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NEWS FROM SWITZERLAND ● ● ●

N.Z. SWISS IN SWITZERLAND.. by Arnold Biland

May 29th was a red letter day for the N.Z. Swiss; it was the day of the official welcome by Bundesrat Wahlen at the Bundeshaus at 2 p.m. We purposefully arrived early so that we could sit in an open-air cafe and watch our compatriots arrive. You can imagine the fun it was, everyone hailing everyone else, when normally the square in front of the Bundeshaus held nothing but strangers.

Some of us had quite a busy time being interviewed by Press and radio, and Press photographers jostling around.

Seventy-four Swiss were able to attend and as soon as all had arrived we were shown inside the building by the Bundesweibel who acted as our guide.

Special floral decorations and Swiss flags were displayed in our honour in the large foyer. We went up flights of stairs—we sat in venerable parliamentary comfortable chairs—we walked over mirror-like parquet floors—looked up to admire glowingly patriotic and allegorical paintings and sculptures—were told how the Swiss democracy works and where the beautiful drapes and carpets and choice furniture came from in the diplomat reception chamber. We wandered through the fine lobby and finally we were shepherded back into the foyer—all this accomplished in the most entertaining fashion by the Weibel (a compatriot from the Tessin) who, without a doubt, possessed the gifts of a dramatic actor, who not only spoke but enacted everything as well, spiced with plenty of humour, delivered in a mixture of English and German.

Once we were all in the foyer again, Bundesrat Wahlen arrived amidst enthusiastic handclapping. The director of the Auslandschweizersekretariat, Dr Halbheer, introduced Arnold Biland, the organiser of the groups to Bundesrat Wahlen.

Arnold Biland then thanked the authorities and the Auslandschweizersekretariat for the kindness and welcome the N.Z. Swiss had received, described their loyalty to their homeland, their endeavour to carry on the good name of the Swiss in foreign countries and their eventual return to their chosen homeland with memories not likely to be forgotten.

Bundesrat Wahlen then spoke to us all of the interest the Government was taking in the welfare of the Swiss living abroad, the problems our Switzerland was facing in a changing Europe and his last words were a promise to look after our little country "mir tue uf euses Landli scho ufasse." This went straight to our hearts.

It was certainly a stroke of genius of the Auslandschweizersekretariat to have arranged this official welcome for us. We all left the Bundeshaus with a glow in our hearts and a feeling of "belong." The other courteous gesture of the Sekretariat was, that they

asked our party of 74 Swiss to come and be their guests at the conclusion of the Bundeshaus function. And so, off we marched across the Kornhausbrücke to Alpenstrasse 26.

How welcome was the shady large garden with seats everywhere, for we were rather hot and footsore by the time we arrived. The excellent wine or Süssmost with delicacies to nibble revived us very quickly.

Herr Dr Halbheer welcomed us warmly to the Auslandschweizersekretariat, made us feel at home and asked us to go inside the handsome building (incidentally, this had been donated by a rich "Auslandschweizer" quite some years ago for its present-day purpose). Much literature of interest to the members of the 5th Switzerland was displayed and freely available for the taking.

Many of our readers will remember Sister Friedli; she especially came along to see us all. She now lives in the Diakonissenheim just across the road from the Auslandschweizeramt. Press and Press photographers were very busy again during the garden party at the Sekretariat. It was late afternoon by the time we dispersed, well content and assured that, although we live furthest away from our Switzerland, we are by no means forgotten.

ARRIVAL OF N.Z. SWISS AT KLOTEN

The three N.Z. Swiss groups which travelled to Switzerland had a surprise in store when they arrived at Kloten. Upon their arrival (each group travelled separately) they were met at the plane by the Direktor of the Auslandschweizersekretariat, Dr Halbheer and by Miss Messerli, one of the secretaries, resplendent in Bernese Tracht. Dr Halbheer spoke warm words of welcome and the wives of group leaders were given a bouquet. John Steiner, being without his wife, received a bottle of Kirsch.

It will interest our readers that by sheer co-incidence the second group boarded the Swissair plane at Athens on which our Chancellor, Vice-Consul Schaerer, and his family, were passengers.

PEN FRIEND WANTED

Young Swiss, 18½ years old, wishes to correspond with boy or girl, preferably in French or German, with the object to exchange stamps and postcards. His name and address is: Bruno Ruf, Salistrasse, 1071 Oftringen/AG, Switzerland.

All matters regarding the Swiss Society . . . to—

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