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# THE SWISS ABROAD MEET AT MORAT

The small picturesque town of Fribourg celebrated the quingentenary of the Battle of Morat this summer. It was therefore well prepared to deal with large crowds, and the hundreds of Swiss from outside their homeland who arrived during the last week of August got a warm welcome, even if the weather was not particularly kind.

The round of working meetings always preceding the official opening got going on Thursday, 26th August with Information. First it was the special commission dealing with the subject in all its aspects, including the "Review", the name given to the official news and information issued four times a year to all Swiss abroad, thanks to the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad co-operating with the Federal authorities who carry the financial burden of this scheme. Readers of the *Swiss Observer* know that the "Review" contents reach them in the four "special issues". The last of these gave a series of pictures taken during the congress at Morat, and a report will follow in the next special issue. We shall therefore confine ourselves to a few essential points, especially since the London Group of the *Nouvelle Société Helvétique* and the Swiss Club Manchester will have devoted a special evening to the discussion of various problems and the reports by the delegates.

## DELEGATES AT WORK

The main business meeting was that of the Commission of the Swiss Abroad, the "Little Parliament", which took place on Friday morning at the Town Hall. It was attended by some 80 members and deputies from inside Switzerland and from all parts of the world. The blue flag with the Swiss cross and the globe was fixed the wrong way round on the stage, but it did not matter — the Swiss cross is right in any position, and somehow it stressed the fact that the Swiss all over the universe are Swiss at heart, even if they get their priorities wrong at times.

There was a discussion on the composition of the Commission. What is it, a kind of Council of States or a National Council? The President, Dr. Louis Guisan,

mused that the Commission was a combination of both principles. In some countries it was difficult even to find representatives, and in others the appointment of delegates had by force of circumstances to be rather arbitrary. But on the whole it was a fair representation of the organised Swiss abroad. Incidentally, the Swiss from France, the largest contingent (ten members and deputies) were all present, and so were all the women members: two from inside Switzerland, two deputies from Belgium and the Netherlands, and the only woman delegate, Mrs. Mariann Meier from Great Britain South. She was accompanied by the delegate for Great Britain North, Dr. Hans-Ruedi Bolliger.

The meeting was informed that the federal law on political rights for the Swiss abroad would be put in force on 1st January, 1977. A number of problems have arisen, especially in establishing ways and means at the Communes at which Swiss from abroad will cast their votes. Some Cantons and Communes even have to make changes in their Constitutions!

There was a discussion on the revision of the federal law on foreign residents in Switzerland, and the meeting heard with amazement of new regulations in Italy, according to which foreign residents not only have to declare property abroad but to transfer it to Italy! A resolution was sent to the Federal Council referring to the injustice of this ruling, especially since it seems to be contrary to an agreement in existence between the two States.

The date of the next Assembly was discussed, and it was finally decided to have it from 19th to 21st August, 1977, a week earlier than usual, so that members could attend the final shows of the *Fête des Vignerons* at Vevey.

## THE 54th ASSEMBLY DECLARED OPEN

Other meetings held were of the Council of the Solidarity Fund and its A.G.M. And finally, on the evening of 27th, the Assembly was officially opened by President Guisan. The ceremony took place in the grounds of the Castle, the "Lindenhalle", and it was introduced by music played by a band in the old uniform of the Swiss Army. Dr. Guisan told of the importance of Morat, an example of Helvetic co-operation and tolerance, both linguistic and historic. The Assembly had not taken place on Fribourg grounds since 1934 when Federal Councillor Motta was a member of the Cantonal Government, Councillor Arnold Waeber and Municipal President Albert Engel spoke on behalf of the authorities.

Many other meetings took place during the Assembly, where all sorts of questions were discussed and answers given to many problems. But the greatest

attraction was the plenary meeting on Saturday held at the spacious auditorium of the Secondary School, modern and functional, a marked contrast to the old building next door, dating back to 1837.

## THE MAIN THEME OF THE CONFERENCE

One year the Swiss from abroad want help and advice, the next year they tell of their own work and activities. This year, they asked questions and were given advice and information. The theme was "Schooling and training in Switzerland of young Swiss from abroad". The President of the *Nouvelle Société Helvétique*, Dr. Ernst Basler, talked about some of the Swiss problems in which his Society was concerned, the Jura question, recession and other matters, and he stressed that permanent values were again being appreciated — full solutions were never possible in affluent times, and these had gone. The value of sound education and thorough training would again be of more importance.

Mr. Philippe Garraux, inland member of the Commission, then gave an excellent introduction on Swiss schooling and training through the ages. We shall go back to his highly interesting talk in a later number of the *Swiss Observer*.

Then came a presentation of a number of personalities concerned with education in Switzerland, experts on university and other studies, representing various fields such as catering, banking, private educational establishments, etc., as well as a representative of the Association for Training Young Swiss from Abroad, a body responsible for granting scholarships. Various questions were asked by the Director of the Secretariat in Berne, Mr. Marcel Ney, and the experts answered them. Young Swiss at present engaged in their training in Switzerland made short statements, but on the whole, they were not really convincing, and a father from Holland showed up some weaknesses, not so much in what is offered, but the lack of proper information abroad. There is no doubt that there are many possibilities, but it is very difficult for any prospective student or trainee to find the right advice and information.

This year, it was Federal Councillor Graber, Head of the Federal Political Department, who represented the Swiss Government. Unfortunately, his talk was a catalogue of all the authorities have done and are doing for their compatriots abroad, and whilst their efforts are undoubtedly much appreciated, the address lacked real inspiration and conviction. Nevertheless, the Swiss abroad owe a great deal to the authorities at home, and much has been done since the special Constitutional Article concerning them was accepted by the electorate on 16th October, 1966.

## Copy Dates

Will readers and contributors please note that items intended for inclusion in the next edition of the *Swiss Observer* should reach the Editor no later than 1st November.

WGS

That is where the rain started, and the picturesque procession of historic figures, bands and other musicians who had to lead the whole party of *Ausland-schweizer*, proceeded to the marquee in driving rain. But the atmosphere was a happy one, the banquet of an exceptionally high standard of its kind, and the singing and folk dancing and other entertainment were much enjoyed. Dancing then went on until nearly two, and the night was a short one, for young drummers led the participants of the congress to church at 9.30 a.m. the next morning. The ecumenical service has become an integral part of the Assembly, and it was once again a moment of valuable meditation and genuine thanksgiving. The orchestra, under the direction of Mr. Nyffenegger, Editor of the *Echo*, contributed to the high standard of the service.

Then followed the outing on the Lake, and lunch was a very happy affair on the "Ville de Neuchâtel". All too soon, the party was back at Morat, and another successful Assembly had come to a close. Much work goes into organising such an event, and thanks are due to all members of the Secretariat in Berne, Mr. Ney and his deputy Mr. Lucien Paillard, as well as their hard-working team.

It is a pity that the contingent from Great Britain was so lamentably small. It included the Swiss Ambassador, Monsieur Thalmann, the President of the Federation of the Swiss Societies in the U.K., Mr. B. Simon, and a handful of members of the N.S.H. But that in no way interfered with their enjoyment. An Assembly is something well worth experiencing.

MM

## Obituaries

It is with deep regret that we announce the death on 24th September of Mrs. Arnold Kunzler, of 31 Dolphin Court, Rustington, Sussex. She died in hospital after a long and bravely-borne illness, aged 72. We extend our sincere sympathy to Mr. Arnold Kunzler, his two sons and their families in their bereavement. His many friends are sad that this should have taken place just before his 80th birthday which he will have on 15th November and which should have been a very special day. Nevertheless, we want him to know that we not only sympathise with him in his loss, but that we shall also be with him in our thoughts when he looks back on his long and active life.

Arnold Kunzler completed his education at the *Verkehrsschule* in St. Gall and then went as a farm-hand to the Jura to learn French. Next he joined a forwarding agency in Basle. After the first world war and a spell of military service he came to London, solely with the intention of learning English and then moving on to the USA. But London fascinated him, and he stayed on. In 1924, he married Miss Nolte from Basle.

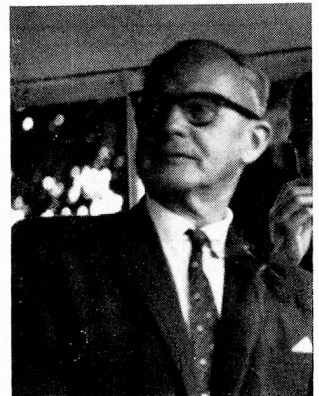
Two years later, Mr. Kunzler founded Machinery and Technical Transport Ltd., later to be known as M.A.T. Transport Ltd. The company flourished and has just celebrated its golden jubilee. He still takes an active interest in his firm.

Arnold Kunzler has always supported various activities in the Swiss community and is a member of several societies. His many friends send him best wishes for the day which he will spend with his family — he has nine grand-

## NEWS FROM THE COLONY

children — and may he long remain alert and well and never lose his great sense of humour in spite of the sadness which will cast a shadow on the joy of having become an octogenarian.

MM



*Mr. Arnold Kunzler celebrates his 80th birthday on 15th November, so soon after his sad bereavement. May we offer him all our good wishes.*

### CITY SWISS CLUB

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\* \* \*

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