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EDITED BY MRS. MARIANN MEIER WITH THE CO-OPERATION OF MEMBERS OF THE SWISS COLONY IN GREAT BRITAIN

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EXPO 1964

LAUSANNE — ACTING “CAPITAL OF SWITZERLAND”

To Lausanne has fallen the honour this year of holding the Swiss National Exhibition which takes place every twenty-five years. It is an opportunity for the Swiss to take stock of themselves, to review the past and preview the future, and since the exhibition becomes a focus of Swiss national self-awareness, it imparts to the town where it is held something of the character of a capital. Not that such a role is entirely alien to Lausanne. It is, of course, the capital of the Canton of Vaud, the largest Canton in French-speaking Switzerland, and, centrally situated as it is, the people of Lausanne like to think of their town as the metropolis of Western Switzerland, in which matter they are at odds with the people of Geneva which is larger, more international, but less central. Something of capital status is also conferred upon Lausanne by the presence there of the Federal Tribunal, which is a compensation for the fact that the legislative and executive powers are at Berne in German-speaking Switzerland.

The capital of the Canton of Vaud is now one of the largest towns in Switzerland, ranking in fifth place with its population of about 136,000. Lausanne has thus joined the ranks of the large cities and its female citizens have not been slow to add to their native charm a becoming touch of metropolitan chic. There is a certain cosmopolitan air about its streets. The town stands at the point where the route from the Rhineland (the coal house of Europe) to the busy Italian centres of Piedmont and Lombardy (the sun parlour of Europe) is intersected by the routes from Paris and the Channel and from the Lower Rhone to the Alpine regions and their playgrounds, and this may have something to do with its cosmopolitanism. But strongest amongst its international traits is that conferred by its position in the centre of a holiday paradise, girded with the Jura hills on one side and the Alps on the other and cradled between the lakes along the foot of the Jura, which empty into the North sea, and Lake Geneva, whose waters eventually find their way to the Mediterranean. Leisure and its pursuits, however, are not the only attraction that brings people here from every clime. Lausanne and its surrounding districts are one of those regions where the Swiss genius for education has brought into being a number of private schools and colleges whose reputation extends far beyond the frontiers of Europe. Heart and centre of Lausanne's intellectual life is the University to which is attached an Institute of Technology. The Uni-

versity of Lausanne is particularly favoured by students from overseas French-speaking territories, but German students, particularly those reading for a degree in law, also study for a term or two in the capital of the Vaud. It is no exaggeration to say, therefore, that Lausanne's influence extends far and wide.

Yet Lausanne is one of the few towns that still clearly show their origins in farming and viticulture. Moreover, the Canton of Vaud is one of the latecomers to the Swiss Confederation. Vaud has indeed been a member of the Confederation since 1536, but it became an independent Canton only in 1903. It was thus at a late date that Lausanne rose to the rank of capital. It is not one of those cantonal capitals which laboriously acquired a subject territory over the centuries and then bestowed their name upon it. This is why, besides its metropolitan features, Lausanne still has some of the characteristics of a small town. It also shares the fate of most other towns which expanded rapidly in the nineteenth century. Its growth was undisciplined, and today it forms the core of a large agglomeration with villages strewn round its edges. In the east there is the residential area of Pully, which has preserved the wine-growing village at its centre, and the quaint little town of Lutry; in the west is Prilly forming a link with the industrial suburb of Renens. It is precisely in the immediate neighbourhood of the Swiss National Exhibition that people have begun to see how necessary it is, in a place so richly endowed with scenic beauty, to place a curb on uncontrolled building activity. The need for town and country planning is now generally realized, and this augurs well for the future when the thinly populated northern parts of the sprawling municipality are developed.

Northern Lausanne occupies a very characteristic position on a hill-side which is much indented by gullies. The deep valley of the Flon stream, which actually cuts the heart of the town in two, has, in its lower reaches, acquired particular importance for the National Exhibition. Here the deep gash it forms in the landscape has been softened by gentle slopes. The valley opens pleasantly into the flat, park-like stretches of shoreland near Vidy with its view of the lake and the distant Alps. It would have been difficult to find a more gracious entrance to the Exhibition site. Under the surface of the brand-new motorway which encloses the Exhibition site lies the

Roman settlement of Lousonna, some of whose relics are preserved in the nearby museum. Farther to the east we reach the port of Ouchy which is dominated by an ancient tower. Apart from the amenities of its large restaurants, Ouchy also boasts some charming fisherman's taverns and attractive boathouses. Strolling along the famous promenade, we come to the shady part of Denantou where the immemorial trees stand like giants.

But Lausanne's history by the shore of the lake did not proceed at the same brisk pace at which we step out along the promenade! Older still than the lakeside settlement living under the protection of Rome was the fortified place the Helvetians erected here. In the troubled times that returned with the beginning of the great migrations in the third and fourth century of our era, the lake shore was abandoned again in favour of the more easily defended position on the hill-side. A new city was created here between 585 and 594 on the initiative of Bishop Marius (Saint-Maire) resident at Avenches (Aventicum), which formed the capital of Helvetia at that time, but was subsequently destroyed. Lausanne thus acquired new importance. The present Cité, the old ecclesiastical town, began to take shape. In close succession were built Saint-Maire Castle, the old Academy, the Evêché and the splendid Early Gothic Cathedral (now Protestant), the most notable of its kind in Switzerland and also the only church in Europe from whose tower a watchman calls the hour every night between 10 p.m. and 2 a.m.! It was here that Rudolf of Habsburg was made emperor on 20th October 1275 by Pope Gregory X. Lausanne later became a free imperial city.

Round the Cité quarter of Lausanne, where romantic nooks alternate with spacious architecture, the suburbs gradually clustered. The roofed Escaliers du Marché, the wooden steps down to the market-place, bring us to the Place de la Palud with its fountain and the imposing old Town Hall. Here every Wednesday and Saturday is held the colourful market which spills over as far as the Place de la Riponne in the north and the rue du Bourg in the south. The latter runs through the secular Old Town on the lakeward side of the Flon valley and is the most important shopping street. We shall spare a moment to peep into the Chenau du Bourg, the best preserved of the old streets with its fine second-hand bookshops, before we visit the old Church St. François which has given its name to the main square flanked by banks and the post office, or stroll on to the large park of Mont Repos farther to the west. Here is the Museum of Old Lausanne, which is also the headquarters of the International Olympic Committee, and the Federal Tribunal with its imposing front in neoclassical style.

But in recent years Lausanne has also acquired various modern buildings like "Les Cèdres". Moreover, the boldly designed Assembly Hall in the Place du Milan and the datelessly modern block of offices in the chemin Mossier also show that time does not stand still in Lausanne.

But Lausanne, old and new, can best be viewed from the "Signal de Lausanne" to the north of the Cité on the edge of Sauvabelin Wood. Here nothing obstructs the eye as it ranges over the last miles of the Central Plain and the waters of Lake Geneva, sweeping from the Alps of the Vaud to those of the Valais and Savoy, and on to the Geneva gap and to the heights of the Jura. Undoubtedly one of the finest and most rewarding vantage-points in Switzerland!

[S.N.T.O.]

GOODWILL ACTION IN FAVOUR OF THE TYPHOID VICTIMS OF ZERMATT

In a report in "The Times" on 17th April, we read that the victims of the typhoid epidemic at Zermatt have been compensated as follows:

"A total of 76 Britons are among the 434 victims of the Zermatt typhoid epidemic in March last year who share 856,000 Swiss francs (£71,333) in compensation being paid by the Swiss Government, the Valais Canton and the Zermatt municipality — each contributing one-third.

"This was announced in Berne today by Dr. Max Tresch, head of the Swiss compensation committee, who said that 99.6 per cent of the claims, including those made in respect of the three fatalities, had been settled amicably out of court. If this had not been achieved, there would have been at least 150 court cases, he added. Some of the victims had taken nine months to recuperate, but nobody had been permanently incapacitated. About two per cent of claimants had reserved the right to seek further compensation if any disability were later to appear.

"All victims — they include 13 Americans, 42 Germans, 39 French, 34 Italians, 10 Austrians and 211 Swiss — were offered three weeks' free holiday anywhere in Switzerland. About 300 have so far taken advantage of this and others are expected to come this year."

To this should be added that hotel staff who had lost their jobs through the epidemic and had difficulties subsequently in getting new employment, received compensation amounting to over Fr.42,000.— so far.

SPRING FESTIVAL OF ZURICH

On 19th and 20th April, Zurich celebrated its traditional spring festival, the "Sechseläuten". On Sunday, the popular children's procession took place, followed by the festival proper on Monday, ending in the burning of the effigy, the "Boegg", on the old Tonhalleplatz. For the first time a mounted group of the Zurich Municipal Police opened the Guilds' procession.

In connection with the introduction of the Trident aircraft between London and Zurich, a number of British business people who had taken part in the British Fair in Zurich last autumn were invited to the "Sechseläuten" by the "Zimmerleute" Guild. Among them was the former Lord Mayor of London, Sir Ralph Perring.

[A.T.S.]

SWISS INDUSTRIES FAIR A GREAT SUCCESS

The forty-eighth Swiss Industries Fair was held in Basle for eleven days in April. Final figures are not yet available, but it is estimated that 865,000 people visited the fair. Though this figure may be slightly lower than last year, the show was nevertheless a considerable success. From abroad, however, there were more visitors — 15,500 as against 11,437 last year. The Industries Fair has once again proved its value in bringing together, as it were, supply and demand. It is not only a market for Swiss Industry, but also a shop window, a centre of information for the buyer, which he finds nowhere else. A new building has been added, but the Director of the Fair, Dr. H. Hauswirth, stated in an interview for the "Basler Nachrichten" on the eve of this year's opening that even on completion of the new hall, next year's fair and that of 1966 would be fully occupied by exhibitors.