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The Swiss Observer

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The Official Organ of the Swiss Colony in Great Britain

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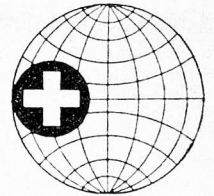
FRIDAY, 11th NOVEMBER 1966

1966 THE YEAR OF "FIFTH SWITZERLAND"

ASSEMBLY OF THE SWISS ABROAD

BERNE, AUGUST-SEPTEMBER 1966

Shortened rendering of the speech delivered (in German)
by the President of the London Group of the Nouvelle
Société Helvétique



Although I have not been briefed by anyone for my contribution to our discussion, I may perhaps speak to you not only as a Swiss living in England but in a sense also from the viewpoint of our compatriots living in other countries imbued with the spirit of freedom and the sense of justice of the Anglo-Saxon world.

The London Group of the N.S.H., which is this year celebrating its 50th anniversary as the first group of our mother society formed on foreign soil, continues its modest efforts of cultivating the knowledge and understanding of the problems and development of the beloved home-country as from the first day of its inception. We take pride in having initiated the formation of the Presidents' Assembly in our Colony as well as its development into a Federation of Swiss Societies in the United Kingdom for facilitating our close co-operation.

The unanimous consent of both Houses of Parliament to the inclusion of a special Article regarding the Swiss abroad in the Federal Constitution has given us much satisfaction and we hope, of course, that the Referendum will confirm the decision with equal understanding. It will be a welcome formal gesture of appreciation which should contribute much to a closer relationship between the homeland and the Swiss abroad. We feel assured of an increasing interest in us as a living part of the Swiss nation no matter whether it will lead to the exercise of some form of political participation or not. As a matter of fact the practice of an early and continuing consultation of the Commission of the Swiss Abroad by the Federal Government in recent years on all questions of particular interest to us has already given us considerable possibilities of influencing all decisions of special concern to the Swiss abroad.

Above all our enhanced appreciation also strengthens our sense of moral obligation towards the home-country in joyful and proud fulfilment of our inevitable role as representatives of the Swiss nation — each according to his own station in the host country. We claim no special ambassadorial talents. All we have to do is to behave in all things as worthy Swiss towards our hosts conscious of the fact that their appreciation of Switzerland is bound to be influenced by our behaviour. We should also strive to keep ourselves well informed of the facts, problems and developments of the home-country in order to enable us

to explain matters to all enquirers. Our personal knowledgeable recommendation can and does gain more friends and customers of Switzerland than the most expensive publicity campaigns.

The history of England has been enriched in past centuries by a remarkable number of distinguished Swiss personalities in spiritual, scientific, political, diplomatic, artistic and military matters, as the recently published study of the "Schweizer Kolonie in England" by Ernst Boos recalled. The "Dictionary of National Biographies" contains no fewer than twenty-eight life histories of famous Swiss personalities. In our century the Swiss contribution to England's greatness is mainly confined to the industrial and commercial developments. Our big chemical works in Manchester and the Midlands, numerous textile firms and precision works are the most telling examples. But the loyal work of thousands of Swiss employees in commerce and finance and thousands of Swiss girls in English families should not be underrated.

In one respect a new need has arisen for the enhancement of the name of Switzerland in England perhaps more than elsewhere since the flow of Swiss thinkers, scientists, educationalists and artists to these islands has diminished: a need for a conscious effort in making our cultural life and achievements better known, a need for an imaginative *Kulturwerbung* in the best sense of the word. We do not underrate the devoted work of our Ambassador and his colleagues, of the Foundation PRO HELVETIA, the Swiss shortwave service in English, des Schweizer Vortragsdienst and individual visiting artists and those living here in creating a cultural presence of Switzerland in this country. But much more needs to be done. The project of a cultural FORUM OF SWITZERLAND in the Swiss Centre in London has become an urgent necessity. Unfortunately the collection of funds for this purpose, launched a year ago in Berne under the chairmanship of Federal Councillor Wahlen, has not so far brought in enough. There are still many internationally Swiss firms and wealthy individuals standing aloof and failing to appreciate the importance of a good cultural image of Switzerland in the eyes of the world in the long run even for their own commercial and family interests. It must be hoped that they will not allow this unrepeatable opportunity of something really effective being done for the Swiss

image in this country to fail owing to their indifference.

We make no demands, we only plead with all concerned in the best interests of our country. We in England as well as our other compatriots abroad have no greater desire than to be helped as far as possible in holding the esteem of Switzerland high amongst the nations. Give us the tools and we shall know how to use them.

H. W. Egli.

NEW ARTICLE FOR THE SWISS ABROAD

Voting Details

As was reported in our last issue, the new Constitutional Article 45 *bis* concerning the Swiss living abroad was accepted by the Swiss electorate and all the Cantons on 16th October. The total of 490,992 against 230,415 was lower than had been expected, and surprise has been expressed in the Press and many other quarters. When the Swiss people were asked to decide on Romansh being the fourth national language in 1938, they did this with a majority of 11 : 1. Now that it was a question of acknowledging "Fifth Switzerland", a similar proportion in favour of the proposal was hoped for. Even though the number of "Ayes" is not as high as expected, the result, nevertheless, is convincing.

When the outcome was known, Federal Councillor Spuehler declared his pleasure that the Swiss people had accepted the *Auslandschweizerartikel*. He referred to the psychological effect this would have on the Swiss abroad whose ties with their mother country would be strengthened, and he said that this in turn would not only benefit the Swiss abroad but also those at home. "A new chapter in the history of the Swiss living abroad has been opened today, and with it the way has been cleared for legislature which will allow for the special circumstances of the *Auslandschweizer*".

The detailed figures are as follows:

Canton	Yes	No
Zurich	108,209	36,389
Berne	81,995	37,577
Lucerne	21,975	14,215
Uri	3,149	1,529
Schwyz	5,498	5,171
Obwalden	1,548	1,179
Nidwalden	2,260	1,473
Glarus	3,629	1,648
Zug	3,995	1,949
Fribourg	11,733	5,996
Solothurn	21,029	10,096
Baselstadt	16,034	4,078
Baselland	13,791	6,091
Schaffhausen	9,122	3,855
Appenzell A.Rh.	4,628	2,882
Appenzell I.Rh.	868	540
St. Gall	30,021	16,956
Grisons	11,137	6,212
Aargau	41,582	27,669
Thurgau	17,417	8,089
Ticino	11,943	3,775
Vaud	29,029	14,639
Valais	12,977	10,111
Neuchâtel	21,117	6,694
Geneva	16,306	1,622

Voting participation: 48%.

[A.T.S.]

ALCOHOL INITIATIVE

On 30th October 1963, an Initiative with just over 51,000 signatures was handed in by the "Landesring der Unabhängigen". Its aim was to introduce a general tax on wines and spirits, which was to be used for the fight against alcoholism and water protection. The Federal Council, as well as all the Parties but one, recommended rejection; the Socialists did not take sides. On Sunday, 16th October, the electorate rejected the proposals overwhelmingly by 174,882 to 570,132 votes. Not one single Canton accepted it either. In the Canton of Vaud, the proportion was 10 : 1, which indicates that the winegrowers were not going to have their produce taxed.

Whilst the Initiative has been rejected, all quarters are agreed that alcoholism has to be fought energetically. Most Cantons have funds for this purpose, fed by the tenth which the Federal Alcohol Administration has to pass on from its net profit. These funds total over 2m. francs. The net profit of the *Alkoholverwaltung* in the year 1965/6 amounted to 106,856m. francs as against 74,861 in the previous year. Of this, 46.1m. is to go to Confederation and Cantons in equal parts, and 14.5m. to the reserve fund. There is some opposition to this, as it is the Confederation which is in need of money and not the alcohol reserve fund. The budget for 1966/7 is 91m. francs.

Between 1933 and 1938, wine consumption in Switzerland went down from 44 to 33.9 litres *per capita* of the population. Since then it has gradually gone up again, and the latest figures were 38 litres. Everywhere, the danger of "drinking and driving" is stressed. There is a society of "Abstinente Motorfahrzeuglenker", and in June, all the Cantons except Uri and Appenzell I.Rh. started a campaign against "alcohol at the driving wheel". Figures published by two hospitals in August revealed that of 376 injured persons in road accidents, 118 (31.3%) were under the influence of drink. Of these, 79.6% had more than 0.8 per thousand of alcohol content in the blood, this figure having been decided upon by a Court as being the permissible limit.

There are several organisations dealing with the fight against alcoholism, amongst them "Alcoholics Anonymous" and a Federal Commission under the chairmanship of Dr. Virgile Moine, Berne, appointed by the Federal Council.

Two sets of figures recently published: The amount of spirits distilled in Switzerland in 1965/6 has gone down from 3,200,117 to 1,991,238 litres. These figures do not include private distilling which was responsible for 3.4m. litres as against 3.8m. in the previous year.

The Federal Council has asked for a credit of 37m. francs for an alcohol store at Dailens (Vaud) to be charged to the Alcohol Administration.

[A.T.S.]

Declaration of presumed Disappearance

Three published statutory notices having remained without effect, the following declaration of presumed disappearance is published:

Brugg District Court

Zürcher-Weber, Gottfrey Charles, 1928, automobile coach builder, citizen of Trachselwald, BE, and England, last known residence at Schinznach-Bad.
Effective from 29th May 1957.