

Journée des Suisses de l'étranger Bürgenstock, Lucerne

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JOURNEE DES SUISSES DE L'ETRANGER BUERGENSTOCK, LUCERNE, 29-30 August 1952.

This year's conference for the Swiss abroad was held on the Bürgenstock on the 29-30th of August preceded by a special meeting of the repatriated Swiss from Germany and Eastern countries. All the meetings were attended, as in previous years, by numerous representatives of various interested departments of the Federal Government and of Swiss organisations concerned with our problems. There were again about 250 representatives from Swiss colonies all over the world, but of course by far the greatest number came from the continental countries nearest to Switzerland. This did not prevent the Swiss from overseas and the small band from England to obtain a proper hearing, because a special session was reserved for them, at which nevertheless most of the other delegates were also present. Our colony was represented by Prof. Jean Inebnit (Leeds), Dr. H. W. Egli London, and Mr. and Mrs. A. F. Suter (N.S.H. London), Mr. Joseph Fries, (Unione Ticinese) London, Consul J. Huber, London, Col. A. Bon, (Swiss Benevolent Soc.)

The demands of the repatriated Swiss on the generosity of the homeland were once again the main topic of their special meeting. Although the separate character of this problem was emphasized by holding this meeting at Lucerne on the day preceeding the conference proper, nevertheless the bitter complaints of the repatriated Swiss claimed the major share of attention in the press reports on the conference.

The fate of those unfortunate compatriots, who have been forced to abandon their homesteads and businesses in Germany, the countries behind the Iron curtain and so on, after a life time of hard work, can of course not be regarded as a matter of indifference to those of us who remained abroad. The repatriated Swiss have had to wait far too long for a satisfactory solution of their problem, and in the meantime they have not been treated too generously. At last a very respectable sum of 121.6 million of swiss francs has been made available for the benefit of the repatriated and other Swiss who have suffered severe war losses. It was proposed by Dr. Rothmund of the Department of Justice and Police that this sum should be devoted to a form of "higher social assistance" available to the point of enabling the recipients to make an adequate living, if still young enough to work, and to spend their old age in sufficient security.

Nevertheless most speakers of the repatriated Swiss had nothing but scorn to pour over this proposal. Switzerland was castigated as niggardly, selfish and partly responsible for the losses suffered by our compatriots under the Nazi regime. These ill-tempered outbursts led Dr. Egli to register a protest declaring that the Swiss in England could not support demands for war damage compensation going beyond a generous assistance in all cases of real need. He pleaded that the offer of 121.6 million francs should be accepted with gratitude, keeping open the possibility of additional funds being made available if necessary, but that further claims for restitution of war losses had no legal or moral validity and should be dropped once and for all. A resolution of the whole conference was passed, expressing its gratitude for the offer and leaving it open to the various organisations to formulate an additional claim in final settlement.

A proposal from the *Swiss colony in Belgium*, formulated by Albert Metzger, of Charleroi, suggesting the collection of the necessary funds for full *war damage compensation* by a very small levy on Swiss imports from the respective countries, aroused considerable interest and support from some other colonies, without however being adopted by the conference as a whole. Another proposal, elaborated by a committee of repatriated Swiss in conjunction with some other organisations under the chairmanship of Mr. Urs Feer, aims at the establishment of a central fund for future war damage insurance of Swiss abroad on the basis of personal premiums and a Government guarantee. More detailed proposals will be worked out, but so far the suggestion has received a mixed reception, its practicability being doubted in some of the colonies. Still, the question is no doubt deserving of further and more careful consideration.

OUR PARTICULAR PROBLEMS.

At the special session for the Swiss from Great Britain and overseas Dr. Egli recalled the suggestions and appeals put forward at previous conferences in the name of our colony. Last Year's appeal to all Swiss firms to place Swiss nationals in their branches and representations abroad wherever possible has not had any visible effect. On the contrary at least two further cases of the replacement of Swiss managers by British successors are known. Another resolution put forward by our Presidents' Assembly pleading for increased attention to our problems of *double taxation and the transfer of pensions* has met with a much more gratifying reception on the part of our authorities, encouraging the hope of satisfactory solutions apart from the unfortunate "Verrechnungssteuer". Dr. Egli also recalled previous suggestions for enabling the Swiss abroad to participate in the *Old Age Insurance Scheme* by paying a fixed premium covering the full commercial insurance risk plus a small social contribution for the poorer insured classes.

Our speaker also pleaded once again for a more definite and clear ruling regarding the *call-up of Swiss abroad*, bearing in mind the relative importance of their military value as against the services they can render Switzerland by remaining in their positions abroad, and also as against the loss of employment, of business interests and the hardships to their families if they are without their breadwinner during an emergency.

Finally he brought up the very special problem of the *thousands of Swiss girls and young men who*



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come here every year with inadequate contacts or resources to make the best use of their precious time spent in this country. The speaker paid a warm tribute to the work performed by Miss Wolfer as welfare officer, he expressed the hope that a hostel may soon be established by the same societies responsible for the social secretariat, and he put in a strong final plea for supporting the impending collection to be made for the establishment of a social Swiss *Youth Centre* in the heart of the metropolis. Prof. Inebnit supported this plea most effectively, stressing that the colony was motivated solely by its concern for the best interests of the young visitors as well as the homeland. Mr. Fries as well as Prof. Inebnit joined some speakers from other colonies in regretting that not all young Swiss who go abroad are inspired by the sense of responsibility and mission on behalf of Switzerland, which counts for so much in holding high the world's esteem for our home country.

Regarding the old bone of contention the *military tax* Prof. Inebnit expressed the view that there are other and more efficient ways for the Swiss abroad to serve their country than merely paying their military tax. He regretted that owing to their duty to collect tax payments due, our Consulates and Legations are so often regarded with less than the complete trust due to them.

In the general debate Dr. Zschokke stressed the old demand to free the Swiss abroad from the military tax altogether. Dr. Egli intervened to make it quite clear that by no means all Swiss abroad share this

view, reminding the meeting that the Presidents' Assembly of our colony had repeatedly expressed in the past the view that the principle of the military tax in place of military service was sound, their only concern being for reforming the tax according to modern conceptions.

At the final session Mr. P. Dürrenmatt, editor of the *Basler Nachrichten* and Prof. J. Freymond of Lausanne spoke at length and most interestingly on the present position of neutral Switzerland in the world of our time. The Lucerne branch of the NSH organised a delightful evening's entertainment for the conference, with entralling performances by a group of Yodlers, dancers, singers and *Fahnenschwinger* from Unterwalden. The *Journée des Suisses de l'Etranger* found a dignified and moving end on the *Rütli*, where the President of our Confederation, Mr. Kobelt, the President of the Commission des Suisses à l'Etranger and of the whole Conference, Dr. H. P. Zschokke, as well as our Mr. A. F. Suter, former President of the London Group of the NSH, spoke on the importance of the Swiss abroad for the homeland.

Dr. E.

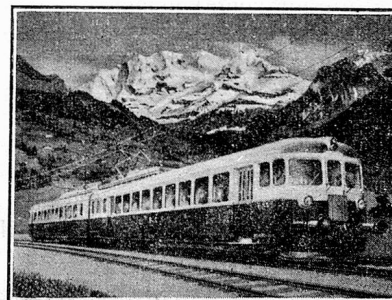
LONDON SWISS PHILATELIC SOCIETY.

The new season opened on September 26th when the main part of the business of the evening was a very successful auction. Under the aegis of Mr. M. Waloff over eighty lots came under the hammer. Two new members were elected.

The next meeting, on October 31st, is a new departure. As a change from the monastic "male-ness" of the usual meeting it has been arranged to have a *Ladies Night* when members of the softer sex will be especially welcome. The star guest of the evening is Miss Rose Titford, Secretary of the Royal Philatelic Society, who will be showing some of the gems from her collection.

W.B.H.

JIG-SAW PUZZLE OF A SWISS ELECTRIC TRAIN.



Messrs. G. J. Hayter & Co., Ltd, Bournemouth, have recently produced a jig-saw puzzle showing a beautiful picture in four colour print of the "Blue Arrow" (rail-car of the Bern-Loetschberg-Simplon Railway) with the Jungfrau mountain as a background. This puzzle is obtainable in two sizes:—

8½" × 6½" containing 80 pieces @ 4/3d each

12" × 10" containing 175 pieces @ 8/6 each

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