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A warm welcome by the Ajoie to the 57th Assembly of the Swiss Abroad from 24th to 26th August 1979



The Petits chanteurs of Porrentruy (Photo Rodo)



Our President, Dr A. Weber, in conversation with President F. Lachat

Swiss from five continents – Europe was particularly well represented – gathered in this beautiful region of the new Canton for three days, in order to discuss the draft of the total revision of the Federal Constitution, the main theme of the Assembly.

Under the chairmanship of National Councillor Dr. Alfred Weber, the plenary session not only brought together the Swiss from abroad and the federal authorities, as well as personalities of the Canton of Jura and the notables of Porrentruy, but it opened a dialogue between the President of the Confederation, Federal Councillor Hans Huerlimann, and the President of the Jura Government, Mr François Lachat, which, in the long run, will be of great importance. Quite a few spoke of an «historic day» in view of the human relations which were created at an interhelvetic level during the Assembly. We may well be proud that it was the Swiss from abroad who were able to bring about a *rapprochement* which, however, will have to be put in concrete form as yet.

Gathered at Porrentruy, 400 Swiss from abroad took an active interest

in the events which began on Friday afternoon. Thursday all day and Friday morning were traditionally devoted to meetings of the Commission of the Swiss Abroad and its sub-committees.

Whilst a large number of participants went sightseeing in the attractive town, some of the confederates – true descendants of William Tell – went to Bressaucourt for a cross-bow contest. It was highly successful, and the women contestants not only equalled their male colleagues, but even surpassed them at times.

During the traditional question hour, some very interesting opinions were exchanged. Competent representatives of the Federal Administration answered questions regarding the Federal Constitution, social and sickness insurance, military matters, citizenship rights, etc. We should like to express our thanks hereby for their co-operation.

The official opening of the Assembly which should originally have been held on the lawn opposite the Castle Tower, had to be transferred into the large entrance hall of the Castle, for the weather that afternoon had been most unkind

and the rain only stopped a quarter of an hour before the official start of the Assembly. Inspite of a strong and fresh wind, the sun enabled the participants at the last minute to gather on the Castle esplanade to hear the welcoming speeches. The Mayor of Porrentruy, Mr Gabriel Theubet, recalled the history of the town. The President of the Jura Government, Mr François Lachat, was quite moved that the Swiss abroad had chosen



The Mayor of Porrentruy, Mr Gabriel Theubet

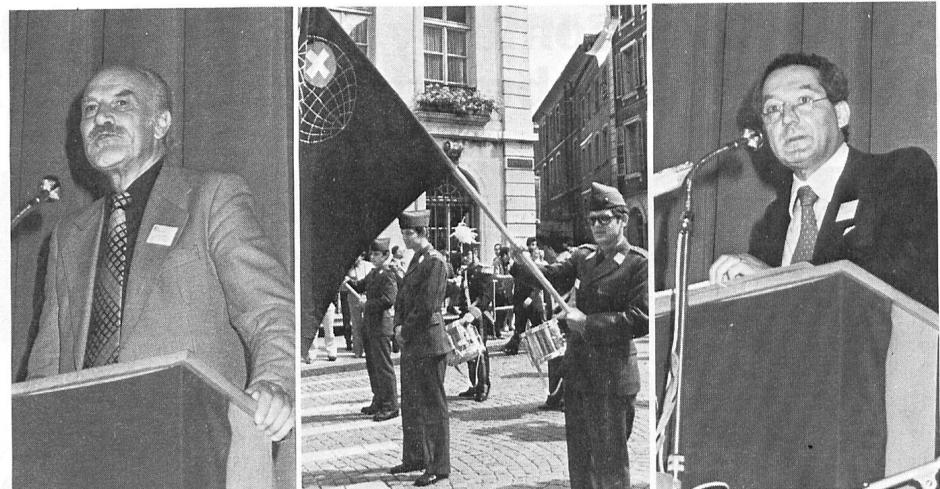
the Year one of the Canton of Jura for their gathering. He reminded the audience that at the federal plebiscite of 24th September 1978

on the new Canton joining the Confederation, no fewer than 4607 Swiss abroad had made use of their voting rights. The Jura citizens abroad would enjoy political rights at cantonal level as from 1st January 1980, provided they had registered with their Commune of origin.

This extremely pleasant event at which the town's fanfares and the «Petits chanteurs de Porrentruy» performed, was followed by a reception at the Castle offered by the Commune.

Before passing to the plenary session, one should mention that the entertainment on Saturday evening at the hall at Courtemaîche went with a swing. Before dancing to the tunes of the well-known «New Rag Time» band, a tasty meal awaited the large crowd. The various folkloristic performances by the choirs «Les Baladins» and «Les Vieilles Chansons de Porrentruy», as well as a recital by the «Groupe de musique champêtre de Alle» were much appreciated, and applauded with enthusiasm. Many thanks to all who contributed towards the success of the event, especially to the Mayor of Courtemaîche, Mr Yves Monnerat, who welcomed the congressists.

After the ecumenical church service on Sunday, an excursion took place to the grottoes of Réclère, which will remain an impressive



Mr Josef Voyame

Part of the procession

Prof. Gerardo Broggiini

memory for many. The journey then went on through France and the Clos du Doubs to Ste-Ursanne. After visiting the Cloister where the Mayor, Mr Charles Moritz, addressed the company and the Canton of Jura and the Commune of Ste-Ursanne offered a much-appreciated drop of wine, the two accordionists Nicole and Jacky, well-known to many Swiss abroad, entertained their compatriots. Subsequently, lunch was served in the various restaurants of the town.

The closing ceremony of the Assembly took place in driving rain near the monument dedicated to the soldiers of the First World War on the Col des Rangiers.

Plenary Session

This was opened by the President of the Organization of the Swiss

Abroad, National Councillor Dr. Alfred Weber who introduced the main theme:

«The Swiss abroad and the draft of the total revision of the Federal Constitution».

He was followed by Mr Gerardo Broggiini, Professor at the Catholic University of Milan, who gave a general survey of that much-discussed project. Mr Marcel Ney informed the audience about Art. 45bis of the Constitution, at present in force but no longer contained in the draft. He indicated possible consequences if the Article were to be left out. It is one of the juridical bases for the Swiss abroad and at the same time represents recognition by the Swiss people of «Fifth Switzerland».

The following three speakers took part in the discussion and demand-

The Commission of the Swiss Abroad in session



During the festivities at Courtemaîche



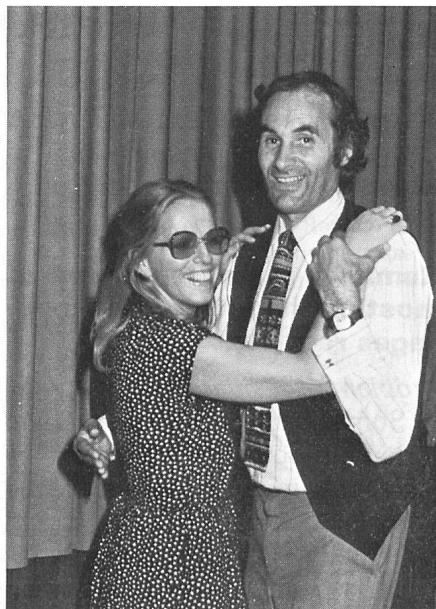
ed that their requests in connection with the draft or a possible change in the Constitution be examined:

- Aspects of international law presented by Prof. Schneider, President of the University of Mainz in the German Federal Republic.
- Citizenship campaign (recognition of Swiss nationality for children born abroad to Swiss mothers and foreign fathers), a request formulated by Mrs Ilse Frei, Antwerp, Belgium, member of the Commission of the Swiss Abroad.
- Political rights of the Swiss abroad; Mr Carlo Goetz, Milan, Italy, member of the Commission of the Swiss Abroad, presented the reasons why the right to vote should be exercised by post from abroad.

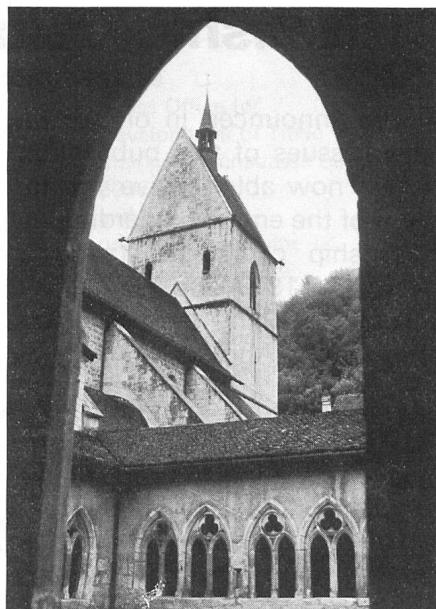
They were followed by Mr Max Braendle, Professor at the University of Brisbane, Australia, member of the Commission of the Swiss Abroad, who commented on the problems regarding the revision of the Federal Constitution from the point of view of the Swiss communities overseas. Mr Jean-Louis Gilliéron, Paris, pleaded for representation in the Federal Parliament, namely in the Council of States.

A gay note was introduced by the former Swiss from USA, Mr John Bitterli. After talking about the difficulties experienced by recipients of foreign pensions paid out in Switzerland, he began to sing the favourite of the 1914-1918 war «La petite Gilberte de Courgenay» - the whole audience joining in the chorus.

An illustrated brochure including all the talks and addresses made at Porrentruy may be had from the Secretariat of the Swiss Abroad, Alpenstrasse 26, 3000 Berne 16, Switzerland. The price is SFr. 10.- plus postage, until stocks are exhausted.



Great Britain meets Australia



The Cloister of Ste-Ursanne

The present state of the preparatory work in connection with the revision of the Federal Constitution as well as its historic development were presented in a brilliant manner by the Director of the Division of Justice, Mr Joseph Voyame, a citizen of the Canton of Jura.

Then came the turn of Mr Paul Schaffroth, Central President of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique, who brought greetings from the Society which had founded the Organization of the Swiss Abroad in 1916.

To close the deliberations, the President of the Confederation, Federal Councillor Hans Huerli-

The President of the Confederation, accompanied by Mr and Mrs Jean Heer and Ambassador Jimmy Martin (Photo Rodo)



mann, head of the Federal Department of the Interior, addressed the gathering. First, he spoke about the new Canton and was accorded great applause by the audience when he said it was «this Canton of Jura, which is also ours». Subsequently he spoke about several problems linked to the main theme and assured his compatriots that the wishes expressed at Porrentruy would be examined closely.

The 58th Assembly of the Swiss Abroad will be held in Locarno at the end of August 1980. We are looking forward to seeing you ...

Lucien Paillard