

Journée des Suisses à l'étranger 1949

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JOURNEE DES SUISSES A L'ETRANGER 1949.

This year's Conference of the Swiss Abroad was again held at Interlaken (30th June — 3rd July) as last year, though in very much better weather. This enabled the 200 Delegates from Swiss Colonies all over the world to round off three days of intensive work with a most pleasurable expedition on the lake of Brienz, which, under a cloudless sky, seemed bluer than ever. It was a fitting end to a most successful conference.

It began on Thursday afternoon with a special meeting of the Chief Delegates from each Colony together with the officials of the Secrétariat des Suisses à l'Etranger and the members of the Commission des Suisses à l'Etranger. The purpose of this special meeting was to discuss freely questions of organization and procedure in the absence of governmental representatives with a view to increase the effectiveness of the representations of the Swiss abroad, where their interests are at stake.

The discussion led to the conclusion, that the formation of a special organization of the Swiss abroad, as the outer wing of the existing central organization, would appear premature for the time being. On the other hand it was recognized, that the better representation of the Swiss abroad in the existing *Commission des Suisses à l'Etranger* was urgently desirable. It was decided, therefore, that half the members of the commission should be representatives of Colonies, the method of selection being left over for further consideration. It was further decided, that one or two of the most important questions regarding the Swiss Colonies should be discussed at length during the ensuing conference, rather than dealing briefly with a multitude of questions on which the views and wishes of the Colonies are already well known.

Thus the evening conference was devoted mainly to the great problem of the maintenance and *rejuvenation of the Colonies* abroad. The experience of the Colonies in this respect varies, of course, very much. Some of the overseas Colonies are flourishing and increasing, others are stagnant, while most of the Colonies in Europe diminished considerably. It was deplored by several speakers, that Swiss firms do not always use opportunities open to them for employing Swiss citizens as representatives, employees and directors in foreign countries, although this would often be to their own advantage as well as that of Switzerland. A representative of the Government assured the meeting, that it fully realised the importance of the Colonies for the future of Switzerland and that it was willing at all times to defend and further their interests.

Special attention is being devoted by the "Secrétariat des Suisses à l'Etranger" to the problem of keeping alive the attachment of Swiss children, living abroad, to the homeland, through excellent work done by a special youth branch under the able direction of Dr Weisskopf. It has organised *camps for adolescent boys and girls* from the Colonies in Switzerland. This year a satisfactory experiment has also been made in holding a special camp for Swiss children in Germany. It was regretted, that not all Colonies, including our own, have taken advantage of this service on behalf of the younger generation. For the *younger children*, Pro Juventute has for many years

helped in placing Swiss children from abroad either with families or in holiday camps, at moderate cost or free of charge in needy cases.

The desirability of facilitating the *repatriation of savings and capital* for investment in Switzerland, as well as participation of the Swiss abroad in the "Old Age Insurance" scheme was stressed by the speaker of the Delegation from England. He pointed out, that the "Verrechnungssteuer" and such investments, which cannot be reclaimed by the Swiss abroad, represented a serious discouragement of this form of attachment of the Swiss abroad to their home-country.

The meeting on Friday morning was largely devoted to a discussion on the *conditions of the Old Age Insurance* scheme as applying to the Swiss abroad. The view expressed by the Swiss Mercantile Society and the Presidents Assembly of the Swiss Colony in Great Britain, that the premium of 4% is far too high was echoed by speakers from other Colonies. The Government representative regretted, that a formal change of the law to suit the needs of the Colonies would be most difficult to achieve. He pleaded for fuller recognition of the high principle of social solidarity embodied in the scheme. We were given to understand, that the Legations and Consulates could be relied on treating cases of insurance with as much understanding and consideration as possible. The upshot of the discussion would seem to be, that even now applications for joining the insurance might be acceptable, dated back to the 31st of March, and that our compatriots should not fail to explore the ample latitude open to them of deducting professional and other expenses for the purpose of arriving at a tolerable rate of premium.

The remainder of the day was filled with separate conferences for the delegates of the German, French and Italian-speaking Colonies, at which their specialised problems were discussed. In the evening the problems of the *Swiss repatriated* since the war from Germany, was once more ventilated, although much has already been done for them to the tune of about 130 million francs and much more has been promised them from the proceeds of the confiscation of German "funk-money" under the Washington agreement. Yet some of the speakers of the "Zurückgewanderten" complained bitterly and viciously about the alleged parsimony of the home-country. To an observer from England it would seem, that the incessant agitation of the "Zurückgewanderten" has actually succeeded in pushing the authorities too far along the road of reparation of losses suffered in Germany, instead of merely and properly giving assistance to the war-damaged compatriots for restarting a useful working life at home.

On Saturday Monsieur Petitpierre, our Foreign Minister, addressed the conference, assuring it of his admiration for the good work and the loyalty of the Swiss abroad, which deserved to be reciprocated in full by the home-country in protecting the interests of the Colonies wherever and however, this was possible. He alluded to pending and intended negotiations on double taxation with various countries and he noted with satisfaction, that an Anglo-Swiss Society had been started as a counterpart to the slightly older British-Swiss Society in Switzerland.

In conclusion we are glad to state, that next year the Journée will be held in the first week of September,

coinciding with the holiday period. Thus it is hoped that our Colony may again be represented by a larger delegation. This year's delegation was regrettably small, comprising only Mr. and Mrs. A. F. Suter, Miss Wenker (Leeds) and your rapporteur

Dr. H. W. EGLI.

RUTH HUGGENBERG'S RECITAL.

Wigmore Hall, June 27th.

Once more our young compatriot Ruth Huggenberg has delighted her audience with her artistry. It is most gratifying to see the number of her audiences growing with each concert — of which she has given four so far in London — the last at Wigmore Hall.

But it is even more satisfying to observe the increasing stature of this woman pianist, the deepened power of her emotion, the growing certainty of her playing. And yet she retains that admirable regard for an honest, straight-forward, almost blunt interpretation of what she plays — and the exactness and scrupulous correctness of each note as the composer put it down. To listen to her is a refreshing return to the composer's own meaning, to seriousness in a serious matter free from all bravoura effects.

Plainly Ruth Huggenberg's qualities fit her peculiarly for the interpretation of spiritual rather than of emotional music — of Bach and Mozart, rather than Brahms and Franck. Yet she succeeded admirably in the B minor Rhapsody of Brahms, the Prelude, Choral and Fugue of Franck and the Schubert Fantasy on "The Wanderer," as well as in Beethoven's F. major Sonata and first of all Bach's C minor Prelude and Fugue, Book I. We extend to Miss Huggenberg our congratulations and best wishes.

Dr. E.

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