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60th Assembly of Swiss Residents Abroad

"THE Swiss Woman Abroad" was the theme when more than 450 Swiss from abroad gathered for the congress at Sierre, Valais, on August 20-22.

The congress has lost nothing in popularity since it was first held, and many were the social gatherings, both organised and ad hoc.

The real work, however, was carried out at a number of meetings. The first was that of the Commission on Information where the difficulties with the Swiss Review were discussed.

Among the countries mentioned was Great Britain, where discussions are being held regarding the inclusion of the Review (which at the moment appears separately) in the Swiss Observer.

A new formula must be found to enable co-operation again, and the Commission agreed that on no account must the Review become a competitor to the colony's official organ.

Negotiations between the Federation, the owner of the Swiss Observer, and Berne are in progress.

Other meetings included the AGM of the Friends of the Organisation of Swiss Abroad, special question times of the secretariat and meetings for new-

comers to such a congress and the young participants.

The Solidarity Fund had both a council meeting and its AGM. The story is the same – while there are not enough members, and the idea of solidarity has not had the appeal hoped for by the founders of this marvellous insurance and savings scheme, its general financial state is sound and satisfactory. Its case was put to the plenary session by Mrs Mariann Meier, who included it in her speech on "Women in Information."

The most important body in the organisation is no doubt the Commission of the Swiss Abroad, the "little parliament". The meeting took place in Sion under the president of the OSA, Dr Alfred Weber.

Great Britain was represented by Mrs Meier for the south and by Mr Bernard Simon (Manchester) and Dr Ursula Ditchburn (Dunfermline) for the north. A report on the work of the commission will follow later.

The official opening of the assembly by the president took place on the Friday and the plenary session was held the following day. Dr Weber welcomed the participants as well as many official guests.

The president of the mother

organisation, the Nouvelle Société Helvétique, Mr René Retornaz, addressed the gathering in the traditional manner, and the president of the OSA then introduced the main theme.

The rest of the morning was taken up by a series of questions and answers and speeches by women, mainly from abroad, under the leadership of Mr Marcel Ney, director of the secretariat in Berne.

A report on this comprehensive picture of what Swiss women do abroad will appear in a later issue of the Swiss Observer.

The afternoon session began with a speech by Federal Councillor Aubert who, surprisingly, did not address the Swiss women abroad nor touch on the theme of the assembly at all but gave a historic résumé on the change in Swiss diplomatic representation abroad. He also made propaganda for Switzerland's possible entry to the United Nations.

The president referred to the retirement of Minister Maurice Jaccard, the man who has been in charge of matters concerning the Swiss abroad at the Department of Foreign Affairs.

He praised his devotion and achievements in the interest of Swiss abroad, not least as creator of their own constitutional Article 45bis and co-initiator of the Solidarity Fund.

Monsieur Jaccard, who will be succeeded by Minister Max Leippert, his assistant, gave a farewell speech and expressed thanks for a handsome present. The singing of the national anthem concluded the session.

After the usual Press conference, the evening was devoted to a dinner and dance at which the entertainment was of a particularly high standard.

The famous composer Jean Daetwyler conducted the folk choir Chanson du Rhône. Some

of his compositions were played by alphorn player Volnar, who accompanied his wife, Heidi Berner, on the flute. Dancing went on well into the night.

There had been some rain, but on Sunday the weather was superb and could not have been better for the outing by coach to the fine church of Lens where an ecumenical service took place.

A reception was held by the local authorities and an open-air "raclette" was held in the woods above the lake of Chermignon. There was Valaisan folk dancing, the local band entertained the gathering and the Fendant du Valais flowed freely.

A happy crowd left in the afternoon, and the final farewell took place in the courtyard of the town hall. Another successful Assembly of Swiss Abroad had come to an end. Next year it will be held in Zurich. – **Mariann Meier.**

Yorkshire luncheon

FOLLOWING the pattern of previous years, the Yorkshire Swiss Club has arranged an informal luncheon to give members and friends the opportunity of meeting in a convivial atmosphere.

This year the luncheon will take place on Saturday, November 6, and among the guests will be the Consul General, Mr Charles Glauser, and his wife.

The venue will be the Queen of T'owd Thatch Inn, South Milford, which is near the A1 and M62, east of Leeds.

Old and new friends are invited to this event, and further information is available from the Yorkshire Swiss Club's secretary, Mrs Ruth Leathley, at 1 Smithy Lane, Tingley, Wakefield. Her telephone number is 0532-522207.

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Flags tell of a Swiss wedding

AS THE greetings of Lord Hailsham, the Lord Chancellor, were read out at the wedding reception of Viviane Saddler and Ronald Proyer in London last month, the flag of Switzerland was very much in evidence, decorating the hall of St Cuthbert's Church, Wembley.

For not only was the bride Swiss-born but her husband is also of French Swiss extraction, his paternal grandfather having come to England early in the century.

The bride was born Viviane Renée Tribolet, in Neuchâtel, where her father was a tram driver, and came to England in 1953 as a mother's help. She married in 1957, and had three children. Her husband died in 1977. Viviane is now assistant manager at a building society in Harrow.

Her new husband is on the staff of the Sunday Express in London, and is a widower with four grown-up children.

Shortly after their marriage the couple flew to Geneva to visit Viviane's mother, Mme Eglantine Tribolet, at her home, and to see the grave of her father, M. Gilbert Tribolet, who died in 1980 and is buried at Cressier.

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