

Two-way traffic

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competing in groups and 1,139 competing as individuals, a total of 71,717 men and women, for women, too, took part and some of them very successfully. The experts also say that the discipline of the shots was exemplary.

When the writer arrived in Zurich the Festival was over. But everywhere she heard about the successful organisation and the congenial atmosphere. The Swiss

have a reputation for arranging and enjoying festivals and no doubt the two great "Federal" in 1963, that of the gymnasts and that of the shots will go down as "bull's eyes" in the annals of festival history.

(Based on reports from A.T.S., "Basler Nachrichten" and an article by Remy Häusermann, in "Zurich", the official periodical of the Zurich Tourist Office.)

TWO-WAY TRAFFIC

The Swiss Abroad meet at St. Moritz

The Assembly of the Swiss Abroad is held in a different place in Switzerland every year, either a town or a holiday resort which commands enough hotels to accommodate between three and five hundred Swiss at the height of the tourist season in August. It stands to reason that more people attend an assembly held in a town which is easily get-at-able than in a rather remote place like St. Moritz where this year's rally was held from 16th to 18th August. Even so some 350 Swiss from all corners of the earth journeyed to the Engadine which presented itself in brilliant sunshine on the first day of the Assembly.

Friday was devoted to the exacting work of the Commission of the Swiss Abroad (ASK), the true "Parliament" of the Swiss living away from home. On it the majority of Colonies have their representatives, from countries as far apart as Peru and Turkey, South Africa and Scandinavia.

The Swiss Colony in Great Britain was represented at the meeting of the Commission at St. Moritz by Mrs. Mariann Meier for the South and Dr. H. B. Knuchel for the North.

The Chairman of the Commission, Dr G. Schürch, opened the first session at 9.30 a.m. at the well-appointed and luxurious Kulm Hotel. The Commission was hard at work all day and there was little time to rest before a press conference was held at 5 p.m. followed in turn by a reception given by the commune of St. Moritz. Its President welcomed the Commission, and generous refreshments of precious local wines and delicious dried meat were presented.

After dinner the first plenary session was opened by the President of the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (ASO), Dr. G. Schürch. Amongst the Guests of Honour who attended the gathering were Federal Councillor Bonvin, members of the Cantonal Government and a representative each of the highest Federal Legislative, the National Council and the Council of States. Many Government departments were represented, the Swiss radio and the press, and in addition several members of the Diplomatic and Consular Services were present, amongst them Consul and Mrs. Ribi (formerly of London, at present in Zagreb), the Swiss Consul in London and Mrs. Tosio and the Vice-Consul in Manchester and Mrs. Sollberger. Germany, France and Italy had the largest contingents (between 25 and 40 members each) whereas from Great Britain, apart from the Consular representatives, only few people attended, such as Mr. and Mrs. A. F. Suter and daughter, Mrs. G. O. Davidson, Prof. J. Inebnit, Dr. H. B. Knuchel, Mr. J. A. Reiber and the Editor of the "Swiss Observer" with her son and three daughters.

The President gave a short picture of the Organisation, followed by brief reports on various aspects of the

work done by the Secretariat in Berne, specially by Dr. H. J. Halbheer, the Director. A short statement on the Solidarity Fund was presented by its President Dr. Froelich.

The party then split up into three groups. One discussed questions affecting the Colonies and the activities of the Secretariat, the second concerned itself with the service for young Swiss abroad and the third with Old Age Insurance and Military Service Substitute Tax. The delegates of the Solidarity Fund held their Annual Meeting. The members of the Fund in Great Britain were represented by their delegate Mrs. M. Meier. It was nearly midnight when this group at last disbanded.

On Saturday the theme of this year's assembly "die Selbstbehauptung der Schweiz in der Welt von heute und morgen" (how Switzerland can hold her own in the world of today and tomorrow) was considered.

The first speaker was Corps Commander R. Frick, the Chief of Training of the Swiss Army who spoke on Switzerland's Military defence. Next followed the former Federal Councillor Prof. Max Weber (member of the National Council) who spoke on Switzerland's economic position. The third speaker, the Central President of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique, addressed the assembly on the spiritual defence of Switzerland.

It is rare to have three excellent lecturers of a very high standard in a row. They gave a most convincing and reassuring picture of Switzerland's position.

Next Fürspreh M. Jaccard, Head of the Service for the Swiss Abroad of the Swiss Foreign Office dealt with the proposed Article of competence concerning the Swiss abroad which is at present with the Swiss Political Department.

The head of Information of the Swiss National Exhibition 1964, Mr. J. Beglinger gave the latest news about the "EXPO", and a short message in Italian by one of the inland members of the Commission rounded off the morning session.

There was a special lunch preceded by separate meetings which had been arranged by the Protestant and Catholic clergy in charge of church questions concerning the Swiss abroad.

After lunch it was the turn of the Swiss living abroad. Speakers from several countries gave short talks on the main theme. The representative of the Swiss Colony in Great Britain, Mrs. M. Meier, opened the session. She was followed by speakers from France, Austria, Italy, Sweden and Spain.

Prof. Inebnit made a plea for international civil service. The Chairman promised that the subject would be put up for discussion at next year's Assembly when the theme would be "Switzerland and the Developing Countries".

The Tourist Director of St. Moritz, Mr. Kasper, welcomed the audience in Ladin, one of the dialects of Romansch, the fourth national language. He pointed out the advantages of the Engadine and St. Moritz in particular and said that the first electric light in Switzerland had been established on the very spot at the Kulm Hotel.

The highlight of the afternoon was Federal Councillor Bonvin's speech, a most unusual piece of official oratory. The illustrious speaker addressed the meeting without a manuscript and managed to clothe the official greetings from the Government into a message of goodwill coming straight from the heart.

The President then thanked all the speakers for their valuable contributions. He said that no great decisions had been taken and no resolutions had been formed. But it had been a most stimulating and interesting meeting and the most urgent need had been established, that of informing more thoroughly the Swiss abroad of what was happening in Switzerland.

With this the serious part of the Assembly was concluded and the members adjourned to a reception given by the Cantonal Government. To the strains of a local brass band drinks were served, and everywhere great satisfaction was expressed at the excellent spirit of the gathering and the real two-way traffic between the Swiss abroad and their compatriots at home.

In the evening a festive crowd met at another of St. Moritz's luxury hotels, the Palace, where the Banquet was held. The Editor of the "Swiss Observer" had the honour of being put at the top table next to Federal Councillor Bonvin and the Commune President of St. Moritz, Mr. H. Fleisch. A group of visiting yodellers from Central Switzerland entertained the party during dinner, and afterwards National Councillor O. Hess delivered a message from Parliament.

The "Cor Romansch da San Murezzan" delighted the gathering with beautiful songs from the Engadine and young men and women in picturesque national costumes performed some lively dances. A dozen or so recruits from Swiss communities abroad rendered a few soldiers' songs, and then a local rural band played "Ländler" tunes to which energetic dancing went on till two o'clock in the morning.

When the visitors woke up on Sunday morning they discovered that snow had fallen in the night and the whole of St. Moritz and the neighbouring mountains were covered in white. This unfortunately meant that the picnic on Alp Surlej had to be cancelled. But as the sky was a brilliant blue and the sun shone serenely, the outing by postal motor coach to Silvaplana and aerial cabin car to Piz Corvatsch took place just the same for those who had stout shoes and warm clothes. The view was magnificent and it was a most unusual treat to sit in warm sunshine in several inches of powdery snow at Murtèl station (9,000 feet).

The unexpected snow and change of plans meant that the usual closing ceremony on the Sunday afternoon of the Assembly did not take place. But even if the National Anthem could not be sung by the whole community, the feeling of belonging was there and opinion was unanimous that the 41st Assembly had been a great success in every way.

Mariann.

Individual reports will follow in the next few issues of the "Swiss Observer".

THE "PARLIAMENT" OF THE SWISS ABROAD AT WORK

The Commission of the Swiss Abroad (ASK) met for the second time this year on 16th August at St. Moritz. Under the chairmanship of Dr. G. Schuerch, the President of the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (ASO), this body of men (and one woman) dealt with a very heavy agenda. As already reported, Great Britain was represented by Mrs. Mariann Meier (South) and Dr. H. B. Knuchel (North). The two proxies Mr. E. Bonvin and Mr. P. Christen were not present. Apart from delegates from many countries, several inland members devoted to the cause of their compatriots abroad attended.

The President opened the meeting at 9.30 a.m. He reiterated that the ASK was not just a group of friends who gathered like members of a skittle club, but a responsible body of people who represented thousands of Swiss living abroad. In order to be taken seriously the Commission had to follow basic rules of procedure and adhere to certain regulations. It was up to the representatives to ensure that the ASK was accepted as the true Parliament of the Swiss abroad.

The first item on the agenda was the election of a new Vice-Chairman in the person of Mr. Jean Heer (Rivaz, VD), as the present deputy, Mr. F. Siordet (La Tour-de-Peilz), had to resign on account of his duties as Vice-President of the International Red Cross Committee.

The Chairman referred to the death of Mr. Urs Feer from Lausanne, a member who had achieved great merits as one of the architects of the Solidarity Fund. The Swiss abroad owed a great deal to his devotion.

The question of postal vote was then debated and it was decided to leave it for urgent cases only when it was a question of time and the answer could be given by a single yes or no. Whilst it was important for Colonies to discuss any problem fully, the constitution of the ASO stated that representatives voted according to their own opinion which was formed during the debate at the Meeting. It was argued that Colonies overseas faced difficulties sending representatives. Against that the Chairman pointed out that proxies had been created for that reason. It had been found useful for countries far away to appoint a proxy in Switzerland, a person well acquainted with the conditions and opinions of that particular Colony. This method was far more satisfactory than a postal vote which could never be complete.

The Director of the Secretariat, Dr. H. J. Halbheer, reported on his journey to USA and Mexico. During his visit the first Presidents' Assembly of Swiss Societies in USA was held along the pattern which exists in Europe.

The Commission accepted two more groups, Ghana and St. Louis, and co-opted two new members from USA (Chicago) and Mexico-City.

The next item on the agenda was the petition of the Swiss in Italy concerning the Federal decree regarding the permission to purchase land in Switzerland. Whilst agreeing that according to international law the Swiss abroad would have to be treated the same way as foreigners, representatives from most Colonies present at the assembly last year had signed a petition asking the Federal Council to see to it that when a Swiss from abroad applied for permission to purchase land the fact that he was Swiss should be accepted as sufficient reason. The answer from Berne had been negative, and the Swiss Colony in Italy now wanted to take new steps. The