

New heads of departments in the confederation

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

Objektyp: **Article**

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

Band (Jahr): - **(1968)**

Heft 1539

PDF erstellt am: **19.09.2024**

Persistenter Link: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-688060>

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The financial means available to the Secretariat of the Swiss Abroad come mainly from three sources. The *Bundesfeierspende* is a large sum apportioned to organisations serving the Swiss abroad every 6 or 7 years from the traditional annual collection on the Swiss National Day. The "Foundation for the Swiss Abroad" is in charge of this fund. The second source is an annual subsidy from the Confederation. The third and very important source consists of donations from friends and subscribers. The "Friends", mainly individuals, pay an annual minimum of 10 francs, whilst the "Subscribers", mostly firms and companies, pay larger sums, possibly not every year.

No appeal for funds has been made for a considerable time. But unless some effort is being made, the ever-increasing work will have to suffer. And for this reason, the members of the Commission have been asked for their support. No general appeal has been launched. But as the delegate for Great Britain — South, the writer feels that this request should be published. Perhaps this is our chance to contribute something positive to show our willingness to share the responsibility. And money is not necessarily what is needed from this end — we all have friends and relations, and/or business connections in Switzerland, and all we have to spend is time and effort to convince *them* of the value of the organisation. If you feel that you don't know enough to persuade them, send names and addresses to the "Swiss Observer", and the Editor who is one of your delegates, will be only too pleased to pass them on. But please, add your name and address for reference.

It is so easy to sit back and pretend lack of time, money and abilities. But we have all been given some tool to tackle a job which needs doing, or the gift of the gab to convince others or a few extra shillings, or time, or may be even more than just one of these gifts. Perhaps 1968 is different after all, and the New Year resolutions are not going to be shelved.

MM

NEW HEADS OF DEPARTMENTS IN THE CONFEDERATION

At the beginning of the year, the following communiqué was issued: "The Federal Council has decided on the following distribution of Departments as per 1st July: Federal Councillor Bonvin will take over the Department of Communications and Energy. Federal Councillor Gnaegi takes over the Military Department. Federal Councillor Celio will become head of the Department of Finance and Customs. The remaining Departments will stay under their present direction. The moment of the change-over has been fixed for 1st July, because the Federal Councillors who change their Departments, have important business pending which they have to complete by the end of the June Session, above all the preparatory work and directives for the Governmental Report."

TWO IMPORTANT NEW YEAR MESSAGES

On 27th December, the traditional New Year Message by the President of the International Red Cross Committee in Geneva was published. In it, Mr. Samuel A. Gonard said that the experiences made during the past year had again shown that the activities of the Red Cross were becoming more and more urgent. In 1967, the Red Cross had to fulfil big tasks and often encountered almost unsurmountable difficulties. Work was carried out above all in Vietnam, in the Near East, Yemen, Nigeria, Greece and the Congo. Nevertheless, the Red Cross was able again and again to help many needy people in countries hit by unrest and war.

On 1st January, Swiss radio and television broadcast the traditional New Year Message by the new President of the Confederation, Federal Councillor Spuehler. He wished his speech to be an address in the real sense of the word, a beginning of a conversation from which reciprocal understanding should result, if not unanimity. In the exchange of statement and reply, which takes place between People, Parliament and Government, were contained the rules governing the daily development of Swiss democracy. Ultimately, it would depend on the honesty and resoluteness of this exchange whether the State's actions were right. The President said that the Federal Council did not fear this exchange, and he himself would wish to have all those included who disagreed, yet who in the end, may have the same fundamental attitude. We should be careful, though, not to denounce too quickly.

Federal Councillor Spuehler referred to the past year which had been marked by wars and crises. One began the new year without any real reason for hope. In the centre of international problems was still that of peace, a problem for generations. The Federal Council, therefore, full of deep anxiety, agreed with conviction to the Pope's request to have the First of January as the Day of Peace.

Finally, the speaker put the question concerning the topicality of our thoughts and actions and asked all citizens to examine the big problems facing Switzerland in that light. The Federal Council, on their side, would endeavour to do what was right and possible, but to let what was not right fall victim to criticism. He welcomed the Press, inasmuch as it primarily served the people and not its owners to act with dignity as mediator between Government and People.

[A.T.S.]

CO-OPERATION BETWEEN LAUSANNE AND GENEVA UNIVERSITIES

The new Geneva Observatory, which also includes the observation department of the Institute of Astronomy at Lausanne University, was recently inaugurated. The purpose of this new observatory is to assist in the training of students, to enable some of them to become research workers and above all to facilitate the development of research on the ground and in space. It is situated in a remote spot away from the main traffic routes — as is indispensable for the correct functioning of precision instruments — on the boundaries between the Cantons of Geneva and Vaud, so that the dome housing a telescope belonging to the University of Lausanne is situated on the territory of Vaud. This is an excellent example of co-operation, in the fields of culture and research, between the universities of two neighbouring regions.

[O.S.E.C.]