

Home affairs

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HOME AFFAIRS.

by MAX NEF.

"The question of the creation of Swiss Embassies abroad."

The Federal Council is asking the Federal Chambers to authorize it to transform Swiss Legations into Embassies. Afterwards, it will be the Federal Council itself which will decide what diplomatic posts abroad come into question for this change. For one thing, Swiss diplomatic courtesy demands that those countries should come into consideration first, which already maintain Embassies in Berne. Even if the granting of reciprocity in such questions need not be looked upon as being a rule that must be adhered to strictly, nevertheless, the conditions for these countries will have to be examined, first of all, as soon as the Federal Council intends to proceed with the raising of Swiss Legations to the rank of Embassies. For the present there are ten foreign countries which come first — if one may so express oneself — in the "select list", these being: France, Italy, Great Britain, Belgium, the United States of America, as well as Canada, India, Pakistan, Egypt and Turkey.

Naturally, the Federal Council will keep other possibilities also in its mind's eye, whereby — as is stated in the argument for the proposed Federal Resolution — the following facts will be taken particularly into consideration: in the first place, the special Swiss interests will count, among these being the size of the Swiss colony in the relevant country and the economic, financial, cultural and other relations. Historical ties with a country may also prove to be of importance. What must also, naturally, be considered chiefly, is the part played in World politics by the foreign country. Another thing to be taken into account is the existence of important international Organisations in the country in question, as Switzerland is not a member of the United Nations, and does not belong to various of its special Agencies.

It is in this last fact that resides one of the principal reasons for wanting that at least the Diplomatic Missions which Switzerland maintains abroad, should be able to exercise the greatest possible effectiveness. And it is with this aim in view exactly, *inter alia*, that it would appear desirable to raise the most important Swiss Legations to the rank of Embassies. It must be admitted, however, quite frankly, that the success of a Diplomatic Mission abroad depends to a very large extent on the personality of the Head of the Mission, that is to say of our Minister. It would appear, however, to be quite clear that under certain conditions his task would be considerably facilitated, or on the contrary rendered more difficult, through his assumption of a higher rank.

International development in the diplomatic intercourse between the various countries is growing steadily in that, instead of Ministers, that is to say, of Representatives belonging to the second diplomatic rank, there is an increasing tendency to accredit Ambassadors, that is to say, representatives of the highest rank, to foreign countries. Whereas, formerly, the appointment of Ambassadors was the exclusive privilege of the Great Powers, nowadays, there are

very few countries in Europe which do not bestow this rank on their representatives. In addition to Switzerland, there are only the Principalities of Liechtenstein and of Monaco, and the Republics of Andorra and of San Marino, which form an exception to this rule. It is therefore quite apparent that Switzerland, owing to her position in the international community of nations, can no longer allow herself to maintain a special attitude in this negative direction, by which she only detracts from her own influence.

Thus it happens that in other countries, especially on the American Continent, that Legations, the Head of which belongs to the second rank, that is to say to the rank of a Minister, are slighted on many occasions and are not even invited to a number of social gatherings, or if they are, then they are neglected or ignored.

In view of the fact that in certain political circles and among the people themselves, the traditional opinion is still defended whereby it is considered to be the proper thing for Switzerland to remain modest and reserved, and not to take part in this movement, in so far as her diplomatic customs are concerned, the Federal Council has chosen a solution which strives to take into account, even such viewpoints as would be difficult to find grounds for. Only the Legations, as such, will be given the rank of Embassies. And then, the Head of the Mission will receive the title of an Ambassador, but only for the duration of his activities at the head of such an Embassy. In the internal administrative offices in Switzerland, there will only



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be Ministers, as heretofore. Moreover, the salaries will not be affected by the bestowal of this rank. The Budget of the Political Department will not carry any heavier burden as a result of this innovation. The Federal Council stresses this point, obviously with an eye to Parliament, as this is one of the first things that it will have to make up its mind about. Thus, it would hardly seem likely that any really serious opposition will have to be met in regard to the proposals put forward by the Federal Council.

HOME AFFAIRS.

by PIERRE BÉGUIN.

"The Upper Chamber of the Swiss Parliament."

There has been a lot of talk, recently, about the results of the Federal elections, which took place on the last Sunday of October. Particular interest was shown in the elections to the National Council. This is easy to explain, as it is this Chamber which groups together the representatives of the Swiss people. Each Canton constitutes an electoral district and elects deputies to the exact proportional number of the population. Thus, it is at the time when the mandates of the deputies to the National Council are being renewed that one can best take the pulse of public opinion and observe the evolution which it is taking or is being subject to.

In principle, the elections to the Council of States are less important and less characteristic. It is more difficult to draw any lesson from them or to interpret the results. In effect, this second Chamber comprises the representatives of the Cantons, to the number of two deputies from each Confederate State. Thus, the Canton of Uri which, because of its small population has the right to elect only one National Councillor, can send two Councillors to the Council of States, whereas Zurich which has the right to appoint thirty-two National Councillors, can only have two seats on the Council of States. This means that in one of our legislative Chambers, the forces are strictly in proportion to the size of the population, whilst in the other Chamber representation is equal, being the same for a big Canton as it is for a small one.

Furthermore, if the régime of proportional representation is applied in all its amplitude and very strictly to the National Council, the deputies to the Council of State are designated in accordance with the majority system. It is this circumstance which renders the interpretation of results, more difficult.

Finally, although the elections to the National Council have to take place on the same day, for the whole of Switzerland, each Canton is free to fix whatever date it pleases for the elections to the Council of States. Thus, on the last Sunday of October only twenty-five seats in the Council of States had been renewed, although the Upper Chamber has forty-four members.

In our opinion, there were two Cantons in which the elections were of particular interest. These are the Cantons of Valais and of Lucerne, two Cantons where, according to ancient tradition, the two senatorial seats are always occupied by Catholic Conservatives, a fact which for a long time past has

corresponded to the predominating opinion in these two Cantons. This year, however, it was merely touch-and-go that one of the Valaisan seats should fall to the lot of a Radical. It also happened that one of the two Conservative seats in Lucerne, was finally attributed, after a second ballot had taken place, to a Radical. From the foregoing it may be concluded that those times when one Party dominated with complete authority the entire political life of a Canton, are now nearing their end. One may also conclude from this that forces, both political as well as social, are now at work which tend to counteract the determining influence of one, sole Party. One might even say that the spirit of proportional representation is now penetrating, with a delay of thirty-five years, throughout the entire country and that one is now seeing its manifestations even there, where it has no business to be, that is to say in an election which can only take place in accordance with the majority system.

Thus, on the last Sunday of October, only one seat out of twenty-five changed hands. Hardly any modification has been brought to the political composition of the Council of States. It continues to comprise a strong Catholic group of seventeen members and an important Radical group of thirteen members, whereas the Socialist group — which is supported by quite as many electors — only possesses four deputies.

From the point of view of arithmetical justice, this situation is certainly open to criticism. The Catholic influence is too strong, the Radical influence is assured in a just manner, whilst the Socialist influence is indubitably too weak.

And yet, in spite of everything, one must admit that this second Chamber is the expression of one of the aspects of Swiss political reality. Our country is, at one and the same time, a nation that it represented by the National Council and a Confederation of 25 States, each one of which is represented on the Council of States by two deputies. If one were to renounce from this duality, Switzerland would change both her political visage and organisation. She would tend to become a unitary State, which no one here wants. Moreover, it must be stated, in all honesty, that the Council of States, in spite of its somewhat unexpected composition, has never abused its situation or its influence. It does not exist apart, but makes its decisions, whilst at the same time taking into account to a very large extent, the real composition of the political forces of the country.

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