

Zeitschrift: Helvetia : magazine of the Swiss Society of New Zealand
Herausgeber: Swiss Society of New Zealand
Band: 31 (1968)
Heft: [9]

Artikel: Switzerland and the world : looking back to 1967 - the pattern evolving for 1968 [end]
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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-942254>

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SWITZERLAND AND THE WORLD

LOOKING BACK TO 1967 — THE PATTERN EVOLVING FOR 1968

[CONTINUED]

NEUTRALITY

In any plans for an integrated Europe, Switzerland's neutrality will have to be considered. The head of the Federal Military Department, Federal Councillor Celio, declared in November that a contingent of Swiss U.N. "Blue Helmets" was not compatible with Swiss neutrality. He gave a much-discussed address on the subject of total defence at the invitation of the Nouvelle Societe Helvetique, Switzerland's foremost forum for discussing national problems. His statement was criticised in particular by the "Action Committee for Switzerland's entry into UNO". They say the former Federal Councillor Wahlen had already stated in 1966 that ways and means could be found which would allow Swiss "Blue Helmet" troops to be withdrawn immediately from anywhere, should hostilities break out in any given spot. Federal Councillor Celio, however, is in favour of special teams which would be used in catastrophes both in Switzerland and abroad. This would not only be a step towards UNO, but also a proof of Switzerland's humanitarian solidarity.

At the end of December, the Federal Council modified its decision of 28th March 1949 regarding export of arms. From now on, production, acquirement and distribution of war materials are under the Confederation. Import, transit and export are prohibited without permit. Thus even stricter control than hitherto has come into operation.

In November, the Swiss Government asked the Political Department to hand a memorandum to the Ambassadors of USA and USSR, which contained the Confederation's attitude to the atomic non-proliferation treaty (submitted to the 18-power conference in Geneva in August last year). The note contains no definite yes or no regarding Switzerland's signing of such a pact. The Federal Council simply asked for elucidation of some of the points and expressed some wishes especially regarding supervision and development of atomic power for peaceful use. The Swiss Government are fully aware that such an agreement, however effective, is no genuine disarmament. It would confirm the monopoly position of the two super powers and would be without any effect on the third giant, China. Negotiations could lead to a lessening of tension, but should they fail, the consequences would be disastrous. According to agreements regarding co-operation in the field of peaceful use of atomic power with USA, Canada and Great Britain, Switzerland's peaceful atomic installations are

already inspected by the Agency for Atomic Energy. Federal Councillor Spuehler stated in Parliament that militarily, Switzerland would never be able to join the nuclear powers for economic reasons.

SCIENCE

In other scientific fields, Switzerland co-operates at international level. When Federal Councillor Tschudi opened the Congress of the International Union for Geodesy and Geophysics in early autumn, he stressed that Switzerland had no capital which combined political, cultural and economic life. The 2000 scientists who attended the Congress were spread over Berne (oceanography and hydrology), Lucerne (geodesy and meteorology), Zurich (seismology, physics of the centre of the earth and vulcanology) and St. Gall (geomagnetism and aeronomy), and this is why the Federal Councillor explained the Swiss federalistic system which has resulted in an evenly spread economic development in the various parts of the country and allowed a much more marked extension of cultural activities than in many other countries. He said that the work of the Congress would help to solve some of the world problems, not least that of hunger. Switzerland belonged to one of the pioneers in this fields, for instance, by her exact maps of mountainous regions, by her production of precision instruments, by glacier research, climatic studies, etc.

HUMANITARIAN ACTIVITIES

Switzerland's Red Cross activities are fairly well known. Realising the ever-increasing burdens of the International Red Cross Committee, the Federal Council increased the present contribution of 1 million francs p.a. to 2½m., and to grant a new loan of 10 million francs.

Red Cross activities have been stepped up in connection with the Near East conflict, and help has been given to both sides with dry blood plasma, blankets, clothing, money for tents, food, soap. Thirty delegates and more have been in the field helping local organisations with looking after refugees. The Swiss Red Cross has also given money to the Swiss children's village Kirjath Yearim in Israel, founded in 1952 by Swiss, where there are about 100 children mainly from bad family backgrounds and mostly from Arab countries. Incidentally, the amount collected in Switzerland for the "Pro Israel" Campaign totalled nearly 4 million francs. Most of the money has been allocated to the rehabilitation centre for invalids (Beit Halochem).

In Vietnam, too, the Red Cross has been active. The Swiss Government donated the money to build a children's pavilion at the civil hospital at Da Nang in South Vietnam. A Swiss medical group is in charge of it, and the Federal Council has granted

another sum for the upkeep. Since April 1966 already, a Swiss medical mission has been working at Kontum hospital under the auspices of the federation. The Government also granted another quarter-of-a-million francs for medical material to the Red Cross in Hanoi. Vietnamese children have been admitted in Swiss families and are being brought up by foster parents. The "Centrale Sanitaire Suisse", too, has sent large quantities of surgical instruments and drugs to Vietnam.

Early in the year, a French Tv. message said that the Swiss Government had offered their services as mediators in possible negotiations in the Vietnam conflict. The Political Department stated that the message was probably based on a declaration by Federal Councillor Spuehler that Switzerland would always be ready to offer her services if she were approached. There was no new development in the attitude of the Federal Council.

The Red Cross has also come into action in the recent earthquake catastrophe in Sicily. Gifts in cash and kind were received by the Swiss Red Cross from all parts of Switzerland in answer to their appeal. Individual towns donated money ranging from Fr.50,000.—from the Municipal Council of Zurich to Fr.5000.—from smaller places like Grenchen, etc. The "Hilfswerk der Evangelischen Kirchen der Schweiz" (HEKS) collected 200,000 francs within a few days. At Burgdorf, schoolboys sold Sicilian oranges in aid of the victims and got 2500 francs. Quite a problem was caused by the large numbers of refugees who wanted to get into Switzerland. For obvious reasons, the Government had to prevent a spontaneous influx of uncontrolled refugees. But they have given permission to families and individuals if they came from the actual area of disaster and had somewhere to go to in Switzerland to either relatives or approved friends.

FIGURES AT RANDOM . . .

In 1967, Switzerland produced 19,958,312 litres of ice cream, an increase of 17.5%.

In order to reduce the surplus milk, the Central Switzerland Milk Producers donated a ton of full-cream milk powder to the Caritas Organisation in Lucerne, to be distributed to hungry nations.

The "Pro Infirmis" organisation for invalids and the mentally handicapped looked after 15,000 people last year, 1500 children among them; 65 fully trained social workers are in charge of the work.

Last year, wheat imports went back by 16.4% to 248,500 metric tons, mainly due to increased production in Switzerland; 43.6% came from Canada, 20.3% from USA, 15% from Argentina, 11.5% from France and the rest from Germany, Austria, Italy and Australia. The Confederation's share was 9.8% of the total.

Figures out this spring regarding convictions in 1966, show that the total reached 19,254 (10 more than the previous year) convicted on the basis of the penal code, 709 (725) of the military code, 24,663 (21,360) of the road and traffic laws and 3212 (2973) of other federal decrees. In the first category were nearly 3000 women, over 4000 foreigners and 2390 juveniles. Among those convicted were 8933 with previous convictions. Only 1075 were women in the third category (driving!), but 6072 foreigners. Here again, 9844 traffic offenders had been previously convicted.

The "Schweizerisches Arbeiterhilfswerk" helped 279 cases in 1967, mostly concerning sickness where there was loss of pay.

Butter consumption went back in 1967, says BUTYRA, the butter production and marketing board, after a previous increase. This was mainly due to the high price of butter in Switzerland.

There were 1,720,687 radio licenses at the end of January, of whom 436,677 on the telephone network. Tv. licenses numbered 879,862, of whom well over 620,000 in the German-speaking part.

Swiss vegetable production for 1967 is estimated at 27,000 trucks @ 10 tons — value about 122 million francs. 14,000 trucks (145m.) were imported.

Switzerland consumes something like 2 million kg. of asparagus **per annum**, of which about 1800 tons are imported. 200 tons come from the Valais, where the production has gone back from about 500 tons 10 years ago, mainly on account of lack of labour.

Due to the glut of tomatoes, the Valais producers started a competition for tomato recipes — over 1500 recipes were received, the six best from the **Suisse Romande**.

Meat consumption per head of the population rose from 65,265 kg. to 65,890 kg., with over 28,000 kg. of pork at the top. Poultry consumption has gone down slightly to 5776 kg. **per capita**.

The Swiss generally eats about 8.5 kg. of cheese every year, but in the Valais the average rises to 35 kg. **La Raclette . . .**

Laugh a little . . .

An inhabitant of the hamlet Ablaendschen (at the foot of the Gastlosen, Jaunpass) travelled to Paris. To get there and back, he had to change trains altogether eight times. When he was back home he was asked for his impressions of this city of millions. He said: "Beautiful, but really in the backblocks!"

* * *

Husband and wife travel through the Simplon Tunnel. "Goodness, how long this tunnel is," says the wife. The husband explains: "No wonder, we are in the last carriage!"