

Parliamentary Winter Session

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- 2) the service of Swiss legations and consulates and issuing instructions to them;
- 3) preparing and, if given a mandate, carrying out of foreign affairs. Informing the Federal Council of political events abroad. Periodical reporting to the Federal Council on foreign affairs;
- 4) preparing international agreements and negotiating with foreign governments and their representatives;
- 5) protecting of Swiss citizens abroad and safeguarding Swiss interests abroad. Swiss societies and institutions abroad;
- 6) supervising and regulating frontier matters;
- 7) international offices in collaboration with other departments on technical questions.

This definition of the tasks of the Federal Political Department is still valid today. But a great deal of additional organisation was necessary. At the moment, the Department is divided into four sections for political matters, for international organisations, for administrative affairs and the services for technical co-operation. This may not be the final set-up; experience has shown that the whole organisation must for ever be changed to fit new demands.

The present construction of the EPD reflects the international relations of today. These used to be mostly bilateral, and problems were solved by negotiation between Switzerland and the other State. Today, international relations exist on various levels: on a direct and bilateral level, then on a multilateral plane where the problems are treated and solved in international organisations or conferences. The political division deals with all exterior matters affecting Switzerland on a bilateral level. The division in charge of international organisations looks after foreign affairs on a multilateral level. If an agreement with another country has to be negotiated it is the task of the political division. If it means stating our attitude at an international conference or to regulate relations with an international institution, it is the division looking after international organisations, which makes the necessary studies.

The third division, still fairly new, is that of assistance to countries in process of development, a task which is of growing importance in modern international relationship. With the purpose of helping the new order grown out of decolonisation, the service of technical co-operation has come into being.

The division for administrative affairs is the main-spring of the Department. All questions of personnel, budget, salaries, buildings of Swiss diplomatic and consular missions abroad, etc., are incumbent on it. It has an often ungrateful task, but its functioning guarantees the working of the whole EPD.

To co-ordinate the four divisions is the duty of the Secretary-General who is at the same time in charge of the division for political affairs.

The part of the set-up in Berne is only one — the other consists of the federal representatives abroad, the network of embassies and consulates. The central office in Berne can be compared to a general staff, the representatives abroad to the army at the front. The staff is interchangeable and may be sent abroad or called back to Berne according to the requirements. The normal career of a civil servant of the EPD runs its course partly in Berne, partly abroad.

(To be concluded.)

SWITZERLAND AND RHODESIA

On 17th December, the Federal Council decided not to accept the unilateral declaration of independence of Mr. Smith's Government. The Swiss Consulate in Salisbury remains open.

Although there have been no deliveries of arms and munition, an embargo has been put on any export of weapons to Rhodesia. This is according to Switzerland's traditional policy not to allow deliveries of arms to any potential scene of war.

Switzerland, as a neutral State, could not have joined any sanctions against Rhodesia. But the Federal Council has decreed that the import of Rhodesian goods will have to be subject to permit. These will only be granted within the normal import volume.

The Swiss National Bank has decided to freeze the funds of the Rhodesian Reserve Bank. The Swiss Club in Rhodesia has protested against this to the President of the Swiss Confederation.

[A.T.S.]

PARLIAMENTARY WINTER SESSION

On the last Monday in November, the Federal Parliament began its winter session. Apart from the elections which are dealt with separately, the most important matter to us Swiss living abroad is the unanimous acceptance by the Council of States of the proposed Constitutional Article for the Swiss Abroad.

The deficit estimated in the federal accounts for 1966 cast a heavy shadow over the meetings. When the budget was first published, there were misgivings in many quarters: 369 million francs was the estimated loss presented to Parliament. After much deliberation, in both Chambers, the military budget was cut by 100 million francs. This, together with some cuts in other Departments, reduces the estimated deficit to 116 mio.

The military budget with its 1,800 million francs estimated expenditure was bound to fall under heavy criticism. Since the "Mirage" affair, trust in the Military Department had been somewhat shaky. The report by the special commission headed by Federal Judge Abrecht was published. The commission had been set up to look into the "Mirage" affair. According to its findings, Divisional Commander Primault is discharged in his handling of the "Mirage" fighter purchase with its disastrous financial consequences. Other officers have been cleared, too, and no sanctions were proposed.

The budget for the Swiss Federal Railways, which also foresees a deficit of 23 million francs was accepted without opposition.

The National Council agreed to a 444 million-franc credit for a first extension and enlargement of the Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich (ETH). Also accepted was the proposal to increase the grant to the "Pro Helvetia" Foundation, which looks after cultural activities. *(More of this will be heard in a future issue).*

The Council of States also agreed that the measures taken to stop the excessive economic boom should be extended by another year.

[A.T.S.]