

Society and social scene

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Federation leaders meet Mrs Hedi Lang

NEARLY 30 leading members of the Swiss community in Britain were introduced to Mrs Hedi Lang, president of the National Council (Nationalrat) at a reception at the Swiss Embassy last month.

They also met Mr Jean-Marc Sauvant, secretary-general of the Federal Assembly (Bundesversammlung), and Dr Karlheinz Ritter, president of the Liechtenstein Landtag.

The visitors were in London to attend the Conference of Presidents of European Parliamentary Assemblies.

The Embassy reception, which was hosted by the Swiss Ambassador, M. Claude Caillat, followed the annual general meeting of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the United Kingdom.

The meeting was attended by the Ambassador, together with the Minister, Mr C. Caratsch, the Consul, Mr C. Duboulet, and the Consul General in Manchester, Mr Charles Glauser. Visitors from Berne were Mr M. Ney, director of the Secretariat of the Swiss Abroad, and Dr D. von Wyss, treasurer of the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad.

In his report the president of the Federation, Mr Bernard Simon, said a number of meetings had been held during the year regarding a fact-finding survey on the current state of Swiss societies. This resulted in a questionnaire being drawn up by Mrs Mariann Meier and Mr Joe Broggin, under a mandate to the Nouvelle Société Helvétique, London.

The questionnaire had now been circulated, and presidents of the society were asked to complete it and return it to Mrs Meier

as soon as possible.

All the officers of the Federation were re-elected – Mr Bernard Simon (president), Mr E. Tangemann (vice-president), Mr Vergil Berti (secretary), Mr Albert Kunz (treasurer) and Mrs G. Schwab and Mr P. Jacomelli (auditors).

The North of England delegate and deputy delegate to the Commission of the Swiss Abroad had resigned during the year – Dr Alex Lang had moved to Canada, and Dr Hans-Joerg Wirz had been made consular agent in Edinburgh, which precluded him from continuing in the post.

Elected to the vacancies were Mr Bernard Simon of Manchester and Mrs U. Ditchburn, of the Swiss Club, Dunfermline. The delegate and deputy delegate for the South, Mrs Mariann Meier and Mr Joe Broggin, continue in their posts.

Mr Broggin gave a very detailed report on last year's Assembly of the Swiss Abroad, which has already been reported in the Swiss Observer.

He concluded: "As a first-timer, I thoroughly enjoyed the experience, not only for the responsibility and commitment carried by all delegates, but also for the sense of a common cause among all participants.

"Hence my personal advice to those among you who have not yet witnessed an Assembly of the Swiss Abroad to attend the 60th assembly which will be held in Sierre from August 20 to 22."

Mrs Meier said she had attended six business meetings over the year, in Berne and Solothurn, including one meeting of the Commission on Information and three meetings of the Solidarity Fund, and she appealed for more Swiss people in Britain to give their support to this very worthwhile fund.

Mr Ney gave details of events planned for the Sierre assembly. "The theme is the Swiss woman abroad", he said, "and we will look at all aspects of the subject, such as the activities of Swiss career women abroad and the achievements of Swiss women doctors.

"We will also not forget the Swiss housewife abroad, and the Swiss mother, and the daily worries they often have to face, especially in faraway countries."

Mr Kunz complained about delays in Switzerland into putting an end to discrimination that had come to light a year ago when it was found that the wives of compulsorily-insured Swiss working abroad for Swiss firms were not themselves insured.

He said that Mr Ney had promised 12 months ago that the Secretariat of the Swiss Abroad would take up the matter, but the situation had not changed. He and his staff, all of whom were affected by this legislative error, were now taking the matter to court.

Added Mr Kunz: "If the theme at Sierre is going to be the Swiss woman abroad then Mr Ney should put this matter as the first item on his agenda. I can assure him of a lively session."

And he suggested that if they didn't receive satisfaction the Swiss societies should send a joint petition to Parliament asking for the injustice to be rectified.

When Mr Kunz asked why the Secretariat had waited a year before telling people abroad about the position, Mr Ney said it was because the relevant issues of the government-sponsored Swiss Review had not been published in Great Britain. Swiss living in other countries had received the information six months earlier.

Dr Hans Egli, the honorary vice-president of the Federation, urged that the committee of the Federation should meet to examine the position in detail and be given the power to prepare the proposed petition, and this was agreed. Mrs Meier said the committee should meet as quickly as possible, and try to finalise the petition before the get-together in Sierre.

Mr Tangemann said this was another reason why members

COMING EVENTS

Sunday, July 4: Family Outing: Swiss Mercantile Society and Nouvellé Société Helvétique.

Wednesday, July 7: Swiss Embassy Lecture Room, 16/18 Montagu Place, London W1. Second part of "The Development of visual arts in Switzerland" (with summary of first part), by Monsieur B. Junod, Cultural Attaché at the Swiss Embassy. Illustrated by slides. Nouvelle Société Helvétique and Swiss Mercantile Society. All Swiss and

their friends welcome. 7pm.

Thursday, July 15: Recital of Baroque Music at the Swiss Church, 79 Endell Street, London WC2. Organised by Isabelle Anderfuhren of Geneva under the auspices of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique. Artists are David Shemer (harpsichord), Yael Ronen (flute) and Isabelle Anderfuhren (soprano). Music by Vivaldi, Handel, Bach, Caldara and Telemann. Admission free, but a

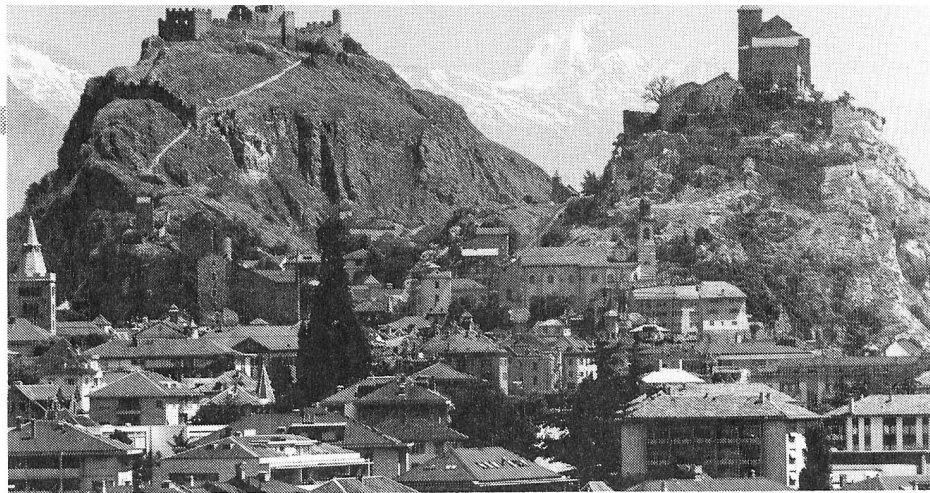
collection will be taken. 7.30pm

August 20-22: The Assembly of Swiss Abroad at Sierre in the Valais. The theme will be "The Swiss Woman abroad". For details apply to Secretariat for the Swiss Abroad, Alpenstrasse 26, 3000 Berne 16, Switzerland. An excellent opportunity of joining compatriots from all parts of the world at meetings and several social events.

Saturday, November 6: Bazaar of the Swiss Churches in London.

NEWS about activities in the Swiss community in Britain is welcomed for future issues of the Swiss Observer.

News items should be sent in the first instance to Mrs Mariann Meier, 53 Priory Road, London NW6 3NE. Her telephone number is 01-624 5360.



Sierre hosts this year's Assembly of the Swiss Abroad

should travel to Sierre in August, and he suggested that the Federation might send an official delegation.

During the reception following the meeting Mrs Hedi Lang, the leader of the parliamentary delegation, thanked the Ambassador and Mrs Caillat for giving her and her colleagues the opportunity of meeting members of the Swiss community. As a member of the ASK she promised to do all she could on behalf of the Swiss abroad.

And she singled out Mrs Mariann Meier for a particular tribute. She said she knew that for nearly 50 years Mrs Meier had worked tirelessly for the benefit of the Swiss in Britain, and that she was a kind of Landesmutter of the Swiss community in Britain – a similar role here to the one she herself had in the Confederation.

Well worth a visit

THIS year the annual Assembly of Swiss Abroad will take place at Sierre, Valais, from August 20 to 22. Many Swiss attending will very likely spend some extra time in the region. This is why they might like to know about the Château de Penthes which now

houses the Museum of the Swiss Abroad.

Its address is 18, chemin de l'Impératrice, Pregny-Chambésy, and it is on the route de Pregny, some 500m from the United Nations Buildings.

The Château de Penthes is situated in a splendid park overlooking the lake of Geneva. With its four pavilions – Gallatin, Besenval, Dufour and Soldati – it forms the headquarters of the Foundation for the History of Swiss Abroad, the national institute for historic research into relations between Switzerland and other countries.

The actual museum is in the château itself and covers the periods from the Middle Ages to our own time. Many documents, uniforms, pictures and drawings, flags, costumes, furniture and many other things give an excellent impression of the vast number of Swiss emigrants who have served their country over the centuries.

In the beautiful rooms on the ground floor the political aspects of Switzerland's alliances in the past is presented. On the first floor the "Salle Pfyffer d'Altshofen" is devoted to the Papal Guard, while the "Salle Béat de Fischer" (former Swiss Ambassador to Britain) tells the history of Swiss Diplomatic

representation abroad – "Salon des Dieux." The Borromini room represents Swiss architects all over the world from the 12th century to the present.

There is room on the second floor for temporary exhibitions, and in the north wing the Edouard-Marcel Sandoz Centre is housed with the library, the iconographic section and the archives of the institute.

The Museum is open daily from 10am to 6pm, but closed on Mondays. There is a cafeteria "Salon de thé" and catering can also be done for special functions.

The Château de Penthes is well worth a visit. Those Swiss from abroad who attended the Assembly in Montreux in 1969 will remember the visit to the Château de Coppet which used to be a small museum devoted to the Swiss abroad. The new one at Penthes is very much larger and more comprehensive and altogether more representative. Visitors will find it most rewarding.

Mariann Meier

Cheshire barbercuc

WINNER of the Swissair trophy awarded at the end of the annual treasure hunt of the Manchester Swiss Club was Mr D. Salden, the

club's treasurer.

After the event a barbeque was held at the lake side of club member Mrs Trudi Bolliger at Knutsford in Cheshire.

Unione Ticinese

THREE new members have joined the committee of the Unione Ticinese. They are Mrs Ivana Cohn-Merlini, who was born in Minusio and has lived for many years in London, Mrs Elisabeth Schwaller, who is on the staff of the Swiss Embassy in London, and Mrs Armiola Veglio, a second generation Ticinese lady who was born in London though her family is from Corzoneso in Valle di Blenio.

The Unione Ticinese sends belated but wholehearted congratulations to Mrs Christiane Barber-Zamboni and her husband Peter on the arrival of their new baby Cecily.

On a sadder note, the society recently lost two of its older members, Mr Pietro (Peter) Bassi, aged 87, and Mrs Lily Marie Bruni who was 88. Both had been members of the society for many years. The committee noted their passing with deep regret and has sent expressions of sympathy to both families.

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