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## The 52nd Assembly of the Swiss Abroad



The President

dealt with in this field. The Director of the Secretariat of the Swiss Abroad, Mr. Marcel Ney, showed the development of the voluntary old-age insurance (AVS). His talk was illustrated by slides of cartoons and drawings in the course of the decades. Then followed a discussion led by the Deputy Director of the Secretariat, Mr. Lucien Paillard, in which specialists and experts of the Federal Office of Insurance and members of the audience took part. Many questions regarding the AVS could be answered, points which are important for the Swiss abroad. They will be published in the next issue. A question which interested the assembly was that Swiss women abroad married

to Swiss cannot join the voluntary old-age and dependents' insurance without the consent of their husbands; should they not agree, difficult situations arise. A further problem taken up at the plenary session is that of a compulsory sickness insurance in Switzerland, which would also be open to Swiss abroad on their return to the old country. At the moment, however, we are still at the beginning in this matter, and many negotiations will be necessary until concrete solutions have been reached. A first step has been made, but the coming deliberations will require a great deal of time. The Swiss abroad may be sure that their interests will be safeguarded during coming negotiations.

In the presence of Federal Councillor Dr. Hans Huerlimann and his wife, the plenary session of the 52nd Assembly of the Swiss Abroad took place in Neuchâtel. It was chaired by Councillor of States Dr. Louis Guisan.

The main theme was social insurance in Switzerland and its importance for the Swiss abroad.

The President of the Commission of the Swiss Abroad presented a summary of Swiss insurance conditions and problems. Amongst other things, he stated that today nearly 90% of the Swiss population belonged to one or another sickness insurance scheme. Next, the Central President of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique, Dr. Ernst Basler, addressed the meeting on the difficulties which had to be

Cocktail reception after the official opening

(All Assembly photographs by Rodo Wyss)





Front row: from right to left

Mr. Marcel Ney, Mrs. Ilse Frei, Madame Hélène Guisan, Brigadier Jacques Bullet, Mr. Jean-Claude Duvanel, President of Neuchâtel, Mrs. Philippe Garraux, Federal Councillor & Mrs. Huerlimann, Mr. Philippe Garraux. Second row: Mr. Anton von Sprecher, Mr. Jean Heer, Minister Gérard Bauer, National Councillor Willi Wenk and his colleague Mrs. Tilo Frey, former Federal Councillor Dr. F.T. Wahlen, Mrs. Ernst Basler, wife of the Central President of the NSH.

Before the address by the Federal Councillor, a member of the Council of the Solidarity Fund explained the new constitution of this insurance by which Swiss abroad can cover loss of livelihood through coercive political measures. Federal Councillor Huerlimann described measures taken since the acceptance of Article 45 *bis* in favour of the Swiss abroad, such as the guarantee to the Solidarity Fund, the federal

law on social welfare assistance for Swiss abroad, the reduction of military duties, various compensation, information, the preparation of a law concerning political rights, with which the Federal Council will deal in due course. The speaker also referred to the bad state of the federal finances and appealed to the Swiss abroad to make every effort to stabilise the situation, together with their compatriots at home.

Prior to the plenary session, numerous meetings had taken place, amongst them that of the Commission of the Swiss Abroad, of the Commission on Information, of the co-ordinating body on information, of the Foundation for the Swiss Abroad, of the Solidarity Fund etc. Decisions were taken which will allow further studies on a number of problems, such as double taxation agreements, cases of expropriation, contracts regard-

Entrance to Cité Universitaire



The Plenary Session





ing information and problems concerning Swiss schools abroad. On the occasion of the official opening of the Assembly at the Church of «La Collégiale» in Neuchâtel representatives of Canton and City were present who had spontaneously offered to help in making the Assembly a success. It was with great pleasure that we heard the «Suite montagnarde» by Jean Daetwyler, played expertly on the alphorn by Jozsef Molnar. He was accompanied by his wife on the flute and by Bernard Heiniger on the organ.

#### *Entertainment*

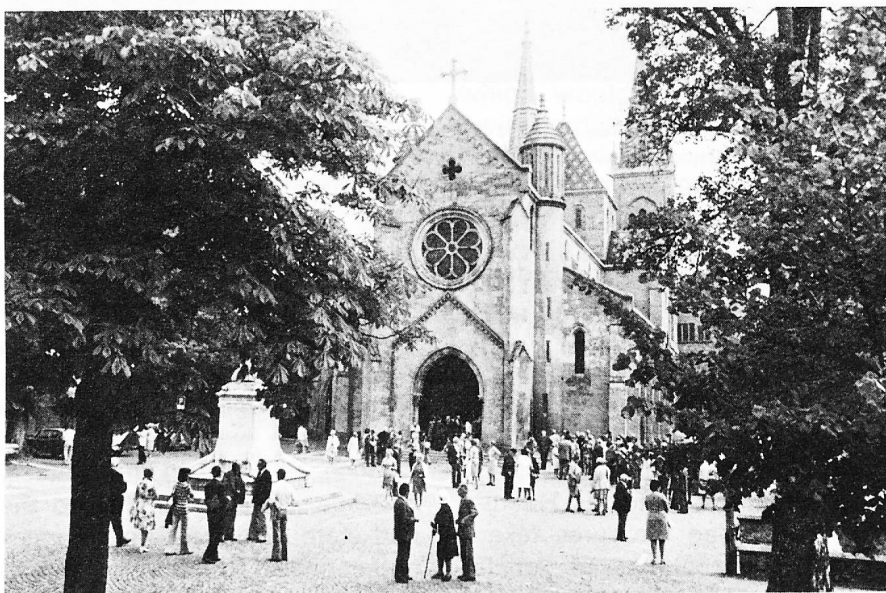
The Assembly, however, did not consist of work only: an excursion on the lake took our visitors to Le Landeron *via* the Thielle Canal. From there, they went by coach to Cressier where they dined and enjoyed musical entertainment, as well as a comic performance by Alex Billeter, Manager of the Neuchâtel Tourist Office. Later there was dancing for those who liked it.

After the ecumenical service at «La Collégiale» on Sunday morning, there was a drive through the Neuchâtel Jura to Les Geneveys-sur-Confrane. An excellent leg of ham cooked in peasoup regaled the Swiss from other countries and their friends from within Switzerland, and the picnic was enjoyed all the more because of the graceful songs and dances performed by the «Chanson de Neuchâtel». The Assembly of 1974 has passed, and already we are looking forward to the one in 1975 which will take place in Basle. It will be a very versatile event, for its motto will be «The Swiss abroad as Ambassadors of Culture».

Lucien Paillard



Sightseeing in Neuchâtel



Prior to the Ecumenical Service

On with the peasoup!



(All Assembly photographs by Rodo Wyss)



Co-ordinating information



The famous ham



During the picnic



Can you recognise yourself?



The «Chanson de Neuchâtel» in action



Messrs Simon and Ney sign the information contract with Great Britain