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Autor: M.M.
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FEDERAL COUNCILLOR GNAEGI IN LONDON



Federal Councillor Rudolf Gnaegi pictured in London during his recent visit. Picture by courtesy of Brenard Press Ltd.

The Second Conference of European Ministers responsible for Sport was held at Lancaster House in London from 4th to 7th April. The Swiss delegation was headed by Federal Councillor Rudolf Gnaegi. The other members were Mr. Karl Glatthard, President of the Swiss Sports Association; Mr. Willy Raetz, Assistant Manager of the Swiss School for Physical Education and Sports; Mr. Ferdinand Imesch, Manager of the Swiss Sports Association; and Mr. Yves Moret of the Federal Political Department.

The Federal Councillor and his party were met at London Airport by Monsieur Jacques Rial, Counsellor of

Embassy for Protocol and International Organisations Affairs, Colonel Dudli, Defence Attaché, and Mrs. Dudli. Mr. L. Nart, General Manager of Swissair U.K., was present, too.

The Conference was opened by the Minister of State, Department of the Environment, the Rt. Hon. D. Howell, MP. He was followed by the Secretary-General of the Council of Europe, Mr. G. Kahn-Ackermann.

The same evening, 4th April, the Swiss Ambassador and Madame Ernesto Thalmann gave a buffet dinner at the Embassy, at which the Federal Councillor and Mrs. Rudolf Gnaegi, as well as the rest of the delegation and their wives were entertained. Present also were Mr. Thomas Keller, President of the General Assembly of International Sports Federations, and his daughter. The visitors from Switzerland met the Presidents of Swiss Societies and institutions in London and their wives (or husbands) and Mr. and Mrs. B. Simon (Federation of Swiss Societies in the U.K.). Several members of the Embassy and their wives were also amongst the guests.

The following day, Federal Councillor Gnaegi gave a short conference to the Swiss Press in London. He explained that he was in London not as Minister of Defence, but as Minister for Sports. He said that the first European Conference had been held in Brussels in

1975. The integration in national life of sports and sound ethical conceptions were no problem in Switzerland. The state was responsible for general development, but the organisations had their own responsibility. There was no political influence, but the co-operation was good.

A watching brief

The *Landesverband fuer Sport* watched over damaging publicity, detrimental monetary considerations, and the guilty ones were punished. One of the issues at the Conference was sports tourism, but Switzerland would not support this idea. The Federal Councillor answered questions on vandalism and his ideas on sport and politics such as in South Africa. The former, he said, was no problem in Switzerland, and the latter was very much the concern of the countries in question. He also told the audience, on being asked, that he himself was keen on mountain walks, swimming, ski-ing and skating.

The same evening, Mr. Gnaegi and the Swiss party attended a Government Dinner at Saddlers' Hall in the City's Gutter Lane.

The Swiss delegation had a full programme, but fortunately the Federal Councillor and his wife found time for a private visit to the Covent Garden Opera.

M.M.



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