

Zeitschrift: Swiss review : the magazine for the Swiss abroad
Herausgeber: Organisation of the Swiss Abroad
Band: 20 (1993)
Heft: 2

Anhang: Regional news : UK

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EEA Vote : The View from Britain

It was billed by nearly all as one of the most important referenda in Switzerland's recent history. And, as readers will by now be well aware, Switzerland voted no in the EEA referendum held on 6 December. For many Swiss nationals living in Britain it was one of the first opportunities to exercise their newly acquired voting rights. At the same time, there was a unusual amount of interest in Britain at large in the Swiss vote, partly because Britain then held the presidency of the European Community, but also, perhaps, because British scepticism about matters of European integration seemed to parallel Swiss attitudes.

Just before Switzerland's no vote in the EEA referendum Federal Councillor Rene Felber was invited by his British counterpart, Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd, to pay an official visit to London. The talks took place at the Foreign Office in November and afterwards Mr Felber, accompanied by officials from the Federal Integration Bureau, Ambassador Mueheim and Minister Faessler, briefed press representatives at the Swiss embassy.

Felber stressed that his talks in London covered a wide range of subjects, including European integration and the problems in Yugoslavia, eastern Europe and the former Soviet states. Switzerland would only give aid to certain regions as this would be a more efficient use of resources. Regarding Yugoslavia, Felber said that Switzerland supported international efforts in the region, including those undertaken by the Red Cross. He condemned the practice of 'ethnic cleans-

ing' and talked of the possibility of an international humanitarian conference.

Naturally enough, however, European integration took up most of the briefing



time as Felber answered a barrage of questions on the subject. He admitted to hoping for a yes vote in the referendum held on 6 December, but was already somewhat worried by the opinion polls predicting a no vote. He confirmed that Switzerland had already applied to join the EC though negotiations were still at any early stage. The problem was how to convince the EC of Switzerland's willingness to join the EC, should the Swiss vote no in the EEA referendum. As it turned out Felber's fears have come to pass – and the problem of Switzerland's relations with the EC are likely to tax the efforts of the Swiss foreign minister for some time to come.

While the diplomats and politicians were locked in discussion, the EEA referendum was also the topic of several meetings held by Swiss societies up and down Britain. The City Swiss Club in London, in conjunction with the newly formed Swiss Economic Forum, organised a 'luncheon speech' at the Royal Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce. Ambassador Benedict von Tscharner, Switzerland's representative

in Brussels, gave an address regarding Switzerland and the European Community. A proposal by the New Helvetic Society in London for a discussion on the EEA vote coincided with Ambassador Mueheim's decision to organise an information and discussion meeting at the

Swiss embassy. The meeting, supported by the Federation of Swiss Societies in the United Kingdom, took place in November and was addressed by Ambassador Mueheim and by Jacques de Watteville, economic and financial councillor at the embassy, who had been involved in Switzerland's negotiations with the European Community.

De Watteville's address went into all the details of why Switzerland should join the European Economic Area, all the advantages and disadvantages and the effects of the plebiscite results. But it emerged clearly, not least from answers given by the speakers and Consul Jaun, that whatever the result, the status quo would not be left intact. An isolated Switzerland would not be able to exist by going it alone and changes would be inevitable. As the late Federal Councillor Wahlen said as long ago as 1965, 'Our country – situated in the heart of this continent – is a piece of Europe. Europe's fate will in the end also be our fate.'

■ Mariann Meier

See also Press Review, page 4 and Letters, page 5.

OSA Elections

As reported in the last issue of the Regional News-UK, Britain has gained an extra (third) delegate on the council of the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA). Each delegate is supported by a deputy delegate. The Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK (FOSSUK) has now circulated all Swiss clubs and societies with information about the posts of delegate and deputy delegate. FOSSUK was particularly keen to encourage women and younger people to apply, though, so far, it has not commented on the demand (See Letters, page 5) that at least one of the delegates should come from the French-speaking part of Switzerland.

The deadline for nominations for the three posts of delegate and for the three posts of deputy delegate was 1 March. Three of the present representatives, Joe Broggini (Unione Ticinese, London) and Bernhard Simon (Manchester) and Ursula Ditchburn (Dunfermline), have indicated that they will seek re-election, though Regula Sharpe (Swiss Benevolent Society, London) had intimated that she wishes to step down. FOSSUK chairman Jeffrey Long told the Regional News-UK that he would shortly be circulating all Swiss clubs and societies with ballot papers. This will be the first time that delegates have been appointed in this fashion. Previously they have 'emerged' from the oligarchic deliberations of club presidents attending the FOSSUK AGM. Since these meetings are usually held in London, they tended to be dominated by the voice of the south-east. The new procedures will ensure that all Swiss societies will have an equal say in the election.

Swiss Clubs & Societies

Aberdeen

Tel 0224 318316
Mrs M Grieve

Anglo-Swiss Society

Tel 0227 721 855
Mrs F Cobb

*August 1st Cttee

Tel 0622 39361
Chris Dyke

Bournemouth

William Tell Group
Tel 0202 731720
Mrs Trudy Bryant

Bristol

Tel 0454 775042
Mrs Trudy Soper

Bucks/Herts

Tel 0494 763030
S Singh

*Cercle Feminin Romand

Tel 081 673 4955
Mme A Yu-Cottier

*Cercle Genevois

Tel 0923 221704
Mrs Suzy Allan

*City

Tel 071 374 0417
Henry Angest

Commission of the Swiss Abroad

- North of Britain
Tel 061 926 8153

Berni Simon

- South of Britain

Tel 081 741 4224
Giuseppe Broggin

*Consistoire

Tel 081 346 8094
Mrs E Crack

Dunfermline

Tel 0383 823447
Fiona Stewart

Edinburgh

Tel 031 331 3366
Mrs Trudy Bott

FOSSUK

Tel 071 727 4113
Mr Jeffrey Long

*Frauenverein

Tel 081 422 3545
Mrs B Laskowski

Guernsey

Tel 0481 48188
Mr T Ferbranche-Ammann

Liverpool

Tel 051 427 1816
Mrs M Moor

Manchester

Tel 0260 273681
Marianne Reuter

Midlands

Tel 021 631 4050
Erich Westacott

*New Helvetic Society

Tel 071 727 4113
Rosemarie Breitenstein

Northamptonshire

Tel 0536 79084
Rosemarie Jessiman-Haenni

Northern Ireland

Tel 0232 648239
Hans Egli

Southern (Farnborough)

Tel 0252 615149
Marcel Gret

South West (Taunton)

Tel 0823 442497
Mrs C Burrows

Surrey

Tel 081 647 9630
Heidi Miller

Swiss Benevolent Fund

Scotland

Tel 041 644 1645
Mrs Trudy Drysdale

*Swiss Benevolent Society

Tel 071 387 2173
Mrs Regula Sharp

*Swiss Business Forum

details not available

*Swiss Church

Tel 081 340 9740
Rev. P von Orelli

*-Mothers' Group

Tel 081 340 9740
Johanna von Orelli

*-Youth Club

Tel 081 340 9740
Swiss Consulate General-
Manchester

Tel 061 236 2933

*Swiss Embassy-London

Tel 071 723 0701

*Swiss Mercantile Society

Tel 06286 69209
Mr R Kaenzig

*Swiss National Tourist Office

Tel 071 734 1921

*Swiss Parents' Assoc at the German School

Tel 081 940 5724

Mrs D Uhlig

Swiss Relief Society

-Manchester

Tel 0260 272407
Mr P Senn

Swiss Review-

Regional News-UK

Tel 0224 272999
Dr David Ditchburn

*Swiss Rifle Association

Tel 081 850 4117
Urs Schaerer

*Swiss Welfare Office

Tel 071 387 3608
Margrit Lyster
Torbay
Tel 0803 842355
Max Singer

*Twickenham Ladies

Annemarie Locher
227 Fulwell Pk Ave
Twickenham TW2 5HD

Tyne and Wear

Tel 091 536 1047
Nelly Scott-Niederberger

*Unione Ticinese

Tel 081 741 4224
Giuseppe Broggin

West of Scotland

Tel 041 956 5127
Mrs M-T Cramer

Yorkshire

Tel 0535 569121
Janina Clough

* denotes organisation
based in London area

Cultural Events

In May Matthias Bamert will conduct the London Philharmonic Orchestra in two concerts at the Royal Festival Hall, London. The works to be performed include Frank Martin's concert for 7 winds.

The writer Peter Bichsel has been invited to deliver readings in June at the Deutsche Schule London, Douglas House, Petersham Road, Richmond, Surrey (Tel 081 948 3410) and at the Goethe Institut in York, King's Manor, York (Tel 0904 6111222).

Details of these events, and all other Swiss-related cultural events in the United Kingdom, are available in a newsletter compiled by the cultural section of the Swiss Embassy in London. If you would like to be added to the mailing list, please contact the cultural section at the embassy (Tel 071 723 0701).

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Around and About

Swiss Rifle Association

The Swiss Rifle Association has published its programme of events for 1993. The rifle 300M and pistol 50M meetings will commence on Sunday 11 April at Bisley Camp, Brookwood, near Woking in Surrey. Meetings will be held roughly fortnightly thereafter. Rifle shooting will take place on the automatic targets on the Stickledown Range from 10 a.m. Pistol shooting will be available, subject to demand, on the Galley Range, but those wishing to take part should contact the range officers by the Saturday previous to the shoot at the latest.

The last shoot of the season for the pistol 25M class was held in Kensington on 21 March. The new season for this class begins on 24 October.

For further details of the Swiss Rifle Association, contact Urs Schaerer (Tel 081 850 8884, during office hours, or 081 850 4117).

Dunfermline



Dunfermline Swiss Club President Fiona Stewart

At Dunfermline Swiss Club's AGM, Fiona Stewart was elected president in succession to Ursula Ditchburn, president since 1977. Gordon Stewart and Andrew Robertson were elected programme co-ordinators and Heidi McGee appointed as treasurer. Friedgard Adams remains secretary. Forthcoming meetings include a talk about Amnesty International in May and an outing on 26 June to Aberdeen, when Dunfermline members will have a chance to meet members of the Aberdeen Swiss Club. Further information about the Dunfermline Swiss Club's activities may be obtained from Fiona Stewart (Tel 0383 823447) or from Friedgard Adams (Tel 0383 726183).

Manchester

Manchester Swiss Club also recently held its AGM and there, as in Fife, there is a change of president to report. Marianne Reutter, who first joined the club in 1970, was elected in succession to Derek Meakin. The outgoing president reported on the club's activities over the past year, noting the particular popularity of the national day celebrations at the Moorside Hotel in Higher Disley – despite the fact that, according to the new president, 'the potato salad left a lot to be desired!'. On a sadder note, Mr Meakin reported that Michel Broggi had left Manchester to further his consular career in Peru and that Berni Simon had decided to retire from the committee.

'We are all well aware that for very many years he has been a leading light in formulating club policy and encouraging greater participation in our activities,' said Mr Meakin, 'and we all owe Berni a debt of gratitude.'

Swiss National Day Celebrations in London

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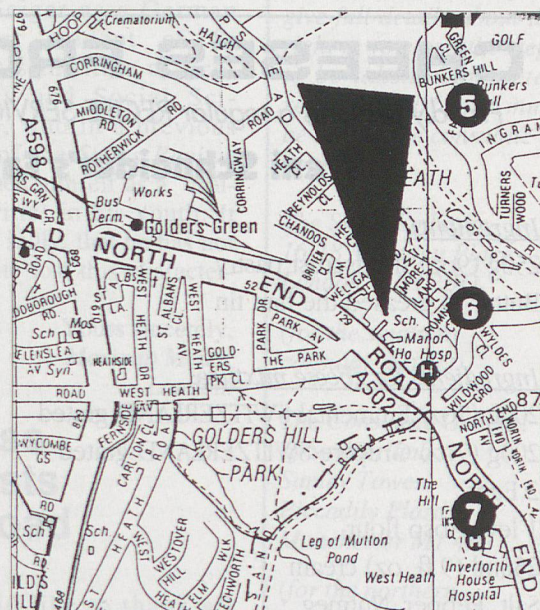
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Press Review

Switzerland rarely hits the inside news pages, let alone the front pages and the leader columns, of the British press. All was briefly different in December when the quality press devoted extensive coverage to Europe's Mr No and the result of the EEA referendum.

The Independent focussed on the fact that the Swiss electorate had defied the government in much the same way as the Danes did, and the French almost did, over the Maastricht treaty. And *The Independent* knew why: 'the nay-campaigners portrayed the EEA as an ante-chamber of the European Community [and] conjured up visions of the country being further overrun by job-stealing foreigners.'

The Scotsman, by contrast, concentrated rather more on the 'deep divide' which emerged in the vote between French and German speaking Switzerland. Such an approach was perhaps to be expected from a newspaper which is understandably rather more aware than its London counterparts of minority cultural and politi-

cal interests within single states. But shame on *The Scotsman* for failing to notice that the Ticino and Graubunden, too, voted no.

Explanations for the fissure between the German and French speaking parts of Switzerland were generally trite and alluded to what *The Daily Telegraph* termed 'the conservative and inward-looking' German speakers. But little effort was extended in attempting to account for this phenomenon or its implied corollary, the internationalism of the French-Swiss community.

Coverage of the vote in the financial pages was, marginally, more inspiring. Most of the British press was agreed that the vote was a matter of 'Swiss hearts before wallets,' as *The Independent* proclaimed.

A report in *The European* took a particularly grim view of the economic consequences of the no vote, predicting that some Swiss companies would seek to transfer their headquarters within the EC, while many companies with only a minimal presence in the EC would go to the wall. But

Hamish McRae, writing in *The Independent*, was less gloomy. The most important sectors of the Swiss economy, he thought, would either be unaffected by the EEA or would do better outside it – and (one senses a British Euro-sceptic on the attack) if the Swiss could indeed retain their economic success outside the EEA 'they would be charting an alternative path for Britain and Denmark too.' So – let the Swiss take the big risk, and we can follow if it works.

By far the most thoughtful coverage of the EEA vote, however, came not in the press but on the radio. The BBC's *Head On* programme, presented by Colin Bell, deserves particular praise for a lengthy but broad-ranging and interesting discussion, involving Bell, Christian Faessler from the Swiss embassy in London and Geneva-based journalist, Sophie Fisher. Faessler, for example, pointed out that the division in the electorate was not simply one between French and German speakers, but also one between generations and one between towns and

country. In seeking to explain the no vote he, and Bell, also drew a valid distinction between attachment to traditional neutrality, which both considered less important, and attachment to a national identity, which many voters felt might disappear within a larger Europe.

The *Head On* programme was broadcast in January. By then the broadsheets had largely lost interest in serious coverage of Swiss political affairs. Instead, *The Independent* carried an interesting story on a dodgy doctor in Schwyz who has been trying to convince patients that he has developed a cure for AIDS.

Elsewhere, the London *Evening Standard* told us that the Queen sent Christmas cards designed by a Swiss artist, while the tabloids had a field day with photographs of Fergie at Klosters – though it might as well have been anywhere in the snow.

In other words, it was back to normal – which explains why the Regional News-UK rarely carries a press review.

CHEESES FROM SWITZERLAND

Proudly presents a regular RECIPE SERVICE featuring a member of the SWISS ALPINE SKI TEAM

Vreni Schneider's Favourite Recipe – CHEESE FLAN

Ingredients:

250g (9oz) shortcrust pastry
Butter to grease the flan tin

Ingredients for cheese mixture:

200g (7oz) Emmentaler SWITZERLAND grated
200g (7oz) Gruyère SWITZERLAND grated
2 Eggs
1 level tbsp flour
250ml (9 fl. oz) cream
Salt, Pepper, Nutmeg

1. Roll out the dough and use to line an approx. 25cm (10") greased flan tin, pricking the base and the sides with a fork.
2. Combine all the ingredients for the cheese mixture.
3. Pour the cheese mixture into the flan case.
4. Bake in a pre-heated oven at 220°C (425°F) for 25-35 mins.
5. Serve hot, accompanied by a salad.



SWITZERLAND

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Letters

Splendid Isolation

Sir,
On 6 December 1992 the citizens of Switzerland voted against the European Economic Area in a referendum. The government in Berne will not be pleased as it had urged a 'yes' vote and what they got was a 'no', the main wish of the people. I must admire the Swiss government for having referenda – a positive indication of true Swiss democracy.

Two years ago now, Switzerland celebrated the 700th anniversary of the founding of the Swiss confederacy – Uri, Schwyz and Unterwalden in 1291. Those peasants who fought and died at the battle of Morgarten in 1315 won the first of a series of Swiss victories during the ensuing two centuries, victories to which Switzerland owes her legend, her independence and her existence.

Switzerland should remain unique. It will surely survive quite comfortably without being involved and swallowed up by unhelpful treaties.

Vive la Suisse.

Yours sincerely,
Vreneli Inwood-Bryner,
London.

French Fears

Sir,
'The worries of French-speaking Switzerland must be taken more seriously' (*Swiss Review*, 6/92). Yes, indeed. It is time respect for the French language – and those in our country whose mother tongue it is – be restored as it obviously did once prevail: 'William Hertenstein of Zurich ... did not wish to take [cabinet responsibility for] Foreign Affairs because his French was not good enough' (*ibid.*)

A few examples from my limited experience show

how low things have sunk: (1) being told of a number change in German by a telephone operator when calling from the Val d'Anniviers, the easternmost French-speaking valley and last refuge of a *langue d'oc* patois; (2) a Geneva-based company claiming German as its official language, in clear breach of the territorial principle; (3) my own Lausanne bank addressing me in German in a letter; (4) French versions of official documents – such as OCFIM no 201.301f, for which the *Swiss Review* invited us to apply – stuffed with spelling and syntactical mistakes; (5) the assertion 'I speak Swiss' (meaning *Schwyzertuetsch*) heard again and again in mixed gatherings, so much so that it has turned into a myth as widespread over here as that of all Swiss being multilingual; (6) the assumption that, before the December vote, only German-speaking cassettes need to be sent to those running Swiss organisations in this country.

We *Welsch* are Swiss too and 'speak Swiss': the great classical language we share with our neighbours to the south and the west of us.

Now is it too much to hope that the joyously hailed third OSA delegate will be a French-speaker?

Yours sincerely,
Mrs FR Cobb,
Canterbury,
Kent.

Wraight is Right

Sir,
You asked for further comment on Till Geiger's review of Sir John Wraight's book *The Swiss in London – A History of the City Swiss Club* and the author's reply. When the review of the book first appeared, there were quite a few voices of protest about an unfair assessment and it was not surprising that the author had to make a vigorous defence and correct inaccuracies and misconceptions by the reviewer.

racies and misconceptions by the reviewer.

Till Geiger is obviously completely out of touch with the Swiss community in London or he would have appreciated Wraight's thorough and painstaking research more and would have dwelt on the remarkable achievement of putting the history of the Club together from only fragments available for certain periods. Geiger's recognition of the author's difficulties was condescending. Instead of giving the reader an informed and balanced appraisal of the contents, he stressed deficiencies, often quite wrongly, and accused the author of such things as a 'disinclination to study the political affiliation of club members', of 'an obsession with endless presenting banquets', of 'using clichés' about prevailing Anglo-Swiss relations, etc. This is hardly worthy of a serious critic, even without realising that Sir John's work was entirely a labour of love and without financial remuneration, a wonderful gift to the club and its members, as well as to the Swiss community.

I have deeply involved in the latter's activities for sixty years and believe I am in an excellent position to evaluate John Wraight's work, probably better than Till Geiger as a German (former student of St Gallen's Institute of Economics and Social Sciences), who in a previous issue of the *Swiss Review* described himself as a 'virulent critic' in his youth. It seems, sadly, that he has not yet quite lost this characteristic.

Yours sincerely,
Mariann Meier,
London.

Swiss Artists Abroad

Sir,
I would like to thank all those readers who have

responded so promptly to my request for information about Swiss artists abroad, published in the last issue of the *Regional News-UK*. I have even received letters from America and Bermuda! The aim is to make compatriots aware of the existence of Swiss artists abroad and to promote their work in Britain and Switzerland. I shall contact all respondents in due course, but in the meantime, if any artists have not yet replied, please send me as soon as possible your name, address, a short cv and photograph or slide of some of your work.

Yours sincerely,
Dr Ursula Ditchburn,
The Little Gallery,
20 High Street,
Pittenweem,
Fife.

The Postal Vote for Swiss Abroad

To be able to vote in referenda and other matters Swiss nationals in Britain must register for a postal vote. Information leaflets and registration forms in French, German and Italian are now available. The information leaflets give full details about the right to vote and the steps to be taken. Completed registration forms must be sent to the consulate of your area:

*The Swiss Embassy
16-18 Montagu Place
London W1H 2BQ*

(for the southern consular district)

*The Consulate General of Switzerland
Sunley Tower
Piccadilly Plaza
Manchester M1 4BJ*

(for the northern consular district)

Tourist Review

by Heidi Reisz and Mariann Meier

This year the Swiss National Tourist Office in London celebrates its one hundredth anniversary. The anniversary year was inaugurated towards the end of last year with the erection of a frozen model, made from a massive load of man-made snow, outside the SNTTO in Swiss Court. The sculpture which contained twelve tonnes of snow depicted famous landmarks in both Britain and Switzerland, including London's Tower Bridge and the Matterhorn. Commented Joseph Bueller, the director of the London SNTTO, 'We decided to mark the occasion with a stunning snow scene that symbolised the strong links between Switzerland and Britain. After all, the Swiss were the first to provide facilities for winter sports and the British were the first to make use of them.' The task of constructing the sculpture was undertaken in just nine hours by teams of ice sculptors from both Britain and Switzerland.

A number of other special events intended to mark the anniversary are planned. These include the publication of a special first day cover on 11 May, for details of which see page 7. On the same day, 11 May, there will be a special celebration held in Leicester Square, with prize draws, raclette and charity events (for details contact the SNTTO, Tel 071 734 1921).

Amidst the festivities, however, the business of promoting Switzerland as a tourist destination continues as normal. The Swiss stands were prominent as ever at the World Travel Market held at Earls Court, London, last November. The WTM is a fair for the trade only, including travel agents, tour operators, hotel promoters, transport companies and conference organisers. But

the business transacted transcends all barriers. Representatives from 140 countries made as much publicity as possible to attract interested parties, often by the use of extravagant displays, music, dancing competitions and all kinds of eye-catching ideas.

Among the three thousand companies exhibiting their wares in Earls Court, Switzerland was well in evidence with two dozen stands, attractively arranged in an open layout with glass partitions. The SNTTO and Swissair were there, as were hotel associations, travel groups and the various regions and big towns of Switzerland. The theme of the Swiss display was *Switzerland: A Taste of Quality*, with dozens of beautiful dolls dressed in festive national costumes used to decorate the stands.

Tourism, however, depends not just on promotion, important though that is. It also depends on resorts offering the best facilities at reasonable prices. And tourist chiefs were hoping that the substantial new investment in improvements to ski lifts and cable cars at several Swiss resorts would attract large numbers of visitors before the winter season shortly comes to an end. As Joseph Buehler commented, 'The large number of high altitude resorts, plus an extensive programme of replacing outdated equipment with modern lifts and cable cars to meet the increasing demand will help Switzerland to maintain its leadership position as the ideal winter paradise. Last year showed an increase of 3% in visitors and this year we are expecting that increase to grow to 5%.'

More than a dozen resorts have made major improvements to existing mountain facilities, taking care to min-



Das Gleichgewicht der Dinge (The Balance of Things) – as reported in the last edition of the Regional News-UK, the stone sculpture in Berne made from rocks collected at locations called Switzerland throughout the world

imize harm to the environment. Switzerland's naturally conservative, but green, approach to expansion of such facilities has made for improvements for skiers, while at the same time ensuring that ski facilities do not become a disturbing factor for the thousands who enjoy a Swiss mountain holiday in the summer. And some other new facilities – such as the *Erlebnis und Kurzentrum Engadin Bad Scuol*, which opens its doors in March with the first Romano-Irish bath in Switzerland – will doubtless prove attractive for both winter and summer visitors.

Likewise, perhaps the most spectacular innovation for this soon-to-end winter season, though it should also attract many summer visitors, is the world's first revolving cable car, which was opened in December on the highest stretch of the Mount Titlis cableway in Engelberg (OW). Part of a multi-million franc expansion project by Titlis Cableways, the cars execute a 360 degree turn during the five-minute journey between Stand and Kleintitlis, giving passengers a stunning panoramic view of the peaks around central Switzerland. The cabin capacity of the Titlis

cablecars remains the same, but the journey time between Stand and Kleintitlis is quicker, allowing a 30% increase on the actual numbers of people using this route in any hour.

Mossiman at Suvretta

Anton Mossiman, perhaps the best known Swiss national in Britain, returned to his native Switzerland to lead a food promotion at the Suvretta House, St. Moritz, in February.

St. Moritz has long been a favourite resort for British visitors, offering everything from the excitement of the Cresta Run to far more leisurely pursuits. The Suvretta House, situated two kilometres from St. Moritz and at an altitude of 1852m, offers uninterrupted views of the mountains and lakes of the Upper Engadin and direct access to the sun-kissed Suvretta-Corviglia skiing slopes. It is also widely acknowledged to be one of the best hotels in the world – one reason why Mossiman was delighted to be cooking there.

Swiss Centre
Swiss Court
London W1V 8EE

Swiss National Tourist Office

Telephone 071-734 1921
Fax 071-437 4577

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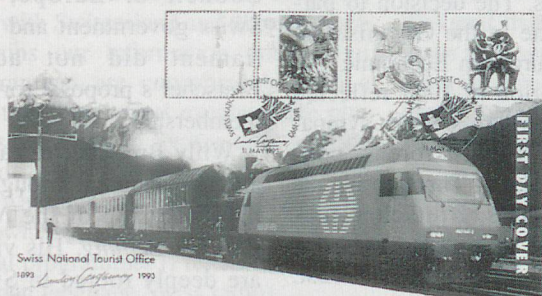
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New Helvetia Society

Claude Mistley, chairman of
the Helvetia Philatelic Soci-
ety, gave a presentation to
the New Helvetia Society in
February on *A Philatelic
View of Switzerland*.

The presentation was
based on slides showing
stamp designers interpreta-
tions of various Swiss
scenes compared with slides
of actual views. This was
backed by a small display of
stamps, essays and postal
stationary.

The Helvetia Philatelic
Society was founded in 1946
by the late E H Spiro. For
over thirty years it was
administered and promoted
by Mrs E J Rawnsley who
sadly died recently. It is one
of the largest specialist soci-
eties in the UK and has a
world-wide membership.

The main object of the soci-
ety is to bring collectors
interested in Swiss philately
together and to collect and
distribute information which
is circulated to members in a
monthly newsletter.

Mr Mistley, who was
born in Switzerland but who
has lived in England for
most of his life, has been a
member of the society for
twenty-five years and has
been its chairman since
1991.

His Swiss collecting spe-
cialities are landscapes, air
mails, the Bundesfeier and
Swiss military issues.

On 13 May the NHS, in
association with the Unione
Ticinese, will present a lec-
ture by Dr Mario Grassi
entitled *Ticino Today*.

■ **Rosemarie Breitenstein**

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Book Review

by Till Geiger

Willy Bretscher, *Spannungsfeld kalter Krieg : Neue Zürcher Zeitung, 1945-1967* (Zurich : Neue Zürcher Zeitung, 1991; pp 347; Sfr.45.00)

This collection of sixty-three editorials by Willy Bretscher – the editor of the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* from 1933 until 1967 – is a treasure trove for the general reader as well as for the academic historian. The editor, Katharina Bretscher-Spindler, should be congratulated for her excellent selection of Bretscher's contributions on foreign policy issues in the first two decades of the cold war. Even for today's reader Bretscher's editorials offer a fascinating insight into the ideological debates of the late 1940s and the 1950s, as well as for the 1960s.

The wide-ranging nature of these editorials makes it difficult to summarise the book. In her selection Bretscher-Spindler has chosen editorials which capture Bretscher's strong liberal world view and reflect his keen interest in Swiss foreign policy. These two themes hold this collection of editorials together. The cold war forms a mere backdrop.

In his editorials Bretscher reminded fellow liberals constantly to guard against the ideologically motivated expansionism of the Soviet Union and its satellites. At all times Bretscher tried to redress the distorted picture of Soviet intentions painted by the Swiss *Partei der Arbeit*. Eager to dispel any illusions about Soviet foreign policy Bretscher counselled western governments to persist in their defensive efforts. When the campaign for nuclear disarmament gained massive support in the 1950s, Bretscher reminded his readers that the events of the past decade

had confirmed the expansionist motives of the Soviet leadership. The key event symbolising Soviet expansionism for Bretscher was the communist putsch in Czechoslovakia in February 1948. At the time he reminded his readers of the scourge of Naziism which had shown a similar disregard for individual freedom and the right to self determination.

The editorials of the later 1940s and early 1950s reflect the strong sense of contemporaries that any form of expansionism should be resisted rather than appeased. In this respect Bretscher's commentaries bear witness to the ideologically shaped perceptions on both sides in the cold war. With hindsight the historians of the cold war tend to revitalise the threat of a Soviet invasion or a communist seizure of power in France and Italy. Nevertheless, historians should not ignore the message of these contributions. There can be no doubt that Bretscher and many of his contemporaries became increasingly wary of Soviet intentions. Events like the Prague putsch and the Berlin crisis of 1948 confirmed these apprehensions.

Given his strong liberal convictions Bretscher did whole-heartedly reject the illiberalism of McCarthyism. From these editorials a clear and vivid picture from a committed political standpoint emerges of the evolution and the swings in the early stages of the superpower confrontation.

As a liberal member of the Nationalsrat (the lower chamber of the Swiss parliament) Bretscher took a keen interest in the Swiss government's foreign policy. His editorials reflect his strong support for the Bundesrat's policy of 'neutrality yet soli-

darity'. This policy had been evolved by the head of the Swiss Political Department, Bundesrat Petitpierre. At the heart of this policy lay the Swiss government's unwavering commitment to the neutrality article in the Swiss constitution. In the eyes of government ministers, however, neutrality did not imply that Switzerland should refrain from any active involvement in international affairs or from speaking out on world events. The decision to participate in the Organisation for European Economic Co-operation in 1947 reflected the firm pro-western sympathies of Swiss foreign policy-makers. Throughout his editorials, Bretscher supported such demonstrations of solidarity with the west. Despite its commitment to neutrality, the Swiss government did side firmly with the west in the emerging conflict of the cold war.

Yet, neutrality did constrain Swiss foreign policy. Although Switzerland had been a founder member of the League of Nations, the Swiss government decided not to join the United Nations. In particular, the Swiss government feared that Switzerland might be drawn into armed conflict by a majority of the security council. Nevertheless, the Swiss government did send troops to Korea to supervise the cease-fire in 1953.

In the late 1950s European integration became a contentious issue for Swiss foreign policy. The wider political ambitions of the treaty of Rome went directly against the neutrality provisions of the constitution. Switzerland, therefore, joined the European Free Trade Area rather than the European Economic Community. While Bretscher accepted the validity of the government's position, he

favoured the idea of European integration. On this issue his views seem, at times, surprisingly paradoxical. Being a politician, Bretscher was aware of the constraints faced by the foreign policy-makers. As an editor, he argued that Switzerland should play its part in international organisations like the Council of Europe and the United Nations. While Switzerland became an observer at the Council of Europe, the Swiss government and parliament did not adopt Bretscher's proposal for UN membership.

Willy Bretscher remained a political animal throughout his editorship of the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*. His views are deeply rooted in Swiss national liberalism. From his eerie in Zurich, Bretscher became an astute observer of international events. His editorials chronicle the evolution of the cold war and offer a critical assessment of Swiss foreign policy. Anyone interested in the development of Swiss foreign policy and the evolution of the cold war will enjoy reading this collection of his writings.

Regional News-UK

The editor welcomes readers' views and comments, as well as reports from Swiss clubs and societies. Letters and articles for the next issue of the *Regional News-UK*, to be published in July, should be forwarded to Dr David Ditchburn, Department of History, University of Aberdeen, King's College, Old Aberdeen AB9 2UB (Tel 0224 272999; Fax 0224 487048) by 1 June 1993.