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The Swiss Observer

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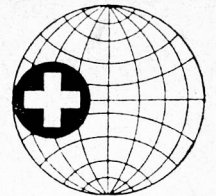
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1966 THE YEAR OF "FIFTH SWITZERLAND"

THE PRO HELVETIA FOUNDATION



In the 'thirties, dangerous totalitarian ideas found their way into Switzerland from neighbouring countries. Enlightened personalities realised the need to counteract the new ideologies by a re-appraisal of the country's spiritual heritage and a re-evaluation of a free federalistic democracy. It was at that time that the term "spiritual defence of the country" (*Geistige Landesverteidigung*) was coined. It was to play a vital part during the second world war.

A plan was worked out of how to keep Swiss culture alive inside the country and of how to make it known outside Switzerland. But war broke out and interrupted planning. Instead of a foundation as originally envisaged, a working party "Pro Helvetia" was created in the autumn of 1939 by way of a temporary solution. It was subdivided into "Army" and "People" and had a modest subsidy of half a million francs at its disposal to cover both sections. Valuable work was carried out as long as the Swiss Army was on active service.

On 28th September 1949, the working party was replaced by a legal entity, and a public foundation was formed, still called "Pro Helvetia". Essentially, it took over the activities of the subsection "People". In the course of the years, its field of activities was extended, gradually also to include foreign countries. With a subsidy of only 1.2 million francs, it was not possible to get very far, and the Foundation approached the Government for a substantial increase and a total revision of the relevant constitutional article. It was pointed out that, compared with the cultural canvassing of other nations, the Swiss effort was a very modest one. Many a good initiative had to be dropped for lack of funds.

Last summer, the Government proposed and Parliament accepted a gradual increase from 1.2 to 4 million francs p.a., the latter sum to be reached in 1969. About two-thirds of the subsidy is to be spent outside Switzerland.

The Foundation is under the supervision of the Federal Department of the Interior. This ensures that the Federal Directives and Regulations are observed and that the Foundation employs its funds for the purposes for which it was created. The Federal Council appoints the President and the twenty-four members of the Council, bearing in mind that a balance must be struck between representatives of the four linguistic regions of the country, as well as between the different religious communities and cultural groups.

For twelve years, Professor J. R. von Salis had been President of the Foundation, to be succeeded by Dr. Michael Stettler in November 1964. The Council includes eminent historians, politicians, educationalists and economists, artists and musicians, a publisher, a Federal Judge and the President of the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad — men and women dedicated to a great ideal.

The Council appoints the seven members of the Executive Committee and those of the five working groups. The nature of the work undertaken by the Foundation depends on whether it is within Switzerland or in foreign countries.

Within Switzerland, the Foundation grants scholarships, gives commissions to artists and extends financial aid to musicians and dramatists. In disbursing its funds, "Pro Helvetia" is specifically charged to devote special attention to the two minor linguistic regions: the Grisons and the Ticino. Furthermore, the Foundation is actively concerned with the protection of Swiss historic monuments.

Abroad, the Foundation organises exhibitions, concerts, lectures. It also supplies books, magazines, records and music scores.

The Foundation, whose Secretariat is in Zurich, maintains a Press Service which supplies documentation, articles and photographs to the Foreign Press. It is also responsible for drawing up programmes for foreign visitors who wish to study a particular aspect of Swiss life. Thus, "Pro Helvetia" becomes host to many scholars and experts of all kinds, as well as to newspapermen from all parts of the world, and it endeavours to give them the best possible insight into Swiss cultural life.

As regards the Foundation's activities in Great Britain during the last few years, the exhibition at the Tate Gallery in London "From Hodler to Klee" must be mentioned. It was held during the Swiss Fortnight in 1959. At the same time, the most successful film "Symphony of Switzerland" was produced, and the Foundation gave a guarantee to the Arts Theatre in London for their production of Dürrenmatt's "Die Ehe des Herrn Mississippi". In 1961/62, "Pro Helvetia" was concerned with exhibitions during the Swiss Fair in Preston and at the London Gallions Mount Primary School. Two years ago, another guarantee was given to the students of German at the University of Cambridge for their production of Dürrenmatt's "Romulus der Grosse". In 1965, the Foundation was responsible for the poster exhibition in Edinburgh, Belfast, Manchester, Northampton and London.

There were, too, various lectures, and concerts including the Viol Quartet of the *Scuola Cantorum Basilienensis* and the *Collegium Musicum* under Paul Sacher. The Foundation was responsible for translating Keller's "Der Grüne Heinrich" and works by Burckhardt and Walser. A special article was published in "The Times" during the Swiss Fortnight, and in 1963, Calgari's "The Four Literatures of Switzerland" was published by Adams. The same year, an article "Switzerland — Administration and Social Conditions" (Moergeli) was written for the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.

As the Foundation has no permanent representatives abroad, it is largely dependent on Swiss Embassies and Consulates, as well as such organisations as the Swiss National Tourist Office; these, indeed, contribute a great deal towards making Switzerland known at their own initiative, but they co-operate, too, with "Pro Helvetia".

Doubts have recently been expressed as to the unblemished image of Switzerland in the world. It may be remembered that the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique devoted last year's Assembly in Solothurn to this subject. The critical voices of compatriots from several countries deplored mainly the lack of Swiss cultural *présence* abroad. It is here that the "Pro Helvetia" Foundation can play its part in improving the image of Switzerland. With the increased subsidy, the scope of its activities has no doubt been widened. This is very necessary. As the Federal Council pointed out in its message to Parliament, the world has become both larger and smaller. Larger through the ascendancy of developing countries as fully responsible members of the community of States; smaller on account of modern methods of communications. Switzerland will have to present herself in all her individuality and with all her achievements not only in the Western world, but also in Africa and Asia. Recognition, respect and prestige of a country are not determined merely by its economic success, but also by what it can do and offer at the cultural level. It may be interesting to note here a small, but significant change in the revised constitutional aims of the Foundation; the term *Kulturwerbung* has been replaced by *Pflege der kulturellen Beziehungen*.

At a period when materialistic considerations so often outweigh spiritual and cultural merits, it is wise to remember the words of Jacob Burckhardt (1818-1897) "Turned backward for the salvation of the culture of an earlier time, turned forward for a continued and persevering advocacy of spiritual values in a time which otherwise would be utterly a victim of matter". This is, no doubt, the mission of the "Pro Helvetia" Foundation, and we Swiss abroad in particular welcome its increased activities and wish its efforts every success.

(Based on a talk given by Dr. Winter of "Pro Helvetia" at a dinner of the N.S.H. Council in London in November, and on information received by courtesy of A.T.S. and "Basler Nachrichten".)

RECENT DEATHS IN SWITZERLAND

The following deaths have been reported from Switzerland:

Remy Haeusermann (60), Zurich, sports journalist; Chief of Press at Olympic Winter Games St. Moritz 1948, Football World Championships 1954 and at many federal gymnastic and shooting contests of the post-war years.

Paul Max Ehrensberger (67), Basle and Bern, former Chief of the Tax Division of the Swiss Bank Corpora-

tion; until 1942 with the Federal Tax Office.

Josué Jehouda (74), Geneva, founder of the anti-Hitler "Revue Juive"; author of the book on the history of the Jewish Community in Geneva of which town he was a citizen.

Kapuzinermissionar P. Gérard Faessler (80), Fribourg and Dar-es-Salaam, originally from Appenzell; for two decades Lecturer at the Kollegium Stans; missionary since 1931.

Charles Salmanovitz (81), Geneva, Founder and President of the "Société Générale de Surveillance"; originally from Latvia, but for over fifty years in Geneva and a Swiss citizen.

Dr. Georg Widmer (39), Zurich, one of the initiators and General Secretary of the Swiss Federation of Space Technology.

Madame Hélène Breuleux (80), Lausanne, well-known journalist, partly with "Tribune de Lausanne"; author of the gastronomic guide through French-speaking Switzerland "Grandes Tables et Petits Bistrots" (1964).

Ernst Vogel (66), Basle, well-known musician, flautist of the B.O.G. Orchestra; score copy writer of repute.

Ernest Faivet (74), Delémont, for many years in the Ajoie district and for thirty years in Delémont with the district administration until he became *Regierungsstatthalter*.

Dr. Charles Attinger (49), Zurich, for twenty-five years with the Swiss Master Builders' Association, since 1956 its Central Secretary.

Dr. P. Raphael Meile (69), Engelberg, theologian at the Benedictine Monastery; brother of the former Bishop of St. Gall Dr. Josephus Meile.

Gustave Uebelhardt (85), Delémont, personality from Tavannes; for many years member of the Berne Cantonal Parliament.

Madame Clara Durgnat-Junod, Martigny, painter and alpinist; lived for many years at Salvan (Valais), though she originated from the Canton of Vaud.

Guillaume Carrel (62), Lausanne; broke his spine by falling from a scaffolding in 1934 and has been in hospital ever since.

Jakob Probst (85), Vira Gambarogno/Ticino, well-known sculptor; originated from Reigoldswil/Baselland, but studied in Munich, Paris, Italy and Egypt; lived in Basle and then near Geneva; his works include the reliefs in Geneva Station, the Dornach battle monument, the Henry Dunant monument in Geneva.

Dr. Erich Marx (78), Zurich, publisher of the "Israelitisches Wochenblatt für die Schweiz" since 1921.

Prof. Dr. Ernst Mettler (74), Zurich, mathematician; from 1939 to 1956 Headmaster of "Oberrealschule" Zurich; Hon. Treasurer of the Zurich Foundation "Für das Alter".

Otto Binder, Zurich, for many years Central Secretary of the Foundation "Pro Juventute"; great merits regarding Swiss youth welfare.

August Geiger (91), Sion, father of the well-known glacier pilot.

Rudolf Joho (68), Berne, well-known actor, producer and writer; born at Grosshochstetten, he trained as a plumber, then studied chemistry, later philosophy and literature and returned to Switzerland after the war; held important offices in the "Schweizer Volkstheater" and in the "Centre National Suisse de l'Institut International du Théâtre".

(A.T.S. and "Basler Nachrichten".)