

The new men : Felber and Ogi

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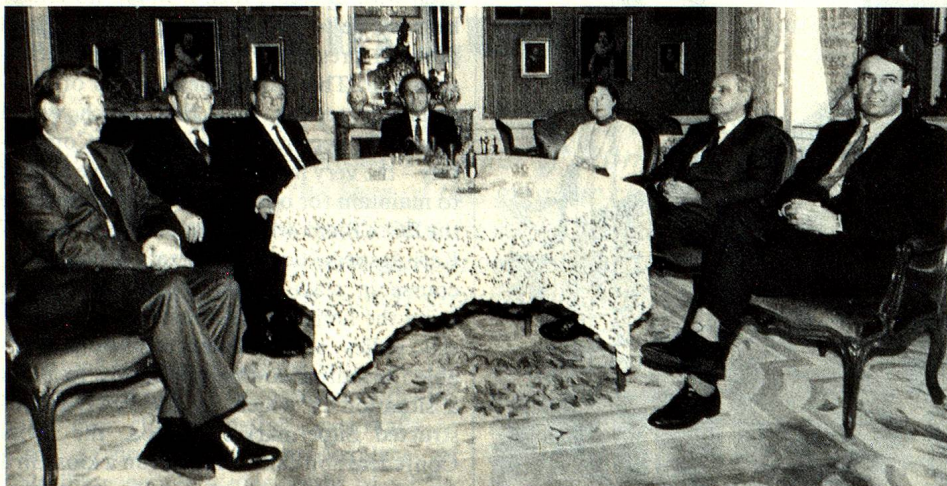
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The new men: Felber and Ogi



The new Federal Council in the von Wattenwyl House, Berne (from left to right): René Felber (Federal Department of Foreign Affairs), Arnold Koller (Federal Military Department), Jean-Pascal Delamuraz (Federal Department of Economic Affairs), President of the Swiss Confederation Otto Stich (Federal Department of Finance), Elisabeth Kopp (Federal Department of Justice and Police), Flavio Cotti (Federal Department of Home Affairs), Adolf Ogi (Federal Department of Transport, Communications and Energy). (Photo: Key)

After the general re-election of the Federal Council, stability and continuity are still the characteristic features of Swiss government policy. On 9th December 1987 the Federal Assembly, in its new guise, confirmed not only the famous «magic formula», the re-election of the former Members standing for the Council, but also that of the officially-submitted nominations of the parliamentary parties for the seats that had become vacant.

All the Members running for re-election were able to account for a good vote, with ballot results that in every case were well above the required absolute majority. The Christian Democrat from the Ticino, Flavio Cotti, managed to collect the largest number of votes, namely 202. The worst result – 166 votes – was booked by the Radical Democrat Elisabeth Kopp from Zurich who, although well liked by the public, could hardly have expected acclamation from the extreme left and right for her competently and consistently applied policy of asylum. This time, too, particular interest was shown in the new Members elected. With 152 votes, René Felber, the Social Democrat from Neuchâtel, made it into the government without any difficulty.

No question about it: René Felber is a dyed-in-the-wool Social Democrat. He comes from a working-class family. He has close connections with the town of Le Locle where, until his election as Councillor of State for the canton of Neuchâtel, he had

been the mayor. This is a region somewhat less blessed with the prosperity which is noticeable almost everywhere else in Switzerland. René Felber and Federal Councillor Otto Stich, the other Social Democrat, can be said to complement each other very well, so that the policies of their Party could well gain in character and significance.

Following the resignation of the Member from the Grisons, Leon Schlumpf, the Berne Swiss People's Party (SVP) once more pressed for a seat in government. From the beginning, the choice of candidates was extremely limited because the deputation of the SVP in the Federal Council had, on the one hand, experienced intense renewal and, on the other, there was little inclination – after the Berne «finance affair» – to nominate a member of the cantonal government for the Federal Council. The Berne SVP quickly managed to settle for Adolf Ogi, the aspirer from the Bernese Oberland, and thanks to its predominance in the Party ranks (in the Federal Assembly), it was in a position to help the nomination towards a breakthrough.

However, doubts within the Federal Assembly as to whether Ogi could bring with him the qualifications necessary to be able to handle, with confidence and conviction, all the difficult situations which a Member of the Federal Council finds himself faced with sooner or later, could not be entirely dispelled. Because of this, he failed to get an absolute majority in the first ballot. Since,

however, no appealing alternatives were available and particularly since the bourgeois parties did not want to provoke their alliance partner unnecessarily, the second ballot, with 132 votes, decided the issue.

Adolf Ogi has been enthusiastically feted by his followers. Once again, Berne was seen in all its old pride and glory as a cantonal and Federal capital. The new Berne Federal Councillor personifies youthful dynamism and sportsmanship. There are great hopes that, not least, he will be able to win back some of the Federal Council's attentiveness to the needs of the people which to some extent has been lost over the last few years. It remains to be seen whether the misgivings expressed on the glacis of the election campaign were in fact justified.

This time, the allocation of the government departments provided as much to talk about as the Federal Council elections – even in the Council itself – but in the end any larger or smaller «casting of the king» in the distribution of ministries did not enter into consideration. René Felber takes over Foreign Affairs from his predecessor, Pierre Aubert; and Adolf Ogi, the Transport, Communications and Energy Department from Leon Schlumpf. Like the Federal Assembly, the Federal Council has come down in favour of stability and continuity. Swiss politics thus remain calculable. *Urs Marti*

Telegrams

■ Switzerland has concluded an agreement with the European Community (EC) in the field of *terminology*. The vocabulary of technical terms of the EC and the Swiss Federal Administration will be amalgamated in the multilingual terminology data bank of the EC, the Eurodicautom. Among other things, Eurodicautom serves matters of translation.

■ «Quotidiano» is the name of a new, seventh, *Ticino daily newspaper* which came out last November. It is the response of Quotidiano's founder and chief editor, Silvano Toppi, to his dismissal by the Bishop of Lugano from the diocese's own paper, «Giornale del Popolo».

■ The entire package of new provisions in connection with the second *revision of the asylum act* came into force on 1.1.1988. One of the main items of the new asylum procedure: applications for asylum can only be submitted at 25 specially-designated border-crossing points.