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EXPO 1964

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

The third Swiss National Exhibition — the so-called "EXPO" or "Landi" 1964 — is at long last a reality. It was opened in the presence of practically all members of the Federal and Cantonal governments, the heads of the Diplomatic Missions and a multitude of V.I.P.'s on the 30th of April, and it will stay open for fully six months. Glorious spring sunshine adorned the innumerable structures of all shapes and forms and purposes of this widely spread "new-town", epitomising Swiss life, work, aims and ambitions of the past, present and future. Everywhere between the various sectors of the EXPO and surrounding them the lovely greenery of nature, skilfully preserved in groups of trees, the lawns and flower-beds provide a restful framework for all the glorious works of man, while the wonderful expanse of the blue lake lapping the shores of the EXPO itself contributes both the most exquisite colour contrast to the trees and exhibition halls and assures a steady source of comforting coolness for the expected fifteen or sixteen millions of visitors.

Two days before the official opening, about 1,000 journalists or more from all parts of Switzerland and beyond were afforded an opportunity to have a preview of the EXPO. Like all manifestations of this sort, however, also this one seemed to require still quite a lot of final touches which a multitude of workers and superintendants were busy to provide in time for the great day. All the same the EXPO revealed itself to the critical eye of the press most impressively in the same gay spring atmosphere that crowned the four years' preparatory work that went into this proud National effort — thrown open to the world at large on the 30th of April.

Having missed the first two National exhibitions due to the outbreak of the two World Wars, the writer of these first impressions of the EXPO 1964 avidly seized the earliest opportunity of the press visit to see what our beloved home land has to show the world in such a magnificent setting. In 1914 the writer's parents had planned a visit to the "Landi" in Berne in the course of the summer holidays, but it was closed down abruptly on the tragic day of August when the first World War broke out. Twenty-five years later the writer wished to combine his late holidays in the home country with a visit to the "Landi" in Zurich, which visit, however, was again frustrated by the outbreak of World War II, the ominous development of the international situation keeping the

writer busy at his London post right through the summer until it was too late to go to Zurich. This time, after another quarter of a century, the danger of a new World War intervening with the full run of the EXPO seems to be remote if not entirely absent, not because the world has become any better or more peace-minded, but rather because the modern engines of war are so vastly destructive that their possessors themselves are terrified to even contemplate using them. It is a sobering reflection to feel completely confident that war might be banned for ever — only because it would be suicidal for the world at large.

This realisation provides a sombre background to the EXPO 1964 which seems to be called upon to show the world what wonderful potentialities of a rich and happy development it has twice retarded so grievously by the cruel resort to arms and mutual destruction. Our little country, twice spared by providence being directly involved in those wars, has been enabled thereby to develop peacefully and steadily by hard work from relative poverty with practically no natural resources to one of the most prosperous nations in the world. But it is not only our prosperity of which the EXPO 1964 is witness in the eyes of the world. What Switzerland may show the world with justified pride and yet with due modesty is rather the spiritual meaning of a peaceful country so heterogeneously composed, the contented way of living together not by subjecting the minority elements of our Nation to the superior will of the majority, but by mutual appreciation of our very diversity which constitutes the real source of our best national heritage and requires careful and loving preservation in a world tending far too much in the direction of uniformity. We may perhaps justly take pride — not in our hard-earned material wealth — but in the spiritually important things it has enabled us to do, in what we are making of it and how we use it not only for our own benefit as a nation, but also in a wider context to help underdeveloped countries forward in the march of development.

Thus the centre piece of the EXPO at Lausanne is naturally and most happily devoted to a symbolic showing of the essential values which we believe have helped and are helping to maintain what is best in the make-up of our nation. In a long sequence of imaginatively shaped and grouped buildings of great simplicity — half tents,

half temples mostly fashioned in rough wood — the “Path of Switzerland” presents to the visitor the basic beliefs and principles of our national life in symbolic figures, each with a simple text. Starting from the hard work of utilising the poor resources of nature, the development of communities, trades and industries is shown. The freedom of the individual, of religion and expression are represented with due regard to their necessary limitations for the sake of social and economic justice. The necessity and the will of a well-organised self-defence of Switzerland is coupled with a sense of solidarity and responsibility going far beyond our borders and with providing a haven of refuge for those fleeing from persecution and oppression in some other countries. The proper planning of town developments, roads and communications, supplies of power, etc., is shown in due combination with modern ideas of improved education and scientific research, where again much can be done and is done for students from all over the world.

Not all the modern ideas of representing these abstract concepts of sound national values will appeal equally to elder and even younger visitors, such as a weird contraption made of old bits of flue pipes and strips of metal of four colours to illustrate the harmonious confluence of our national languages. Pride of place is given in the open to an outsize piece of so-called sculpture composed of odd scraps of rail and bits of old cars and bicycles with some moving parts — to show what? Most visitors will probably be happier where more conventional methods

of representation are employed, which is of course the case in most other sections of the EXPO dealing with the more mundane aspects of life in Switzerland: such as the groups of buildings devoted to agriculture (“Feld und Wald”), to industry and trades, to transport, to the army and, above all, to “L'art de vivre”. This delightfully imaginative section is devoted to sport and health, holiday activities, clothing and eating, the home, the arts, culture and science. The National Tourist Office is showing a wonderful film projected on to circular walls. The visitors stand in the centre and see the beauties of nature all round them as if they were in the plane or train or car from which the films were taken in all directions simultaneously.

The pièce de résistance, the Mesoscaphe-Submarine specially built for the EXPO, which has received so much advance publicity, sad to relate, seems to be a non-starter. It is hoped to get it going by August but it may remain a salutary though costly reminder to everyone that even the Swiss can make whopping mistakes. Fortunately the other special attraction, the mono-rail overhead trolley transporter, weaving its way in grand loops from section to section, works to perfection. After a fleeting visit only a few of the things at the EXPO could be mentioned. There is plenty to see and learn and enjoy for young and less young day after day. As a whole the extended shore West of Lausanne/Ouchy has been made into a worthy though temporary Mecca for all those who love Switzerland.

E.

LANDSGEMEINDESONNTAG — SWISS OPEN AIR PARLIAMENTS

On the last Sunday in April, the open air parliaments of Unterwalden and Appenzell took place, four in all, i.e. one in each Half-Canton. They were favoured with exceptionally lovely spring weather, and the citizens arrived in large numbers. All the four “Landsgemeinden” had official guests. The President of the Confederation, Federal Councillor von Moos, attended the one in his own Canton of Obwalden, Federal Councillor Spuehler in Nidwalden and Federal Councillor Bonvin in Innerrhoden.

The Obwalden “Landsgemeinde” on the Landenberg above Sarnen elected Kantonsrat Arnold Durrer, Giswil (Liberal), as new member of the government in place of the retiring Landstatthalter Hans Gasser, Lungern (Conservative). The new “Landammann” is Regierungsrat Leo von Wyl, Kaegiswil, whilst the previous “Landammann” Christian Dillier has become “Landstatthalter”. New judges were elected, and credits were granted to a total of nearly half a million francs.

Landammann Remigi Blaettler retired at the Nidwalden “Landsgemeinde” at Wyl near Stans, and his successor was elected in the person of Dr. Alfred Graeni, Stans. The new “Landesstatthalter” is Regierungsrat Walter Vockinger, Stans. New judges were also elected. Thirteen proposals were submitted to the electorate, of which ten were accepted without opposition. Two more were accepted after lively debate, and the third, a contribution towards building a road at Ennetbuergen, was defeated.

The “Landsgemeinde” of Appenzell-Ausserrhoden took place at Trogen. The government was confirmed in office, and new judges had to be appointed. A proposal for pensions for members of the government was defeated,

but an increase of allowances from Fr.7,500.— to 12,000.— for “Regierungsräte” was accepted by a two-thirds majority. Revision of old age insurance and of taxation was agreed to without opposition.

The deputy Landammann Dr. Albert Broger had to be replaced at the “Landsgemeinde” of Innerrhoden at Appenzell. Three times electors had to vote until the result was final — Kantonsrichter Dr. Leo Mittelholzer was elected. The governing “Landammann” was confirmed in office (Karl Dobler). Various financial proposals were accepted without opposition.

The remaining “Landsgemeinde”, that of Glarus, took place on 3rd May. It was a beautiful day when 5,000 electors of Glarus assembled in the “Ring”. The governments of Thurgau and Zug were this year's guests. Landammann Herman Feusi opened the ceremony with a welcoming speech, and after swearing in leaders and electors, Landrat Michael Beglinger was elected Civil Judge. The financial report was accepted, and grants agreed to for the Sanatorium Braunwald and the building of a home for epileptics in Zurich. The list of public holidays was reviewed, and Good Friday will in future also be observed by the Catholics, not only by the Protestants as hitherto.

Vocational guidance will in future be handled by the cantonal authorities. After lively debate, the credit for the EXPO, amounting to Fr.190,000.— was accepted.

The “Landsgemeinde” lasted two and a half hours.

(News received by courtesy of the Agence Télégraphique Suisse.)