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Diversity of fairs

The Swiss Art and Antiques Fair at the Art Museum in Berne annually radiates unusual splendour. From October 8 to 17 numerous firms have displayed works of art and antiquities in an artistic decor. While this show was still on, the "Viennese Weeks" were starting in Berne on October 15 and lasted until October 21. They offered a rich programme of concerts, theatrical performances and exhibitions. In Eastern Switzerland the "Olma" Swiss Farm and Dairy Fair (October 1-17) was an important annual event. Not only in the fields of agriculture and dairy production, but as an economic

fair in general it always offers something new to visitors from Switzerland as well as from adjacent foreign countries. Also the St. Gall Autumn Market is always attractive. In Basle the "Jubilee Autumn Fair" will be a merry large-scale event, from October 23 to November 7. It enjoys popularity also with visitors from neighbouring areas of Germany and France. There is merry making around St. Peter's Square from early morning until late night. This year Basle will commemorate the fact that fairs have been held there for 500 years. Based on this ancient tradition the Swiss Industries Fair which has achieved international importance may display its annual spring show just in Basle. In Lucerne the "Budenmesse" (Booths Fair) on the Inseli (Little Island) will mean pleasant days from October 4 to 16. (SNTO)

ASSEMBLY OF THE SWISS ABROAD

The Delegates at work

During the Assembly of the Swiss Abroad, several meetings took place which were not open to participants other than those who were members of the Commission of the Swiss Abroad, the Council of the Solidarity Fund and the Foundation of the Swiss Abroad which is responsible for administering the money which comes to the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad every few years from the National Collection on 1st August.

The Commission of the Swiss Abroad meets twice yearly, and when members gathered in the beautifully renovated Council Hall at Schwyz early in the morning of 27th August, it was a most international crowd, all good Swiss but representing communities in all parts of the globe. There were several members from inside Switzerland and of the Secretariat's staff. The President of the Organisation and Chairman of the Commission, Councillor of States Dr. Louis Guisan, welcomed delegates from as far apart as Sweden and the Congo, Peru and Thailand.

From the report given by the Secretariat, it was evident that work had gone on much the same with an ever growing interest shown in the activities of the Organisation. The Director, Mr. M. Ney, had been in South Africa and visited 14 Swiss organisations and met (individually) some 400 people in one month. The President announced that he would visit the United States next year and contact Swiss societies there during about 2-2½ months. At the moment, the contacts established so far were not very close.

The President also reported that he was now a regular member of the Central Council of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique and their President

was a member of the Commission. It was also stated that more financial support was needed to carry out the work of the Organisation. For that reason, the Friends of the Swiss Abroad would be reconstituted at a later meeting at Brunnen, and it was hoped that their activities would result in more income.

Next, the subject of information was dealt with, and a report was presented on the work done by the special commission which has been studying the subject for a number of years. Recognition of foreign matriculation by Swiss universities was discussed, and members were informed of efforts made to get some relief for Swiss nationals wishing to study in Switzerland. There was a short report on the pending revision of the old-age pension scheme (AHV) and certain alterations which may be made in favour of Swiss living abroad who may at present join on a voluntary basis.

Regarding military exemption duty, it was reported that no answer had yet been received from the authorities as to the suggestions put forward by the Commission earlier.

Next, a new member was elected on to the Executive Committee of the Commission; Mr. C. Schaefer (France) was replaced by Mr. M. Gehrig, President of the Union of Swiss Societies in France. The members also agreed that the Swiss Association of Hong Kong should be invited to appoint a delegate and deputy.

A list of meetings in 1972 of umbrella organisations was read, and details of next year's Jubilee Assembly were given. It will take place in Berne from 25th to 27th August, and the theme will be "Political Rights and Duties of the Swiss Abroad". There will be special events, such as a military march past and a rifle shooting competition for Swiss from abroad, not to forget the exhibition of products and achievements by Swiss living abroad.

The next meeting of the Commission was fixed for 11th March in Berne.

Following the business part, there was question time, and quite a few points were raised, such as the thorny point of double taxation which worries the 16,000 Swiss in Italy.

One of the new members attending the meeting for the first time was Father Bossard from London. He now replaces Mr. E. Bonvin as deputy to Mrs. Mariann Meier. She, too, was present, as was the delegate for Great Britain North, Dr. H. R. Bolliger from Manchester.

A much-valued member, Mr. Theo Nagel from Sweden made his farewell speech after 11 years of devoted service. He stressed that there was too much materialism, and that it was the Commission's task to watch jealously over spiritual values. It should be like a seismograph which records all currents and drifts within the Swiss communities, so that all Swiss abroad would become accepted as valuable citizens of the homeland.

(MM)

P.S. to PMB report on the Assembly (issue 1623): the collection made in aid of the tornado victims in the Vallée de Joux amounted to Fr. 2,400.

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