

1966 the year of "Fifth Switzerland" [to be continued]

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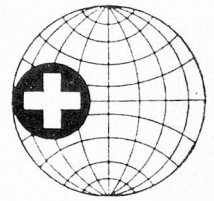
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1966 THE YEAR OF "FIFTH SWITZERLAND"

THE STATE OF THE SWISS COLONY AND THE SWISS "PRESENCE" IN THE UNITED KINGDOM IN 1965

Survey by Monsieur BÉAT DE FISCHER, Swiss Ambassador



The Survey of 1964 gave a comprehensive picture of the state of the Swiss Colony and the Swiss "presence" in the United Kingdom in that year. There have been only a few important changes since then; the present review can thus be confined to showing where the figures have altered or new developments have occurred.

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(1) In 1965 the members of the Swiss Colony in the United Kingdom and in those British territories overseas included in the London consular district increased by 423, thus numbering 13,885 on 31st December 1965.

There were 1,837 fellow-countrymen in the consular district of Manchester, which also embraces Scotland (382) and Northern Ireland (55). 292 were residing in British territories outside the British Isles, i.e. the Channel Islands, Bermuda-Bahamas, Aden, Gibraltar and the independent state of Malta.

Of the 11,756 Swiss in the southern part of England and Wales (which constitutes the London consular district), well over 8,000 were living within 50 miles of London.

More than 5,300 Swiss residing in the United Kingdom possessed both Swiss and British nationality.

It is estimated that about one-third of the Swiss nationals in this country was made up of students, student trainees and young girls with household occupations. These are temporary residents only and seldom stay longer than twelve months.

(2) At the beginning of 1965 there were 275,648 Swiss established abroad. 119,668 of them were dual nationals.

The Swiss Colony in the United Kingdom continued to be, in 1965, the fifth largest Swiss community outside Switzerland. The respective figures were as follows:

90,517 Swiss were living in France, 31,542 in West Germany, 24,471 in U.S.A., 18,803 in Italy, 13,885 in the United Kingdom and certain overseas territories (31.12.65), 13,042 in Canada.

The Swiss Colony is at present the sixth largest foreign community in the United Kingdom.

(3) Of the 275,648 Swiss living abroad, only 7,350 were registered members of the Solidarity Fund in June 1965. This institution was designed seven years ago to safeguard the livelihood of those of its members who might be deprived of their means of existence in foreign parts through no fault of their own. According to the latest reports, 2,372,500 Swiss francs have been paid out to 257 contributors to the Fund who were victims of adverse political conditions in certain areas of the world. Information on this scheme is, as in the past, always available at the Embassy.

(4) The Voluntary Swiss Old Age and Survivors Insurance Scheme (AHV/AVS) has had a far more favourable response from compatriots. 860 pensioners were registered with the consular offices in London or Manchester in 1965 and received pension benefits to the value of 1,728,830 Swiss francs. There are 954 contributing members who will be entitled to pensions in later years.

(5) The figures of Swiss gainfully employed in the United Kingdom, including the temporary students, were as follows:

Occupations at administrative and executive level: technical professions (architects, engineers, technicians, chemists, etc.) 158, science and education (including clergy) 117, commerce and trade 243, other vocations (musicians, painters and other artists, etc.) 25. Skilled and clerical occupations: agricultural and forestry 38, industry and crafts 739, commerce, banking and insurance 828, catering 558, domestic and hospital service (with labour permit) 629, au pair and mother's help 759, transport (air, rail and sea travel) 86, religious work 47, other occupations 304, students 809.

In 1965, 3,129 Swiss men were liable for military service. Of these, 1,689 were subject to military tax.

(6) On 31st December 1965 the numbers of Swiss registered with the Embassy or the Swiss Consulate in Manchester were 4,328 men, 7,941 women and 1,616 children.

Of this total, 608 men, 3,416 women and 1,332 children were dual nationals.

(7) In 1965 the consular offices in London and Manchester registered: 432 marriages, 245 births, 135 deaths and 23 divorces.

(8) Consular protection was granted to all registered Swiss citizens, the Consular Section of the Embassy in London and the Manchester Consulate being helped in this task by the Consular Agency at Dunfermline, in Scotland. When necessary, the Embassy acted at intermediary between compatriots and the British authorities.

(9) With the Churches, the Swiss Benevolent Society, the Welfare Office, and the Swiss Hostel for Girls, the Swiss community has at its disposal a social set-up particularly well fitted to take care of Swiss in need, whatever their age or circumstances. There have been changes of personnel in this field in the course of the past year, but the good work was carried on devotedly and without interruption, aided, in the case of the Swiss Benevolent Society, the Welfare Office and the International Travellers' Aid Association, by federal grants.

Happily, the Swiss Colony in London was able to benefit from the services of the French and the Italian Hospital, which both received subsidies from the Swiss Government. The French Hospital, however, had some financial difficulties to contend with.

In Manchester, in the rest of northern England and in Scotland it was to a large extent the friendly societies which, with the help of their members' subscriptions and donations, organized mutual aid among compatriots.

(10) The vigorous public activities and the social life of the numerous Swiss societies and other organizations in the United Kingdom during 1965 have been fully and ably reported in "The Swiss Observer". This constructive and fruitful work, performed with so much devotion, is largely responsible for the excellent Swiss spirit which prevails in the Helvetic community, and also facilitated the activities of common interest with the Embassy. It deserves great appreciation.

(To be continued)