

# Spring session of the commission of the Swiss abroad

Autor(en): **MM.**

Objektyp: **Article**

Zeitschrift: **The Swiss observer : the journal of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK**

Band (Jahr): - **(1966)**

Heft 1500

PDF erstellt am: **19.07.2024**

Persistenter Link: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-694381>

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## SPRING SESSION OF THE COMMISSION OF THE SWISS ABROAD

Due to the Golden Jubilee of the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad, this year's spring meeting of its "Parliament" was postponed from early March to 22nd April. It was held in Berne on the day before the official celebration in Basle. As is usual at the spring session, most of the countries represented were European, though delegates attended also from the Near East, from Morocco and South Africa. Soon, it is hoped, to have representatives also from Canada and to have elected members from Australia and U.S.A. (at present only co-opted members). Over half of the twenty members from within Switzerland attended the meeting, and Great Britain was represented by the two regular members Mrs. Mariann Meier (South) and Dr. H. B. Knuchel (North) as well as by Mrs. Meier's proxy, Mr. E. Bonvin.

One of the most important items on the agenda was the progress report by the President, Dr. G. Schürch, on the efforts made to improve the image of Switzerland. Since the Assembly in Solothurn last August, the thought to do more for the country has been activated. Dr. Schürch reported on the two meetings which took place in Berne with the then still Federal Councillor F. T. Wahlen. At one, organisations like "Pro Helvetia", Swissair, Swiss National Tourist Office were represented, and at the other, the six speakers from Swiss communities abroad, who had voiced concern in Solothurn, were invited to a discussion. The most important aspect of it all was better information and improved co-ordination. It was vital, said the President, that the Colonies were to be pulled in, and he thought that there was room for improvement on both sides.

The question of information was discussed, and the suggestion of a bi-monthly news bulletin was put forward. On the whole, it was felt that it would be preferable to have more information on happenings in Switzerland in the "Echo" rather than introduce yet another publication. Before a definite decision is taken, the matter will be investigated further.

The annual report was read and accepted. It contains references to the Constitutional Article and to the permission to buy property in Switzerland; this, thanks to the efforts of the Swiss in Italy, to Dr. L. Zellweger and his namesake Councillor of States, has now been satisfactorily dealt with, and, in future, Swiss abroad no longer require a permit. The image of Switzerland in the world, youth activities, film service, Solidarity Fund and the Swiss schools abroad all have their place allotted in the comprehensive survey of the manifold activities of the Organisation.

The accounts were considered, and it was reported with gratitude that, after only six years, the "Bundesfeierspende" (collections and sales on Swiss National Day) had again been devoted to the Swiss abroad. Special attention was drawn to the Solidarity Fund and the "Echo", the illustrated monthly magazine (in German, French and some Italian) specially published for the Swiss living outside Switzerland. The Solidarity Fund is not yet able to carry the cost of administration, and members were asked to appeal further to their fellow countrymen and women to support this admirable scheme of self-help. As regards the "Echo", an increase of subscription will be necessary to cover the deficit in production.

The meeting spent some time on the arrangements made to celebrate the "Year of Fifth Switzerland" in a suitable way. The year is important mainly for two reasons: the Golden Jubilee of the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad and the plebiscite on the proposed Constitutional Article for the *Auslandschweizer*. This has already been accepted unanimously by the two Federal Chambers, and the electorate will go to the poll on 16th October. The meeting expressed gratitude to the men specially concerned with it and passed a resolution of thanks to the Federal Assembly. To mark the special character of this year's Assembly in August, this is going to be extended to cover nearly a week. The theme will be *Leistungen und Zukunft der Fünften Schweiz (L'Oeuvre et action de la Cinquième Suisse et son Avenir)*.

Before lunch, a Press Conference was held at which members of the Parliamentary Press were informed on the work of the Commission and of the Jubilee year arrangements. (*A detailed programme will be published in the next issue of the "Swiss Observer"*). One of the most faithful members of the staff of the Secretariat in Berne, Miss R. Zuellig, was honoured by a special presentation for her 45 years of loyal service to the Organisation.

MM

## ART TREASURES IN ZURICH

This city's Kunsthaus (Fine Arts Museum) is currently playing host to an important exhibition of works from the New Gallery of Vienna's Kunsthistorische Museum (Museum of Fine Arts). The show, which will remain in the City on the Limmat for some weeks, features fine examples of old masters as well as a notable collection of paintings and sculptures from the nineteenth century. Although all owned by the Vienna Museum, these works have not been on display for about three decades because of lack of available space. They include creations by such major nineteenth-century artists as Arnold Böcklin, Delacroix, Monet, Renoir, van Gogh, Cézanne, as well as Adolph Menzel and Max Liebermann.

[S.N.T.O.]

## SWITZERLAND SCORES A NEW SUCCESS IN THE FIELD OF ELECTRONIC WATCHMAKING

At the Pleasure Boating Salon in Paris, the Swiss watch factory of Patek Philippe (Geneva), which can be considered one of the pioneers of electronic watchmaking, has just presented a new electronic deck chronometer called "Chronoquartz" which undoubtedly marks a turning point in the construction of deck chronometers. It is in fact the first electronic quartz deck chronometer comparable in price to its mechanical predecessors. As its name indicates, this appliance is worked by quartz; it is entirely transistorized and no longer has any moving part, except for the hands. Consequently its running is practically completely unaffected by outside phenomena, thus guaranteeing really remarkable results. The Chronoquartz is the culmination of the work begun by Patek Philippe in 1950 in the field of electronic timekeeping. It is now possible to prophesy with certainty the general use of these truly wonderful timepieces.

[O.S.E.C.]