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ADDRESS BY FEDERAL COUNCILLOR WILLY SPUEHLER

at the Assembly of the Swiss Abroad

Sion, 25th August 1962

The Federal Councillor began by expressing his pleasure at attending for the first time an Assembly of the Swiss abroad. He conveyed the Federal Council's greetings and assured the audience of its lively interest in the joys and sorrows of the Swiss in foreign lands. He pointed out the merits of the Assembly at which the Swiss abroad had a chance to air their grievances and to discuss vital problems. He thanked the New Helvetic Society for creating this annual gathering, but above all he thanked the Swiss abroad for their loyalty to the homeland, specially those who, year after year, spent hours of voluntary work in the interests of their fellow countrymen. He painted a clear picture of the "Auslandschweizer" and said that Gottfried Keller's famous words suited us better than anybody else "Honour every man's country, but love your own".

In the Assembly the Federal Councillor saw a chance to establish a common point of view towards the authorities and the Swiss at home. It provided an opportunity to present the main problems to the authorities. He felt one could only really value the Swiss activities in the various colonies once one had been with them, and he considered himself privileged to have visited several countries during recent years.

Next he dealt with the wish for a new article in the Constitution which he said was understandable and had something fascinating in it. He could not yet state the Federal Council's attitude, but assured us that the question would be studied with benevolence. Any revision of the Constitution was a difficult and slow process in our country and it was essential not to jeopardize the final issue by haste or impatience.

The speaker then turned to the Solidarity Fund and the fact that Parliament had agreed to a guarantee *unanimously* in both Councils. He hoped that events in Algeria, the Congo and Egypt would serve as a warning to all Swiss abroad and encourage them to participate.

A new page in the history of the Swiss abroad, Federal Councillor Spühler continued, had been turned with the Swiss participation in assisting the less developed countries. It was a wise decision that Parliament had agreed to a credit of sixty million francs for technical assistance. A further nine million francs had been granted to foreign students at Swiss universities, sixty per cent of which to students from under-developed countries. Much help in the field was being given by Swiss abroad who had the trust of the inhabitants in the economically less advanced countries. Their experience and expert knowledge of local conditions would be a great asset.

The next subject the Federal Councillor touched upon was European integration in which the Swiss abroad, specially in Europe, took a lively interest. The Swiss who returned to his country after having lived abroad found many changes. The economic boom of the last

few years had left its marks, more factories, denser traffic, new roads, feverish building. Let us rejoice at the general well-being, Mr. Spühler said, but we must husband our resources, specially our precious ground. We would want to maintain a healthy agriculture, keep the lakes and waters clean and refrain from short-term planning which could be detrimental to our future development.

The problem of the 600,000 foreign workers, the Federal Councillor said, deserved special mention. It should neither be belittled nor over-dramatised. Our foreign trade, our tourist industry and last but not least our foreign workers were an indication that our country was already highly integrated. In the discussions with the Common Market it was not only a question of keeping the last decisive word with the people, the sovereign in our country, but even more that of the relation between the citizen and the state. The spiritual attitude towards the Confederation, the Canton and the Commune was an essential ingredient of our democracy and must be preserved.

The Federal Councillor concluded by appealing to the Swiss at home and abroad to co-operate in the solution of these many problems by doing our duty, each in his own place, with a vigilant mind and a warm heart, confident that our small country had its special place also in the new Europe and the new world. He ended by wishing us a happy return, convinced that our fellow-countrymen at home were willing to remain equal to the tasks of the future, so that coming generations would still be able to say with Goethe "Happy am I to know a country like Switzerland for there I always have a refuge".

Mariann.

SWISS MERCANTILE SOCIETY

MONTHLY MEETING

AT

SWISS HOUSE, 35 Fitzroy Square, W.1

ON

Wednesday, 3rd October 1962, at 7.15 p.m.

followed by talk in English (illustrated by slides)

on

"La Future Exposition Nationale Suisse"

by

Monsieur E. HENRY, Directeur Administrative of the
Swiss National Exhibition 1964

Members and Friends cordially invited