aid are: a) quite different and mutually exclusive; b) equally necessary and complementary.

(answers, see page 11)

Switzerland's diplomatic presence in the World

It is imperative for Switzerland to be open to the world and to remain so. Swiss foreign policy therefore at ensuring that our country participates in all expressions of international life. In this article, Ambassador Albert Weitnauer outlines some aspects of the Swiss diplomatic service (see diagram below).

Brief historical survey

Today a nation can afford less than ever before to live in isolation or self-sufficiency. A look at any newspaper shows how all sorts of problems can only be solved through contacts, negotiations and the conclusion of agreements with other countries. Until the fifteenth century the major nations confined themselves to an *ad hoc* form of diplomacy, dispatching roving ambassadors

from time to time to perform specific tasks, such as the formation of alliances, the conclusion of peace treaties or the delivery of declarations of war.

The «Old Confederation» of Switzerland continued with this type of diplomacy up to the French Revolution.

Starting in the 15th century, the states of Italy, notably the Republic of Venice, Florence, Milan and the Holy See, recognized the necessity of establishing permanent missions. Other nations followed suit. The main purpose was not simply to collect political information about their neighbours, but equally – especially in the case of Venice – to gather economic and commercial intelligence.

The Swiss Confederation opened such missions only much later, for in most cases

the individual cantons, being sovereign states, conducted their own international relations. Not until 1798 were the first legations established, namely in Paris and in Milan, the capital of the Cisalpine Republic. In 1802 an embassy was opened in Vienna; a few years later it was reduced to the status of a legation.

Between the 15th and 20th centuries, nations introduced more and more coherence into the conduct of foreign policy. Diplomacy was organized and structured, and a specific government department was created to deal with it: the ministry of foreign affairs, known in Switzerland as the Federal Political Department.

The constitutional bases

It was only with the foundation of the Swiss Federal State in 1848 that the Federal authorities became responsible for foreign policy. The present Constitution, dating from 1874, establishes the particular purpose of the Confederation as being to assert the nation's independence from outside powers; it alone has the right to declare war, conclude peace and to enter into alliances and international treaties. Prime responsibility for the conduct of foreign policy lies with the Federal Council. Under Article 102 of the Constitution, the Federal Council defends «the interests of the Confederation in foreign affairs, notably its relations under international law, and attends to all external matters», and it watches over «the external security and the maintenance of the independence and neutrality of Switzerland».

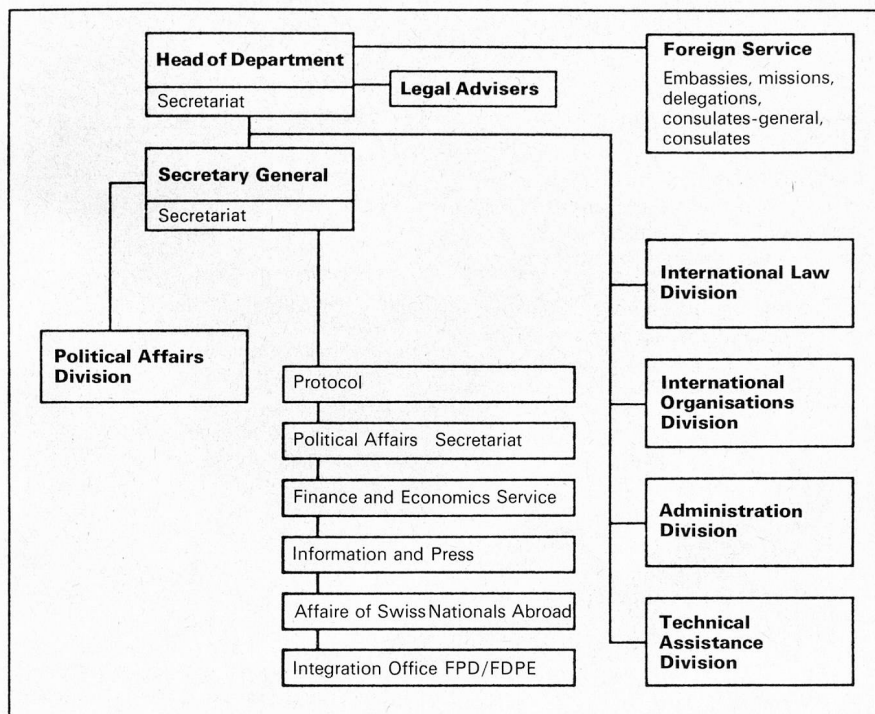
Organization

Thus Switzerland did not institute permanent diplomacy until very late. Its foreign service therefore remained extremely modest in size during the 19th century. In 1848 there existed only the two legations in Paris and Vienna, along with seven consulates-general and thirty-four consulates and vice-consulates.

In 1900 the Political Department in Berne employed only about a dozen people.

Even at the outbreak of World War II, the staff of the Department was still extremely small: it comprised 680 persons, of whom about 100 worked in Berne. In view of its policy of neutrality and «good offices», Switzerland was called upon to represent the interest of 35 belligerent nations in a corresponding number of countries, and in order to perform this role the Department had to take on a new staff of about 1000. However, the principle of an active Swiss foreign policy, based on the universality of Switzerland's foreign relations, was not

Official Communications



realized and generally accepted until after World War II. Decolonization necessitated the opening of diplomatic missions in numerous countries, while the growing importance of multilateral diplomacy led to the establishment of several delegations accredited to major international organizations (OECD, UNO, EFTA, EEC, Council of Europe). Thus now, in 1977, we have 84 embassies, 5 missions and delegations to international organizations, 39 consulates-general, 53 consulates and 62 consular

agencies; the Department's personnel totals 1732, of whom 500 are employed in Berne.

Published in the «Bulletin du Crédit Suisse 11/76», this article has been shortened in agreement with its author, Mr Albert Weitnauer.

Should you want the complete text, please apply to this institute which will send it to you in the language required (french, german, italian, english or spanish).

Swiss from abroad seeking employment

The Emigration Service attached to the Federal Office of Industry, Crafts and Labour (BIGA/OFIAMT) not only provides information and a bulletin of vacancies for people wishing to work abroad. It also helps Swiss returning from abroad and seeking work in Switzerland. At a time of recession and partial unemployment it is important for the public recruitment service to close all possible information gaps between employers and employees. For this purpose, BIGA's Emigration and Repatriation Service publishes every three months a «List of Swiss from abroad seeking employment» for the use of the cantonal and communal employment exchanges and, the umbrella associations of employers and labour.

The first part of the list comprises all the Swiss scientists, engineers and technicians living in North America (USA and Canada) who would be prepared to return to Switzerland provided they could find a suitable job. In the second part are listed our compatriots abroad in various countries who wish to return to Switzerland to follow a variety of occupations.

Office fédéral de l'industrie, des arts et métiers et du travail. CH-3003 Berne.

Federal Ballots

Since 1st January 1977 the Swiss abroad have been entitled to vote in Switzerland on federal matters.

Anyone can apply (at any time, and it needs only be done once) to the competent Swiss diplomatic or consular mission, which will fill in the requisite forms.

The Swiss mass media give the necessary information about each ballot. The Swiss Shortwave Service also produces special broadcasts on the subject for the Swiss abroad.

Forthcoming federal ballots in 1977:
12th June, 25th September und 4th December.



The 1977 National Day Collection

The purpose of the National Day Collection is to keep alive the spirit of solidarity which led to the founding of the Confederation and to give it concrete form. So every year an appeal is made to all the Swiss people on behalf of a nation-wide cause.

The proceeds of the 1977 collection are earmarked for «cultural activities». The difficult situation of the federal finances has meant that the amount of money available for cultural work has had to be appreciably reduced. It is therefore not surprising if the Committee of the National Day Collection attaches greater importance to that sector this year. Although it can only give limited assistance, it nevertheless performs a valuable task in helping to preserve Switzerland's cultural independence, for which we still have to fight. The allurements of foreign customs and foreign modes of thought and speech are becoming increasingly powerful in this age of radio and television, while an enormous number of newspapers, books and magazines are flooding in from outside. If we can confront these influences with worthwhile cultural contribution of our own, the «Confoederatio helvetica», with its four languages, its different religious denominations, its 25 cantons, and the very diverse occupations of its people, can continue to be the nation described in the federal constitution. The Committee of the National Day Collection is thus happy to be called upon to help promote the cultural life of our country.

Official Communications

Welfare Payments to the Swiss Abroad

Communication from the Federal Department of Justice and Police

The Federal Act of 21st March 1973 concerning welfare payments to the Swiss abroad, which came into force on 1st January 1974, made the Confederation responsible for needy Swiss abroad. «Swiss abroad» within the meaning of the Act are Swiss nationals domiciled abroad or who have been living abroad for more than three months. Those who cannot support themselves adequately from their own resources, or with assistance from a private source or from their state of residence, are entitled to welfare benefits.

The Confederation may give assistance in the form of cash payments for the recipient's maintenance in his country of residence, or by paying for him to return to Switzerland. Benefits are fixed according to the needs of each individual case and local conditions are taken into account.

Anyone wishing to claim assistance under the above Act should apply to the competent Swiss diplomatic or consular mission, which will examine the request and forward it, with a report and recommendation, to the Police Division of the Federal Department of Justice and Police for a decision. In emergencies the Swiss diplomatic or consular mission can itself give essential aid. Needy Swiss abroad have a right to assistance if the legal conditions are fulfilled and also to appeal against the welfare authorities' decisions.

Last year the Police Division handled 1,400 welfare cases, involving the Confederation in an expenditure of 2.9 million francs on recipients in 75 different countries. To this must be added the cost, born by the can-

tons and communes, of aid granted under the welfare agreements with France and the Federal Republic of Germany (these expenses are not covered by the federal legislation).

Further details can be obtained from the Swiss diplomatic and consular missions abroad and from the Section de l'assistance de la Division fédérale de police, Taubenstrasse 16, 3003 Berne.

Commune of Ormont-Dessus 700th Anniversary

To all you citizens of Ormont-Dessus living abroad

In August–September 1977 your commune of origin will be celebrating the 700th anniversary of the first charter of freedom granted to the inhabitants of the upper Valley of the Ormonts by the «Sires» of Aigle.

This festival will be spread over three weekends, and the whole of Sunday 28th August 1977 *will be reserved for you*: it will be devoted to a rally of those citizens of the commune who live abroad.

So you are all concerned, you «Exiles»! The local Ormonans will be happy to welcome you and to entertain you in this majestic setting of the Vaudois Alps.

Do you intend to join us? Then write to us and you will receive the material specially prepared for this occasion.

Address:
Comité d'organisation
700^e Ormont-Dessus
Bâtiment administratif
CH-1865 Les Diablerets

Passport

Do not wait until the eve of your holiday before applying for your Swiss passport to be renewed... it may not be possible to return it to you in time.

Answers to the six questions

1) Correct answer: a). All the western industrialized countries participate in aid to the Third World, on which they spent some 35 thousand million Swiss francs (Switzerland: 268 millions) in 1975.

2) Correct answer: b). With public contributions to development aid representing 0.18% of our country's gross national product, Switzerland just beats Finland (0.18%), Austria (0.17%) and Italy, which is at the bottom of the league (0.11%), while Sweden comes top with 0.82%, followed by the Netherlands (0.75%).

3) Correct answer: a). Here we must bear in mind welfare payments by the communes, inter-cantonal revenue apportionment, old-age insurance etc. etc. To give a single example: in 1975 the Confederation paid our disadvantaged mountain farmers some 800 million francs, while its aid to the Third World for the same year amounted to 268 million francs.

4) Correct answer: a). The countries of the Third World bear about 90% of the cost of their own development. Nevertheless, the 10% received from outside is absolutely indispensable.

5) Correct answer: a). Development aid does not mean simply sending governments a cheque. In technical cooperation a large part of the funds is made available in the form of experts' salaries and deliveries of material; where other forms of cooperation are concerned the conditions are laid down in advance, in agreements concluded with the Third World partners, so as to ensure that resources are used in accordance with the predetermined objectives. Misuse of tax revenue intended for development aid is therefore practically impossible.

6) Correct answer: b). Even if there are certain differences between the activities and responsibilities in the sphere of development aid undertaken by the Confederation and the private organizations (Helvetas, Swissaid etc.) respectively, the two collaborate closely. To quote one example: the Technical Cooperation Service uses up to 20% of the means at its disposal for projects carried out by private aid organizations.

