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Auslandschweizertag 1969

More than 500 persons from all corners of the globe attended the 47th Auslandschweizertag, which was held in beautiful weather from 29th - 31st August in Montreux, on the lovely shores of Lake Geneva. I attended this congress for the first time and was very impressed with the organisation of it, and the importance with which the Swiss Government and the people treat this conference. Many important Swiss personalities were present (Bundesrat Schaffner, Bundesrat F. T. Wahlen, Ständeratspräsident Clavadetscher, etc.) as well as nine Ambassadors, nine General Consuls and many Consuls.

On Friday morning meetings of different groups on different subjects were held and in the afternoon one had the choice of a visit to the Chateau de Chillon and the new piece of Nationalstrasse No. 9, which in a very bold manner is being built over the vineyards along Lake Geneva and which is regarded as a masterpiece of the Swiss building and construction technique, or a visit to the big winecellars of the firm Henri Badoux in Aigle and the new oil-thermal electricity works, which in spite of not being in use, impressed by its size. The third choice was a visit to the Ateliers de Construction Mecaniques de Vevey S.A., where I went. There we were told by expert guides about the progress the firm has made in the last 20 years when they started from a very small beginning to the impressive size they are now, especially in the construction of turbines in which they are world-renowned.

In the evening we attended the big reception organised by the authority of the Canton de Vaud and the town of Montreux, which was the official opening of the Congress.

At the meeting on Saturday morning in the Casino of Montreux Ständerat Dr Louis Guisan, who was conducting the conference, introduced the new Centralpresident of the Neuen Helvetischen Gesellschaft Mr Jean Claude Nicole from Geneva. Following, as the centre of the conference Bundesrat Schaffner, head of the Volkswirtschaftsdepartement, in his speech under the title "Is Emigration a win or a loss for Switzerland", spoke in a forceful manner about the problems emigration brings for Switzerland and the emigrants themselves. He pointed out that those Swiss centres in foreign countries are indispensable, if we as Swiss want to affirm our position in a growing world competition. He said further, that the Swiss who go abroad should not take a full employment, like we have at the present time in Switzerland, in other countries too much for granted. Today 300,000 Swiss abroad represent the 5th Switzerland; 130,000 have dual citizenship. Every year 15-16,000 Swiss still leave their home country to look for work, adventure or happiness in a foreign country.

Switzerland is now in 12th place in absolute figures in the world of commerce.

Saturday evening saw us all together in the big hall of the Casino at a dine and dance, and in the very relaxed atmosphere of the evening many lasting friendships across the seas and continents developed. Sunday brought us to a worthy end, a boat trip on Lake Geneve with a visit to the Stälmuseum in Coppet.

From Coppet we left by a special train back to Montreux. At the hour of departure one realised how international our Congress had been. Here one could overhear: 'Don't forget to look me up if you ever come to Brazil', or 'I give you my phone number in case you visit Japan', or 'Whenever you pass through Montreal you are always welcome', or 'Any time you happen to come to Nigeria please pay me a visit', etc.

Some of the visitors make an effort to come to the congress every year and they told me that it is an inspiration every time they attend it. The next Congress will be held at Zofingen from 28th - 30th August 1970.

E. STUDER.

[Mr Studer was the official N.Z. delegate at this year's Auslandschweizertagung in Montreux.]

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