

F.T. Wahlen : President of the Swiss Confederation

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GROUP NEW ZEALAND OF THE NEW HELVETIC SOCIETY

24th Year

APRIL 1961

Hamilton

F. T. Wahlen . . . President of the Swiss Confederation

By P. BEGUIN

MR F. T. WAHLEN, Minister of Public Economy, has been elected President of the Swiss Confederation for 1961. Here are a few biographical notes:

Exactly two years after entering the Swiss Government, Mr Wahlen accedes to the highest political office of our country. On this occasion it would seem opportune to recall the essential traits of his career, as well as the predominant qualities of his personality.

If one considers his early training and the first stages of his professional life, Mr Fritz Wahlen may be said to be essentially a technician. His studies were devoted to agricultural engineering. For several years he was the manager of experimental agricultural stations in Canada. Then he returned to Switzerland to take up the same kind of work. His principals and colleagues had every opportunity to appreciate his capacities, but, at the beginning of the Second World War, he was still unknown to the general public.

This Second World War made him known—in a rather sudden manner. Because of his great capacities, the Federal Government entrusted him with a very hard task, namely, that of reorganising Swiss agriculture, of adapting it to the possibilities and the requirements of wartime, of extending the arable land, and, in order to achieve this, of mobilising not only the farming classes, but also—to a very considerable extent—the city-folk. It was necessary to extract the maximum amount of produce from our soil and, in order to do this, the smallest square metre of land had to be worked. It was also necessary for the cultivation of the land to be judiciously apportioned, in order to be able to cover the minimum requirements, in spite of the decline, and then the almost complete cessation, of our imports.

In this task Mr Wahlen achieved complete success. He was not satisfied with being a calcu-

lator and organiser. Nor was he content with the issue of a mass of legal rules and regulations. What he did, was to mobilise a lot of good will and to make his scheme popular. In short, the “Wahlen Plan” proved to be a complete success.

This success brought Mr Wahlen his election as Zurich deputy to the Council of States, i.e. to the Upper Chamber, where he remained for several years. There exist good reasons, however, for thinking that Mr Wahlen did not look upon this political mandate as being the crowning of his career. He, therefore, left for abroad and devoted all his energies and competencies to the Food and Agriculture Organisation — one of the Special Agencies of the United Nations. There, he finally became Assistant Director, charged more particularly with the task of carrying out the programmes of technical aid to the under-developed countries.

Meanwhile, Swiss public opinion had almost forgotten Mr Fritz Wahlen. However, when, in 1958, his name was mentioned in connection with a candidacy for the Federal Government, the memory left by the organiser of our agriculture during the war years, as well as all that had been learnt about his activities in the FAO, aroused a great movement of confidence, which carried him to power. Since then, this confidence has become still further consolidated.

If Mr Wahlen enjoys so much favour with the public, this is due to the fact that, during the whole of his busy existence, he has never wasted any time in indulging in the “little games” of politics. He is not a Party man, but has placed himself above all Parties. During the two years he has been in the Federal Government, he has given proof of his qualities as a statesman, that is to say, as a servant of the general interests of the public. Moreover, it is a good thing that the presidency of the Confederation should be entrusted to a personality whose horizon has expanded as a result

of his international activities. This is all the more necessary at a time when Switzerland is less able than ever to live retired within herself, and when she must multiply her external contacts and relations.

NEWS OF THE COLONY

HAMILTON SWISS CLUB

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General Meeting was held in the Riverlea on Sunday, 9th April, 1961. Over 80 members were present and received the 5th annual report of the Club's President.

"We can look back on a particularly successful year regarding the Club and a particularly busy one for the committee. Our membership has increased and our finances, thanks to Jakob Von Holzen, our treasurer, look very healthy.

"Our evenings, which were held regularly each month, showed a consistently good attendance and we counted as many as 130 people at times. In addition, during the winter we organised two card evenings and one film presentation. Our most successful 1st of August celebration was honoured by the presence of Dr Rosetti, Consul-General, and Mrs Rosetti. A picnic held on the farm of Mr and Mrs Scheidegger, Matamata, for which I again express to them my gratitude, and a Christmas evening complete with Santa Claus for the children concluded the year. Then we held the annual Picnic in Mercer with the Auckland Swiss Club.

"Our Swiss Society shooting competition was held in the form of a picnic at the residence of Mr and Mrs Risi, to whom I also would like to express my sincere thanks for offering their beautiful grounds for this occasion.

"In concluding I would like to thank the members of my committee for their loyal support and the great deal of work they did during the year; also my sincere thanks to the ladies of the committee members and all those helpers that are doing such a great job in the kitchen and thereby keeping their menfolk in good condition and a reasonable frame of mind; and last but not least many thanks to our handorgelers, who make our gatherings so much like home."

—Arnold Biland, President.

Election of officers resulted as follows.—

President: Arnold Biland. Vice-President: Walter Risi. Secretary: T. Villiger. Treasurer: Jakob Von Holzen. Committee: Joe Arnet, Walter Steiner, Mr and Mrs Charly Steiner, Rinaldo Rust, Frank Krieger, Bruno Bolli. Delegates to Society: Ernst Studer, Jakob Von Holzen, Joe Arnet. Entertainment Committee: Hans Oettli, Ernst Studer.

SHOOTING COMPETITION

On Saturday, 18th March, the Hamilton Swiss Club held its shooting competition under ideal conditions. The weather was fine and the park-like garden of the Risi family in Ngaruawahia absolutely perfect. Shots ringing out, Swiss flag fluttering in the breeze, the noise of the Kegelbahn and last but not least the barbecued Bratwurst with Gipfel, created a near perfect illusion of being at home. We owe Mr and Mrs Risi a big "Thank You" for throwing open their home for this club shooting picnic.

A total of seven complete groups and nine single competitors took part. Individual results will appear in next issue.

WELLINGTON SWISS CLUB

On March 12th our last picnic was held for the season. In bright sunshine a dozen cars packed with people left the city and drove along the coast, then up to the hills to "Games Farm." We all enjoyed this beautiful spot along the edge of the bush.

Adults competed in "Steinsctossen" and had a game of football, while the children enjoyed races in "Sackgumpe" etc. Too soon the shades grew longer and a little nip in the air let you feel that autumn was very close. Happy and a little tired, we returned back to Wellington. —R.M.

CHRISTCHURCH SWISS CLUB

We had our "Chilbi" (fair) on the 28th March. It proved to be a very big success and the whole club and guests enjoyed themselves, having great fun with all the games. We also had the pleasure of watching a magician who showed us lots of very good tricks, and the small children (as well as the grown-up ones!) enjoyed themselves thoroughly. The proceeds of the evening are going to be used for our 1st August celebrations. —E.G.

SWISS SOCIETY OF NEW ZEALAND

SHOOTING COMPETITION

18th - 19th MARCH, 1961

GROUP COMPETITION	Result
1. TARANAKI I	204
Napflin J., Kaiser J.A., Fluhler P., Chamberlain L.	
2. AUCKLAND I	202
Fitzi H., Mueller A., Enzler H., Hartmtnn S.	
3. HAMILTON V	201
Studer E., Schuler A., Weber J., Schuler F.	
4. TARANAKI II	193 (64)
Suter F., Hiestand E., Guerder J., Chamberlain E.	