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The Swiss Observer

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The Official Organ of the Swiss Colony in Great Britain

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THE SWISS ABROAD MEET IN LAUSANNE

When the President of the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad and Chairman of the Commission, Dr. G. Schürch, welcomed some six hundred and more fellow countrymen to the 42nd Assembly on 28th August, he said our annual rally was held this time "on the fringe of the Swiss National Exhibition". And this indeed characterised this year's Assembly. On one hand, the theme "Switzerland and the Developing Countries — seen through the Eyes of the Swiss Abroad" was very much connected with the EXPO, and the contribution made in short speeches by Swiss from many parts of the world was of a high standard. On the other hand, though attendance was considerably higher than in other years, interest in the actual deliberations at the plenary sessions was not as concentrated and as lively as usual. In fact, the Municipal Theatre, where the plenary sessions were held, was not as full as the large number of registered participants would suggest — the attraction of the EXPO was too great.

Nevertheless, much work was done. Already on Thursday, 27th August, the Council of the Solidarity Fund, the Executive Committee of the Commission of the Swiss Abroad, and the Foundation for the Swiss Abroad met in separate meetings.

On Friday, 28th August, the "Parliament of the Swiss Abroad", the Commission (A.S.K.), met at the Hôtel de Ville for an all-day meeting. There were representatives from many parts of the world, as well as members from inside Switzerland. The Swiss Community in Great Britain was represented by Dr. H. B. Knuchel for the Midlands and the North and myself for London and the South. Details of the business transacted will follow later.

After a press conference and the delegates' meeting of the Solidarity Fund, the General Assembly was opened in the evening. After an introductory speech by the President Dr. Schürch, Monsieur Théo Chopard gave the main address of the evening as Central President of the New Helvetic Society. He was followed by Dr. N. Stoll, Paris, on the creation of Groups for the Study of Swiss problems. The remainder of the evening was given up to separate meetings on general problems, Old Age and Invalidity Insurance, short wave service, especially for Swiss overseas.

On Saturday morning, the first talk was by Dr. H. J. Halbheer, director of the Secretariat. He described the many varied aspects of the work of the Organisation and then took leave officially after six years of devoted service. He mentioned three things which he considered as particu-

larly important, the representation of Switzerland abroad, the Solidarity Fund and the importance of keeping the Secretariat a private organisation. When the warm applause had died down, Dr. L. Zellweger spoke on the question of permission to purchase land in Switzerland, and the Secretary-General Monsieur R. Bovey on the constitutional article for the Swiss abroad; both subjects will be referred to later.

The chief subject of the Assembly "Switzerland and the Developing Countries" was ably introduced by Ambassador Dr. A. Lindt, Delegate for Technical Co-operation of the Federal Political Department. He was followed by Dr. C. F. Ducommun, Managing Director of the PTT. The President of the Solidarity Fund, Dr. E. R. Froelich, then gave a talk on the state of the fund.

During lunch, the Churches held special meetings for the Protestants and the Roman Catholics, followed by a joint luncheon.

At the EXPO Studio of the Swiss Broadcasting Corporation, the midday broadcast on that day was devoted to Swiss abroad, and I had the honour of being chosen as one of several representatives to take part in it. After lovely weather the first two days, a spectacular thunderstorm broke after lunch which, however, did not reduce the interest shown in the short talks on the main theme given by Swiss living in other countries, mainly in those "en voie de développement". These, as well as the main address by Federal Councillor Wahlen, will be referred to later. The latter spoke in such an absorbing way that nobody was aware that his speech lasted for 55 minutes.

Apart from the Federal Councillor, the Vice-President of the Swiss Parliament, National Councillor Kurmann was present, as well as the President of the Council of States, Ständerat Danioth, who gave a spirited address at the banquet in the evening. Also amongst the guests of honour were Monsieur L. Guisan, President of the Council of State of the Canton of Vaud and Monsieur A. Vogelsang, President of the Grand Council of the Canton of Vaud. The Municipal Authorities, the Federal Political Department and other governmental bodies were represented, as well as the management of the EXPO who, incidentally had invited the members of the Commission to a luncheon on Friday, a welcome break in their day's labours. Amongst the Ambassadors and Consuls from many parts of the globe were Monsieur and Madame von Fischer and Consul and Madame E. Tosio, also Consul and Madame E. Ribi, now in Zagreb.

The government of the Canton, the Municipality of Lausanne and the management of the EXPO gave a reception prior to the banquet at the spacious Palais de Beaulieu on Saturday evening. It was a pleasant evening, enriched by songs presented by the "Chanson de Lausanne", by folkloristic music performed by a Swiss family from Canada and by short, lively speeches including the official farewell by the President. Dancing went on until well past midnight, though only a fraction of the nearly 700 people who had sat down to dinner, remained to the end, for the next day brought the colourful procession of the costumes, which meant an early rise.

After the rain of the day before, Sunday was again sunny and warm, though luckily not too hot for participants and spectators. For three hours we were able to watch (from specially reserved seats) 4,800 people in colourful costumes from each Canton pass on their way to the EXPO. The afternoon and the next day were reserved for a visit to the National Exhibition, where there was a special meeting point at the Restaurant "Drei Eidgenossen".

And so the 42nd Assembly of the Swiss Abroad passed within the colourful frame of the EXPO and the Federal Costume Festival, an occasion not easily forgotten and a memorable event in a busy year.

Mariann.

DIE SCHWEIZ — HEUTE

A new book for young Swiss in and out of Switzerland

The Secretariat for the Swiss Abroad of the New Helvetic Society has published a new book in German of great interest to the young Swiss living outside their homeland. It contains articles by experts, covering history and geography, present conditions in all spheres of life and important problems of the future. It has been edited by Leonhard Rösli, a competent young man in charge of youth questions at the Secretariat. Karl Mannhart is responsible for the lay-out. The volume of 240 pages is attractively got up in red linen (21 x 21 cm.), illustrated with 69 photos, 4 colour plates, 23 drawings and charts. It is published by Sauerländer, Aarau and costs only Fr.10.—.

The reader is fascinated by the bright and forthright way in which old and familiar matter has been presented, and impressed by the intelligent manner in which every aspect of our country has been dealt with.

Prominent Swiss have contributed, such as Dr. phil. H. Bernhard on the Country and its People, Dr. phil. U. Im Hof on Switzerland in the Past, Prof. Dr. oec. publ. I. Niehans on National Economy, Dr. iur. Alice Lüscher on legal questions and Divisional Commander Dr. iur. A. Ernst on defence. There are articles on Swiss art, language, Literature, drama, film and contemporary music. (A Swiss abroad, Dr. phil. A. Briner wrote the latter.) Two members of the Secretariat are responsible for articles, the editor of the book wrote on Swiss politics and the Director of the Secretariat, Dr. iur. H. J. Halbheer, on the Swiss abroad.

The book is excellent value and may be warmly recommended to young and old people alike. An edition in French is being prepared.

Please apply to Secretariat of the Swiss Abroad, Alpenstrasse 26, Berne.

THREE CONFERENCES — THREE FEDERAL COUNCILLORS

On Monday, 31st August, the President of the Swiss Confederation, Federal Councillor L. von Moos, opened the Third Conference on the **Peaceful Use of Atomic Energy** held in Geneva from 31st August to 9th September. The main object of the Conference was to take stock of the present state of progress in the use of atomic energy for the production of power. Eleven large reactors for non-military purposes exist at present in the whole world, and thirty are being built. In addition more than two hundred research reactors exist. Federal Councillor von Moos referred to the fact that since the last Conferences much progress had been made, and the use of atomic energy had now left the phase of research and entered that of economic realisation on a large scale. The powers with which the Creator had imbued the earth were destined to be of benefit to mankind, and all those concerned with it should co-operate in this sense for the good of all nations.

On 5th September, the **Swiss Federation of Bankers** met at Villars s/Ollon for their General Meeting. Amongst the over four hundred guests was Federal Councillor R. Bonvin who addressed the gathering on the financial and economic boom policy of Switzerland. He said that the result of the measures taken was generally positive. The inflationary pressure from foreign investments had decreased. The limiting of credit and the regulating of new issues seem to have had good results. Most opposition had been shown to the building restrictions, but it was too early yet to judge.

Federal Councillor Bonvin then referred to the construction of the national highways which still caused a great many worries. The cost of construction was mounting, partly also on account of rising land prices. He said the increased price of petrol would not deter a foreign tourist — Switzerland's petrol was still amongst the cheapest in Europe — but rumours that the tourist trade was no longer competitive would certainly influence would-be visitors.

On the other hand, land speculation except where road construction was concerned had largely been halted or at least normalised, even though no drastic reductions in prices had taken place yet.

Housing was another problem which created difficulties. The programme of the Federal Council plans five thousand flats per annum and generous grants of credit for mortgages.

The federal authorities, said Federal Councillor Bonvin, were trying to tighten the reins on expenditure by the state, and they urge Cantons and Communes to do likewise.

A Commission and two sub-commissions are at present examining proposals for encouraging savings. A report is expected in the autumn. In this connection, the question of the withholding tax and the savings book privilege was to be re-examined.

After referring to the "Couponsteuer" which brought in 85 to 90 million francs a year, and to the revised competences of the issuing bank which should remove the causes of over-expansion in the monetary field, the speaker concluded by assuring the banks that their confidence and co-operation would at all times be necessary.

On 8th September, Federal Councillor H. P. Tschudi, welcomed the delegates to the **Nineteenth International Congress of Medical History** in Basle. Switzerland, he said, had produced the fascinating personality of Para-