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The Swiss Observer

FOUNDED IN 1919 BY PAUL F. BOEHRINGER.

The Official Organ of the Swiss Colony in Great Britain

Advisory Council: R. J. KELLER (Chairman), GOTTFRIED KELLER (Vice-Chairman), G. BODMER (Press Attaché Swiss Embassy), O. F. BOEHRINGER, J. EUSEBIO, A. KUNZ, C. NATER, R. M. SUESS, G. E. SUTER.

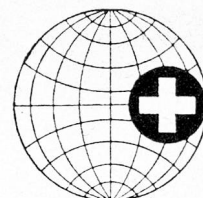
EDITED BY MRS. MARIANN MEIER WITH THE CO-OPERATION OF MEMBERS OF THE SWISS COLONY IN GREAT BRITAIN

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FRIDAY. 26th MAY 1967

HOW TO ACTIVATE THE "FIFTH SWITZERLAND" ON BEHALF OF OUR COUNTRY



The special recognition of the Swiss Abroad as an integral and important part of our beloved home-country in the new article 45 bis of the Swiss Federal Constitution has clearly not only enhanced the dignity of our status in the eyes of our compatriots at home but also put us under a moral obligation to help justifying the trust thus reposed in us. This has already been argued most forcefully by the Editor of the "Swiss Observer" in the last issue reflecting the thoughts of the retiring President of the Commission of the Swiss Abroad, Dr. Gerhart Schürch, whose distinguished tenure of this office during ten long years was crowned last October by the acceptance of this new article in our Constitution. The consequences of this great event were discussed at length at a recent meeting of the Commission of the Swiss Abroad on which the two chief Delegates of our Colony, Mrs. Mariann Meier and Dr. H. B. Knuchel, also reported fully to the second Annual General Meeting of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the United Kingdom held in London on May 5th. As President of our Federation I have pleasure in stating that the response of the meeting to these reports was unanimously favourable. While caution was felt to be indicated as regards the claiming of any new rights under the Constitution the meeting agreed to recommend two questionnaires aimed at ascertaining our views and suggestions to the attention of all our societies and their members.

The first questionnaire had already been mentioned in the last issue of the "Swiss Observer" (page 2). It concerns the need of the fullest possible mutual information between the homeland and the Swiss abroad as the main basis for a closer and fruitful co-operation in their mutual interest. Individual answers to the questionnaire are invited urgently by the Secretariat of the Swiss Abroad by mid-July. Copies can be obtained from the Presidents of all societies (in German or French) or from the Editor of the "Swiss Observer" (by application with stamped and addressed envelope).

The other questionnaire has been elaborated by the Swiss Club Manchester with the co-operation of Dr. Knuchel. It aims at obtaining the views and suggestions of respondents a) as to possible organisational improvements of our Colony and the Swiss abroad generally and b) as to what could be done "to make more of Article

45 bis than just a printed paragraph". By way of stimulating thought the questionnaire enumerates over a dozen suggestions for the respondents' consideration who are also urged to add their own ideas on the subject. The questionnaire is addressed only to the members of the Swiss societies in the North of the U.K. But it is of equal interest to the South and the President of the Swiss Club Manchester has kindly undertaken to see to it that copies will be sent to all applicants who should send a stamped and addressed envelope to the Hon. Secretary, Mr. B. Simon, c/o Geigy (U.K.) Ltd., Simonsway, Manchester 22.

The respondents to the questionnaire are invited to indicate the order of priority they would give to the following proposals for action:

- Revision of the tax for military exemption,
- revision of the system of military leave and control,
- reform of the consular system,
- introduction of right to vote in Federal matters,
- introduction of right to vote in elections,
- centralisation of aid and relief for the Swiss abroad,
- revision of old-age pension and invalidity insurance,
- establishment of a "Claims Commission" for Swiss abroad who have been expropriated,
- co-ordination of publicity for Switzerland abroad,
- revision of all federal legislation (regarding citizenship, fiscal and civil matters, etc.) from the point of view of its application to the Swiss abroad, and
- establishment of a system of consultation of the Swiss abroad for the negotiation of international agreements between Switzerland and other countries.

The questionnaire then poses a number of more detailed questions for answering in elaboration of some of the listed suggestions. They comprise the justification of the military tax payable principally by the young when least able to pay, the registration system at consulates and the renewal of military leave, the withholding of names and addresses of individual Swiss from our societies and institutions, the respondent's knowledge of Swiss affairs to enable him to exercise the vote if it were granted and if he wanted it, the question of representation of the Swiss abroad in the Swiss Parliament and how to select the representatives, the reform of the system of relief for the Swiss abroad in poverty, improvements of the Old-Age and Invalidity Insurance for the Swiss abroad, and, finally,

how the Swiss abroad could or should be consulted for negotiating international treaties on matters such as double taxation, immigration and importation.

If some of these suggestions provoke contradictory views, this will be interesting and useful to our Delegates for their guidance when representing our Colony in the Commission and at the annual Conference of the Swiss Abroad. The important thing is to get enough expressions of Opinion in to represent a fairly accurate cross-section of views. They should be sent to the President of our Federation of Swiss Societies, Dr. H. W. Egli, 17 Corringham Road, London N.W.11, by 20th June. The initiative of the Swiss Club Manchester in eliciting such expressions of views is most praiseworthy, though it is hoped that our compatriots will not hesitate to communicate any ideas of their own they may have on the subject quite apart from the questionnaire.

One suggestion not mentioned in the Questionnaire but may be deserving attention is a demand for the establishment of special sickness insurance facilities for the elderly Swiss abroad when retiring to the home country. Another matter missing in the Manchester questionnaire is our deep concern for the poor image of our country abroad requiring a vastly increased effort of cultural propaganda for Switzerland in the best sense of the word, of which the still hoped for establishment of a worthy "FORUM of SWITZERLAND" in the Swiss Centre in London should only be regarded as the nucleus of a continuing effort radiating throughout the British Isles. Let us all help in this great work of making the "FIFTH SWITZERLAND" a living reality — first by the pooling of ideas as to what should be done and secondly by supporting whatever actions and projects may emerge from this exchange of views culminating in the forthcoming *Auslandschweizertagung* at Lugano at the end of August.

Dr. H. W. EGLI.

AT RANDOM NEWS

It is now known that **Stalin's daughter** spent some time with the wife of the Fribourg industrialist Claude Blancpain, Madame Bertrand d'Astier de la Vigerie, (whose death is announced on another page) at her house at Ninan near Fribourg. First, she was at Beatenberg, and then she retired to the home of the Canisius Sisters at Burgbühl/St. Antoni (in the Sarine district). For a while, she also stayed at a Convent in Fribourg. Twice she was in Berne, always well taken care of by two Swiss security men. After her departure for U.S.A. on 21st April, she thanked the Swiss authorities and all concerned in making her stay one of relaxation and peaceful collection.

The investigations into the fatal flying accident at Sion on 26th August 1966, when "**Glacier Pilot**" **Hermann Geiger** lost his life, have been concluded. The blame has to be put on the dead pilot himself who ignored the right of way to which the other plane was entitled. Geiger's great courage and daring and unselfish nature were coupled with a certain rashness which led to his tragic death.

The collection in aid of the **flood victims in Florence**, started by the Swiss Red Cross in November, has so far resulted in 5½ million Swiss francs. The first phase in the aid campaign was for immediate help, the second will be for rehabilitation, such as prefabricated houses, furniture, linen, etc.

Forestry students at the Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich spent their spring holidays in Florence, helping in afforestation work in the Apennines.

The **population of Skopje** in Yugoslavia thanked organisations and individuals in Switzerland for their extensive help after the earthquake in 1963.

Three years after the **air catastrophe at Duerrenaes**, in which practically the whole adult population of the little village of Humlikon was killed, life at the village goes on. The farms are being worked and kept going until the respective children can take over. The fund which was collected and reached 2¼ m. francs is slightly lower now, but money is used wisely according to a 20-year plan set up by the curatorium in charge of it.

The organisation in aid of poor **mountain farming communities** is 25 years old. Nearly 400,000 francs was spent on help in 1966, and a new appeal for *Patenschaften*, a kind of godparent scheme, has been launched.

Some 8,000 young boys and girls helped in the **Voluntary Agricultural Service**, among them 18 were Germans, 4 English, 4 Dutch, 3 French, 2 Italian, 2 American and an Austrian. Most helpers went to individual farms, but there were four camps too. Whole school classes went, and some firms gave their young employees an additional holiday for the purpose.

A social service called "**Aktion 7**" was founded in Zurich in 1964. Its aim is to afford young boys and girls a chance to help. In 1966, 1,021 girls and 549 boys offered themselves to work in hospitals, as home helps, in catastrophes, etc. This spring, for instance, old people in Basle, Zurich and Schaffhausen had their double windows removed, cleaned and stored ready to be put in again in winter.

Old **telephone directories** are collected by the "Radio for the Old and Invalid" group every year. Out of the money received, radio sets are purchased for the blind, etc. In 1966 alone, 870,000 kg. of telephone books were collected.

The **First of August Collection** 1966 resulted in 3.8 m. francs, 800,000 more than in the previous year. 932,000 badges were sold and over 34m. stamps. The money benefited needy mothers.

In 1961, the **Exhibition for Hygiene and Sport** (HYSPA) took place in Berne. It has just been announced that the deficit was 4.9 m. francs. The town of Berne carried nearly half, the Canton about a third and the Confederation about a sixth.

[A.T.S.]

HOLIDAY CAMP FOR YOUNG SWISS ABROAD

The Youth Service of the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad again organises a hiking camp. It will take place from 23rd July to 12th August. Girls and boys from 16 to 24 years are invited to apply. In small groups, the young people will leave the base camp for walks in the Canton of Ticino and spend a few days of rest on the Lake of Lugano or the Lago Maggiore. Cost: Fr.150.—.

Application forms may be obtained from and should be returned by 15th June to:

Jugenddienst des A.S.S.,
Alpenstrasse 26, 3000 Berne.