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1966 THE YEAR OF "FIFTH SWITZERLAND"

SWISS ELECTORATE ACCEPTS CONSTITUTIONAL ARTICLE FOR THE SWISS ABROAD

It has taken several years of preparation, of discussion and negotiation until a draft proposal was ready for a Constitutional Article for the Swiss Abroad. And now this, the year specially dedicated to the Swiss Abroad, the year of "Fifth Switzerland", has brought the crowning of these efforts. Both Federal Chambers accepted the Government's proposed version, and every effort was made to make the Swiss electorate realise the importance of the Swiss nationals living abroad.

The voting took place on 15th and 16th October. Ten days before, a Committee of Patrons appealed to the Swiss people to support the proposed Article which would enable the Confederation to further co-operation between the Swiss at home and those abroad and to work out the necessary regulations regarding rights and duties of the *Auslandschweizer*. The appeal further stated that their historic, political, cultural and economic importance justified such a step, and that it would help towards improving the Swiss image in the world. The appeal ended with the following words: "The undersigned recommend acceptance of the Article 45 bis for the Swiss Abroad to the electorate, asking it to do this with a strong and convincing "Yes" on 16th October. With this we repay a debt of gratitude, and our citizens abroad will be grateful for this attitude beneficial to the whole country."

The appeal was signed by the President, former Federal Councillor Prof. Dr. F. T. Wahlen, and the Vice-Presidents, former Federal Councillors Dr. M. Petitpierre and Dr. G. Lepori, followed by the Presidents of the two Federal Chambers and thirty men and women from Swiss public life.

As far as the writer knows, all the political Parties in Switzerland recommended acceptance of the Article, and notable articles appeared in many papers and periodicals. Special programmes and panel discussions were transmitted on radio and television, and a poster "Fifth Switzerland deserves our Vote" appeared in strategic places.

The last and probably the most important event organised by the Secretariat for the Swiss Abroad in Berne, took place at the *Rathaus* in Zurich on 8th October. Federal Councillor W. Spuehler referred to the

importance of the Swiss colonies abroad, especially in the economic field. A number of personalities from industry, finance and trade praised the activities of their compatriots outside Switzerland, and the President of the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad, Dr. Gerhart Schuerch, gave an extensive survey of the possibilities for strengthening the ties between the mother country and its citizens living away from home. He advocated better information in order to interest the *Auslandschweizer* in the happenings at home and to enrol him for active responsibility.

The Director of the Secretariat in Berne, Dr. E. Mueller, referred to the Exhibition "Fifth Switzerland" planned for 1969 which should indicate the future structure of the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad and form the basis for an information and documentation centre.

The meeting was attended by the former Federal Councillor Dr. M. Petitpierre, members of the Federal Parliament and political personalities from the town and Canton of Zurich.

On 16th October, the Swiss electorate went to the poll and accepted the Article for the Swiss Abroad by 490,992 to 230,415 votes. As this report was written, no details had been received. They will be published in the next issue.

(Information mainly received by courtesy of Agence Télégraphique Suisse.)

A TELEGRAM OF THANKS

On behalf of our Colony the following telegram (translated) was sent to the President of the Confederation, Federal Councillor Hans Schaffner on 19th October:

"The Federation of Swiss Societies in the United Kingdom comprising all Swiss societies and institutions desires to convey to the Federal Council, Parliament and the home-country as a whole the sincere gratitude of the Swiss Colony in Great Britain for the elaboration and acceptance of a special Article in the Constitution concerning the Swiss abroad stop We regard it above all as a pronouncement of confidence and solidarity of which our Colony hopes to prove itself worthy at all times stop Signed Hans W. Egli, President."

