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SWISS INTERNAL POLITICS IN 1949.

By: Hermann Böschenstein.

(Service suisse des Ondes Courtes).

The Swiss Parliament closed its Winter session on Christmas Eve. On the last day of January it will meet again in Berne; this is quite an unusual occurrence, as usually recess lasts until the Spring. After a whole year's elaboration by the special committees set up for this purpose, and after several years of consultations in the Department of Finance, and consideration by groups of experts, the Draft Bill of the Finance Reform is at last ready for debate in the National Council. If this were merely a matter of taxation which had to be discussed, the political tension regarding the outcome of the debate would not be understandable. But it is not, and is really a question relating to the very structure of the Swiss Confederation; a question, the answer to which will decide for years to come which fiscal competency falls to the share of the Confederation and which to the Cantons. It is only too well known, that it is who holds the money bags who decides in practical matters, and that is why adherents of the more powerful and independent Cantons are so opposed to the Confederation arrogating to itself the right to impose any direct tax, even if it be only a temporary one. Experience has demonstrated that once a public body has been invested with the power of levying taxes, it is very difficult to dispossess it of this right. On the other hand, the Confederation's sphere of financial activity grows - one might almost say daily - more extensive in so far as expenditure is concerned. Today, the State has not only got to bear the entire burden of the military and civil - that is to say economic - National Defense and the country's foreign policy, but also, to a very large extent, its social policy, which possesses a number of special problems which can only be solved by a central executive.

According to statistics, modern conditions, the growth of industry and traffic, and the flight from the land, have brought about a very considerable internal migration of the population in Switzerland. At the time when the Confederation was founded, the original inhabitants of a Canton formed the great majority of its population. Foreigners even if Swiss, but belonging to some other Canton, were very much in the minority. Nowadays, however, there are Cantons, as for instance Zurich, which has developed into a characteristically urban centre, which possess a greater number of strangers from other Cantons living within their boundaries, than their own people. This circumstance can be explained by problem resulting from the century-old Federalistic organisation of Switzerland, to which consideration was given by means of a compromise when the Confederation was established in 1848. Since then, - and this is easily understood, in a Europe wherein great National States have arisen, and where the call has sounded for a super-national Union, the Confederation has waxed steadily stronger, the war also contributing to this development. The whole of the country's war economy and supply system could only be organized, in Switzerland - as elsewhere - by a Central Executive, in other words by the Confederation.

Practically every internal political movement in Switzerland is determined by the relations existing between the Confederation and the Cantons. Recently, a referendum has been launched against the new Federal Law on the fight against tuberculosis, so that now this Bill will have to be submitted to the approval of the electorate before it can come into force. It would give the Federal Council authority to order periodic obligatory X-ray examinations for the entire population. Opposition to the proposed Law comes mostly from those circles which are against any further competencies being allowed to the Federal Council and more particularly against State interference in the private affairs of the individual. Advocates of this innovations declare, on the other hand, that the only possible effective method of combatting tuberculosis consists in the compulsory examination of the entire population by means of x-rays and of X-Ray photography. It is true that it is a matter for the Cantons to deal with health questions, but when it comes to contagious diseases the Confederation is competent to take the necessary measures for the protection of the public's health.

It is interesting to note that, at the present time, the Swiss citizen is much more characteristically a Bernese, a Genevese, a Zuricher, a Basler, etc., than were ever the French in their century-old Central State, or the Germans, with the exception perhaps of the Bavarians. But, perhaps, in thirty or forty years, this internal migration of the Swiss population will already have resulted in the present strong Cantonal loyalty becoming transformed into an all-embracing feeling of love and loyalty to the Confederation as a whole. A change is now evolving under the influence of economic factors, which it is hardly possible to stop.

"SWISS NATIONAL DEFENCE - TODAY AND TOMORROW."
By: Peter Dürrenmatt.

V. PECULIARITIES OF THE SWISS MILITIA SYSTEM.

The Swiss Militia is something quite special within the framework of the various modern military systems. Its particular character is responsible for the existence of a number of peculiarities in the organisation of its military service, which are unknown in other armies. To begin with, we would like to mention the nature and manner of the principle in accordance with which our general compulsory military service is carried out. This principle is conceived in so general and democratic a manner that it does not allow of any exceptions or any facilities in respect of any citizen capable of bearing arms. Every Swiss who is found to be apt for military service must attend an identical school for Recruits, whatever may be his social or financial position. Recruiting is carried out in such a way that only those who are suffering from physical or mental disabilities are dispensed from military service. The future officer or N.C.O., has to attend the same preliminary courses as the soldier and he trains in the company of comrades who will, perhaps, serve under his command at a future date. It is the personality of the man, rather than the rank he carries which will have the greatest influence on the troops under his command. The absolute equality which exists in the first period of military training through which everyone must go - and which is known as the "recruits school" signifies also that the Militia system fulfills a most important social task. For the School of Recruits, as we said a moment ago, brings together people of all classes and professions; educated men and labourers, workmen and farmers, merchants and craftsmen, the sons of big business men and those of their employees - and because they are set at learning the same lessons, and must undergo the same physical hardships, they, also, at the same time learn to know and respect each other. In this sense the recruits school is an essential factor in the democratic education of the citizen.

Another peculiarity of the Swiss Militia system is the intensity of the work accomplished. This is a thing which never fails to strike the foreign observer. The four months spent in the school of Recruits or the three weeks demanded by refresher courses, necessitate a very careful and thorough employment of this short time. Mornings and afternoons, as well as a couple of nights per week, are devoted to military instruction. It is only in this way that it is possible to attain in so short a time the results which are so surprising to the foreign observer.

The Swiss Army possesses neither decorations nor Generals. The rank of General is only applicable to the Commander-in-Chief and only in the case of a General Mobilisation, when the country is in a state of so-called "Active Service." In peacetime, it is the Federal Council which is invested with the supreme authority in military matters, an advisory council of high-ranking military experts being available for consultation. Commanders of Brigades, Divisions and Army Corps are ranked simply as "colonels"; in order however, to designate their specific function, they are styled, in accordance with their grade, as "Brigadier Colonel", "Divisionary Colonel" and "Colonel Corps Commander." These designations remain in use even when their possessors are transferred to other military