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The Swiss Observer

FOUNDED IN 1919 BY PAUL F. BOEHRINGER.

The Official Organ of the Swiss Colony in Great Britain

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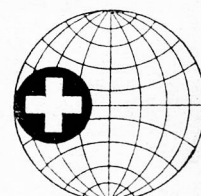
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FRIDAY, 13th MAY 1966

1966 THE YEAR OF "FIFTH SWITZERLAND"

GOLDEN JUBILEE OF THE ORGANISATION OF THE SWISS ABROAD

BASLE, 23rd APRIL 1966



Scarcely to years ago the Nouvelle Société Helvétique in Switzerland celebrated its 50 years' existence as the foremost organisation devoted exclusively to the cultivation of Swiss thinking and Swiss acting in all situations in the spirit of our best national traditions, formed as it was almost on the eve of the outbreak of World War I in the image of the first Helvetic Society founded in a previous period of national and international upheavals and democratic reform. And a few weeks ago the 50th anniversary of one of its most important achievements, the beginnings of a special Organisation of the Swiss Abroad, based on a directing commission and a secretariat in Berne, was celebrated with equal pride and fervour in the place not of its birth — but where the first eight annual Conferences of the Swiss Abroad were held — in Basle.

It was there where at the invitation of the Basler Mustermesse the first Journée des Suisses de l'étranger took place in 1918 and every year after until 1925, when it started to change its place of venue annually in order to identify its roots and composition with every part of the home country. The first external group of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique was actually formed in London on the 8th of June 1916, an event which it hopes to celebrate as well in due course. From here the movement spread rapidly to other foreign capitals like Paris and Berlin and later all over the world. It was born in the anxious days of the first World War — anxious for the neutral Swiss in war smitten countries as well as at home. It was inspired, encouraged, nurtured and finally organised by the same man, Gonzague de Reynold, who was the founding father of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique itself a few years before. Soon after the N.S.H. groups in London, Paris and Berlin — still in 1916 — a Commission des Suisses de l'étranger was formed in Berne under Monsieur de Reynold's presidency which he retained until 1919. He handed it over to a succession of other eminent Swiss personalities, including Arnold Lätt, the first secretary of the London Group and first editor of the "Swiss Observer", down to Hans Peter Zschokke of Ciba fame, National Councillor Olivier Reverdin and these last few years Dr. Gerhard Schürch.

The organisation, to which now-a-days more than 500 N.S.H. groups and other Swiss societies in foreign countries are associated, soon required a secretariat of its own, the Auslandschweizersekretariat in Berne whose successful and beneficial work was directed also by an

almost equally brilliant succession of personalities, starting with Robert de Traz and including Eduard Zellweger, Werner Imhof, Alice Briod, Jakob Halbheer and at present Edmond Müller. A few years ago the Auslandschweizerkommission was reconstituted with a majority of elected delegates of Swiss Colonies abroad which had started to hold Presidents' Conferences when needed or formed more or less loose federations of their various societies.

The influence of this slowly built up Organisation of the Swiss Abroad, comprising the Commission, the Secretariat, the associated groups and federations abroad, the annual Journées and the monthly publication "ECHO" grew year by year, enjoys a federal subsidy and is supported by a vast number of influential friends in Switzerland and former Auslandschweizer. It is consulted now-a-days as a matter of course on all questions regarding the Swiss abroad. It has been chiefly instrumental in getting the military tax demands revised, the rights of Swiss women to retain Swiss nationality when married to foreigners or regain it in widowhood established on a liberal basis, the restrictions on the purchases of ground properties in Switzerland by non-residents rescinded in favour of the Swiss abroad, and now, to enumerate only the most outstanding of so many political successes, the inclusion of a special article in the Swiss Constitution concerning the rights and duties of the Swiss abroad already accepted by both Chambers of Parliament and soon to be finally sanctioned by referendum. It also formed the Solidaritätsfonds of the Swiss abroad for which it gained a guarantee of all its obligations from the Federal Government.

This proud record of fruitful activities and great achievements entitled the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad to an equally proud celebration of its 50th anniversary. At the invitation of the Cantonal Government of Basel-Stadt it took place on 23rd April in the Grossratssaal of the Rathaus in the presence of a hundred prominent personalities and representatives of the Auslandschweizerwerk itself. The chief guests of honour were alt Bundesrat Wahlen, Gonzague de Reynold and Madame Robert de Traz, the widow of the first Secretary of the Organisation. Most of the Cantonal Governments were represented by their presidents or prominent ministers. The Federal Political Department had six representatives of ambassadorial and ministerial rank present. Most members of the Auslandschweizerkommission attended, including from England Mrs. Mariann Meier, Dr. H. B. Knuchel and E. Bonvin.

The mother society and various N.S.H. groups abroad were represented by their presidents or former presidents, as well as the Secretariat by the present and former directors and staff. Some 16 Swiss institutions particularly supporting the movement were also represented on the highest level, including the Stiftung pro Helvetia, the University of Basle, the Verkehrszentrale, the Zentrale für Handelsförderung, the Fédération Horlogère, Swissair, the Basler Kunstverein and the Mustermesse. Finally the leading newspapers of Switzerland and the Depeschagentur did not miss the event in order to report on it.

Most delightfully the programme was opened, interspersed and concluded by accomplished performances of the Basler Bläserquintett. The Basler Regierungsrat Dr. Alfred Schaller welcomed the assembly as the town's honoured guests. Dr. Gerhard Schürch presided the meeting as President of the Auslandschweizerkommission. In a lengthy speech he thanked the hosts for the use of the Grossratssaal, all participants for their presence, all the friends of the Auslandschweizerwerk for their untiring sympathy and support, all authorities for their understanding and help, all the former and present officials of the Auslandschweizerwerk for their untiring devotion, singling out for particularly warm praises Mademoiselle Alice Briod, for many years directing secretary of the Auslandschweizerwerk, and Fräulein Rose Züllig, who has already spent a life-time in the service of the Sekretariat and is still continuing it with all her heart. The speaker sketched with pride the development of the Organisation and spoke with emotion of the undying merits of the founder Gonzague de Reynold, the first Secretary Robert de Traz and their deserving successors, as well as of the initiators of the associated groups abroad.

The President of the National Council, Pierre Graber, spoke of the important role and the invaluable patriotic loyalty of the Swiss abroad, in the name of whom our delegate to the Commission, Mrs. Mariann Meier, had the honour of replying. She did this with the dignity, sincerity, modesty and consummate skill which we have learned to admire in her devoted work for the Colony and the homeland. She spoke thoughtfully of the problems of the "fünfte Schweiz" and pledged with pride our continuing determination to further the image of Switzerland in every way and on all occasions.

After a musical interval the Central President of the N.S.H. Oskar Reck and two of his predecessors in this high office, Théo Chopard and Guido Calgari, continued the programme of distinguished oratory, which was then concluded by Andri Bisaz in Romansch, addressing himself to the young Swiss abroad, and the reading of the "Prière des 22 louables cantons". The company then adjourned to attend a sumptuous Dinner at the Mustermesse as guests of the Director, Dr. Hermann Hauswirth. He welcomed them with appreciative compliments to the Swiss abroad and their friends and helpers in Switzerland, on whose behalf Dr. Hans Peter Zschokke, a former President of the Auslandschweizerkommission responded humoursously. He ended with the inspiring appeal to all concerned to "help projecting the cultural image of Switzerland all over the world". Summaries and excerpts of the most interesting speeches at the jubilee meeting will be given in later issues of the "Swiss Observer".

E.

FEDERAL ACCOUNTS AND STATISTICS

On 25th April, the Federal Council published the Confederation's accounts for 1965. The full accounts ended with a surplus of 448 million francs, 116m. less than the previous year. The income and expenditure account showed the smallest surplus for thirteen years, revenue standing at 4,952 and expenditure at 4,920 milliard francs. For the first time, too, the budget had been exceeded by a relatively small amount only. More than half of the Confederation's revenue came from taxes (2,610 milliard). Import customs duties accounted for 1,800 million francs. On the expenditure side, nearly a quarter went on subsidies of all kinds.

The total federal staff numbered 26,523 during 1965, nearly half under the Military Department. Personnel cost amounted to 532m. francs.

3,070 applications were made for the export risk guarantee, covering a total of 843.3m. francs. The Federal Department of Justice and Police dealt with 448 complaints made to the Federal Council. The Federal Office of Works (*Baudirektion*) looked after 10,100 buildings (total value 1.3 milliard francs). In addition, it is in charge of 950 renovations and extensions.

The Federal Mint produced 70.4 million coins for the Federal Treasury. In addition, 18m. bronze coins were minted for Syria and 10m. aluminium coins for Israel. Paper consumption in the federal administration amounted to a new record of 2000 metric tons. The number of office machines has increased to 27,426.

The number of countries with which Switzerland had diplomatic and consular relations, remained almost stationary at 108. There were 71 Swiss Embassies, two Delegations (Berlin and OECD in Paris), one Observer at UNO in New York and one in Geneva, one Mission with EEC in Brussels, 40 Consulates General, 54 Consulates and one Vice-Consulate. The number of international officials and members of staff in interstate organisations stood at 6,900 in 1965, 1,700 of whom were Swiss. This is 400 more than in 1964. The number of foreign diplomatic representations accredited in Switzerland increased to 90 with five new States (Mongolia and four in Africa) establishing Embassies.

[A.T.S.]

SWISS INDUSTRIES FAIR

The Swiss Industries Fair in Basle (16th to 26th April) showed a record attendance. For the first time in the fifty years of its history, the million mark was surpassed. Amongst the 290,000 visitors who attended the Fair at the second week-end, were the members of the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad and the distinguished guests who attended the Golden Jubilee in Basle, which had been organised by the Government of Basle and the Management of the Swiss Industries' Fair.

Two Federal Councillors, President Schaffner and Federal Councillor Tschudi represented the Government on the "Official Day", and a number of well-known personalities attended the *Ehrenabend* at the beautiful baroque mansion, the "Wenkenhof" at Riehen. It had been put at the disposal of the Basle Government by the owners, Mr. and Mrs. A. Clavel-Respinger. Hunting horn choruses and riding demonstrations in the extensive floodlit park of the estate added to the charm of the Golden Jubilee party.

A.T.S. and "Basler Nachrichten".