

Fifth Switzerland

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“FIFTH SWITZERLAND”



Andri Bisaz, the dynamic young man in charge of the Youth Service of the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad, has met many Swiss boys and girls, young men and women who make up the second generation of Swiss living abroad. He has been impressed by what these young people had to say. Most of them he met in the youth camps organised by the Secretariat in Berne, and the very fact that they took part showed that they were at least willing to get to know Switzerland. Their opinions often coincide with those of other Swiss who left Switzerland at an early age, either temporarily or to settle abroad. But their views are also those of the thinking and enlightened “old” *Auslandschweizer* who know the shortcomings as well as the sterling qualities of the home country and also of the Swiss institutions abroad. For them, terms like “patriotism” and “loyalty to the homeland”, as well as many political doctrines are to be treated carefully, even if not with the same scepticism and suspicion which often make the young generation reject them completely.

The young Swiss that Mr. Bisaz got to know in the camps, were between 16 and 25, and his conclusions are the result of many lively discussions. Some of the views are well-founded, other spontaneous and often immature, some decidedly prejudiced. Apart from the fact that any intelligent young man and woman is bound to question establishment and tradition in order to find his (her) own feet, the child growing up abroad is continually faced with two worlds, that of his family's Swiss ways and that of his surroundings. Comparison begins at an early age, and the problems for those who are not prepared just to drift or be bullied into one or the other, are considerable.

The next Assembly of the Swiss Abroad in Schaffhausen (23rd to 25th August) will have as its theme “THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE YOUNG SWISS ABROAD TO SWITZERLAND”. All concerned with running Swiss societies and institutions know only too well how difficult it is to induce the second generation to take part in their activities. To many young Swiss, most societies seem antiquated and uninteresting. Even if one agrees that many youngsters are not aware of the full extent of the problems, it must also be admitted that there is no smoke without fire, and that much could and should be done in order to activate not only the Swiss institutions in the Colonies, but also the relationship between the Swiss abroad and the homeland.

The young people are willing to take an active interest in anything they *believe* in; if our societies cannot inspire them, it is futile to complain and to blame the youngsters. We have to put our own house in order first, and the odds are that we can produce something which will attract the young men and women, not just to spend a few happy evenings, but to take part with constructive ideas and practical support.

As a first step, the Assembly in Schaffhausen will give the opportunity to discuss the whole aspect of the problem. The theme has been split up into four sections:

- 1) The young Swiss abroad between country of residence and homeland:
 - How does the young Swiss see himself (herself)?
 - What does Swiss citizenship mean to him (to her)?

THE PROBLEMS OF THE YOUNG SWISS ABROAD

- What is his relationship to his (her) country of residence?
- 2) Relationship to Switzerland:
 - What does he (she) expect of Switzerland?
 - How can he (she) get to know and appreciate Switzerland?
 - What does Switzerland expect of him (her)?
- 3) Relationship to the Swiss Societies:
 - How can the young Swiss take an active part?
 - What can the Swiss Societies do for the young Swiss?
 - What does the young Swiss expect from the Swiss Societies?
- 4) Relationship to the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad and its Secretariat:
 - Aims and objects and extension of the activities of the Youth Service.

It is hoped that the whole question will be discussed in the various societies beforehand. Above all, young people are invited to make their points. Any contributions by individuals should be sent to the local Club or other Swiss institution, or to the President of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the U.K., Dr. H. W. Egli, 17 Corringham Road, London N.W.11. The Editor of the “Swiss Observer” will also be pleased to accept any contributions. The Federation have their meeting on 27th May, and the findings will be discussed then. Any young candidate who would be willing to go to Schaffhausen and take part in the discussion should apply to Dr. Egli or the local Club President by that date, sending in a synopsis of what he or she would like to say.

Some of the criticism which has been voiced is that there are not enough *young* officers in the clubs and societies, that a President who has been in office for nearly a generation cannot be expected to understand young potential members, that Consulates and Embassies often fail to draw attention to societies and institutions, Colony Bulletins, etc., that folklore and card playing are not attractive to the young, that often the 1st August is neglected by Consulate and Embassy, that the Swiss Club meets only for expensive meals in “posh” hotels and restaurants, that there is not enough chance to meet Swiss individuals and groups coming from home, and that special Youth Evenings with definite programmes should be organised to which one could take nationals of the country of residence.

Some of these points do not or only slightly apply to the Swiss communities in the British Isles; others fit only too well. It must be admitted that a lot could be done to improve matters. As a splendid example may be given the Swiss Club in Manchester — see their report on another page of this issue — where a special evening was arranged to receive the report on the Assembly of the Swiss Abroad in Lugano, and where many young members took part in the survey made by the Club with regard to the new Constitutional Article for the Swiss Abroad. Their Annual Banquet and other club events are well patronised by the younger generation, and the Swiss Club give them special terms. Perhaps societies and clubs should appoint a responsible *younger* member to look after the young.

Some of the societies aim at introducing important personalities of the country of residence to hear interesting lectures and addresses by prominent visiting Swiss. Such efforts help to improve the image of Switzerland, and obviously, they cannot be organised over a sandwich and a cup of tea. Perhaps clubs should make it a habit of inviting young people to attend in order to hear eminent personalities from home and to take part in the debates.

The young generation do not remember the horrors and atmosphere of wartime. Economic affluence, T.V. and space research have become realities. They are impressed by Vietnam and the racial problems, where the older generation is apt to shrug their shoulders resignedly. The young live in a world of thought and experience, which the older generations fail to understand. In his report on the problem, Andri Bisaz quotes Schelsky, slightly altered, and says "Youth is more critical, more sceptic, more suspicious, has less faith and fewer illusions than any previous young generation; youth is without pathos, without programme, without maxims". But youth is ready to work for concrete aims, in reconstruction camps, in aid to developing countries, Peace Corps, help in disasters — those are the aims youth can get enthusiastic about.

On the face of it, it seems that the generation gap prevents young and old from meeting. Yet it is not true that the older man and woman, too, have to adapt themselves in a changing world. They will have to understand that Jazz, beat music, pop art and enthusiasm for sport and space adventure, but often also anti-something demonstrations are but an expression of youth's tremendous vitality. Some of that should and could be activated in the interest of the home country. Nor should we expect that the deep and natural ties the young Swiss abroad have with their country of residence, are suppressed or even severed. We do nobody a good turn if we let our children walk about waving the Swiss flag and talk "Schwyzertütsch" at the top of our voices. The respect for their right to make a choice begins at home. We may regret if they opt for their country of residence, but a definite and responsible decision is preferable to sitting on the fence for ever. It does not prevent them from appreciating what is good in the country of their parents. Their present may be uncertain, their future in the country of residence, but their past irrevocably lies in the country of their parents, and that is a value which will remain. Like other nationals who have a deep interest in Switzerland, the young Swiss who has opted for his country of residence, perhaps even fights for it, remains a valuable link, and it is up to the older generation, the various institutions at home and abroad that that link remains untarnished. So often one

is apt to think that only the members of Swiss clubs and societies are the "good" *Auslandschweizer*. How wrong that assumption is! Much is done on the quiet for the interest of the home country, by the so-called "isolated Swiss", by those who object to organised activities, to club rules and time-honoured club traditions. But their contribution to uphold the image of Switzerland is still considerable; many young Swiss are amongst them, too.

A realistic policy for the Swiss abroad cannot be made in Berne. The raw material for it must come from the Swiss communities abroad. And that is why the youth camps, summer and winter, have been organised by the Secretariat, why the Assembly in Schaffhausen will devote itself to the young Swiss abroad. If the deliberations in the picturesque town of the Munot are to be fruitful, we must take the young Swiss abroad and what they will have to say, seriously. Only then may we expect the young people to take seriously our own experience, only then will they respect our own views and learn to appreciate them.

There is no magic formula to solve the problem. But with goodwill and patience on both sides, at least a starting-point can be established in Schaffhausen. *MM*

TAKEOVER IN THE SWISS CHEMICAL INDUSTRY

The Swiss chemical products factories Ciba Ltd. J. R. Geigy Ltd. and Hoffmann-La Roche Ltd., in Basle, are taking over the majority of the shares of Fluka Ltd. Chemical Works at Buchs (St. Gall), a firm founded in 1950 and going in for the manufacture and sale of chemical products for laboratories, with a staff of about 200. The three Basle firms, which are dividing these shares equally among themselves, are taking them over in order to ensure the supply of chemicals to laboratories in chemical research institutes in industry and higher education. Fluka will continue to work as an independent firm, with the same management as before. [O.S.E.C.]

EXPANSION OF THE SWISS CHEMICAL INDUSTRY IN THE UNITED STATES

The United States branch of the big chemical and pharmaceutical products factory Ciba in Basle has just opened its new regional centre for the southern United States at Charlotte (North Carolina). Situated in the heart of a thriving industrial area, this town is also the centre for textile research and technology in the United States. Ciba Chemical & Dye is one of the main suppliers of specialities for manufacturers of textiles, paper, paint, plastics, leather, soap, detergents, and printing inks. [O.S.E.C.]

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