

The swiss publishing Trade

Autor(en): **Mittler, Max**

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THE SWISS PUBLISHING TRADE.

By MAX MITTLER.

Secretary, Swiss Booksellers and Publishers Association.

In many foreign countries it is still not known that there are publishers in Switzerland and that Swiss literature exists. While it is true that Germans and Austrians who take an interest in literature are familiar with the names of *Frisch* and *Dürrenmatt*, and the names of such publishing houses as *Francke*, *Orell Füssli*, or *Birkhäuser* are widely known, not everybody appreciates that these are the names of Swiss firms. This, however, need not disturb us, because literary and scientific achievements must not necessarily appear under a national banner. Yet, there is an implicit danger that the Swiss publishing trade as well as the works of our writers will *a priori* be branded as "provincial." It cannot seriously be contended that the Swiss publishing trade had originally more than merely local significance. It goes without saying that Leipzig's dominant position in the last century as a book-publishing centre extended beyond the German frontiers and also exerted its influence on the Swiss book-trade. German publishing firms were predominant. The unity of all German-speaking countries did not give rise to any doubt as to this order of things. It should be pointed out that even before the turn of the century publishing houses such as *Francke* and *Sauerländer* methodically worked out a publishing policy of their own, securing themselves a respected position in the book-trade.

The First World-War, and to an even greater extent the rise of National-Socialism, showed that publishing in German, free from intellectual fetters, is not the concern of one country but of all Europeans. In the struggle of those days, which Switzerland did not fight with weapons but with ideas, the Swiss book-trade seized its great opportunity, as has often enough been shown. In retrospect it seems that this chance was both taken and lost. In the years immediately after the war the influence of the publications of the *Europa-Verlag*, which boldly criticized the rulers of the Third Reich, extended far beyond the Swiss frontiers. It must not be concluded that other firms, economically weak and confused in their ideas, were less successful. Obviously the Swiss publishing trade has strengthened its position in German-speaking countries. But its output no longer enjoys the same unique position it did in the early post-war period. German and Austrian publishing houses have recovered their share of the market and it must be said that Swiss publishers are faced with severe competition from neighbouring countries.

It is obvious that only the portion of Swiss book production that appeals to an international readership by its literary, intellectual, or scientific achievements, can have success outside our frontiers. There is no lack of Swiss publishing houses which, in the fields of literature and science, have had success at the international level. A number of firms publish books of a more national or local character. To-day the majority of Swiss publishers promote the exchange of ideas regardless of national frontiers and linguistic barriers. The fact that in Switzerland books are produced in both German and French can only be regarded as positive.

In the last resort exports are vital for the Swiss book trade as the inland market is too small. In 1957 the export value of books exceeded 40 million Swiss francs. The German Federal Republic is the most important buyer of Swiss books, followed by France and the United States of America. Exports to other countries, with which Switzerland formerly had no connections as far as the book trade is concerned, have increased considerably in recent years. Japan, Poland, and the South-American countries have become important customers. But further success can obviously only be achieved by increased effort.

SWISSAIR PROPOSES CAPITAL INCREASE.

An increase in Swissair's share capital from 63 to 105 million Swiss francs will be proposed by the company's Board of Directors at the Annual General Meeting to be held on 9th April 1959.

If approved the increase will be made by an issue at par of 120,000 new registered shares of 350 francs nominal each. The last capital increase, from 42 to 63 million Swiss francs, was made in April 1958.

WEDDING — CUSHMAN-BESSIRE.

The wedding of Miss Paulette Bessire, elder daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Bessire, of 28 Cumberland Road, Barnes, London S.W.13, to Dr. Paul Cushman, second son of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Cushman, of 115 East 67th Street, New York City, and Syosset, Long Island, took place on Saturday, 4th April 1959, at the Eglise Suisse, 79 Endell Street, W.C., followed by a reception at the Dorchester Hotel, Park Lane, W.1. The Rev. C. Reverdin officiated.

Amongst the numerous guests were the Swiss Ambassador and Madame Daeniker, and the bridegroom's parents, two brothers and sister-in-law — who specially travelled from the U.S.A. — a number of officers from the U.S.A. base at Laken Heath, Suffolk, where Dr. Cushman completed his National Service, Mr. and Mrs. L. Chapuis, a doyen of the Swiss Colony, and members of the Swiss Church. Mr. A. F. Suter proposed the Toast to the happy couple.

Nouvelle Société Helvétique (LONDON GROUP)

OPEN MEETING

Tuesday, 21st April 1959, at 7.15 p.m. at
SWISS HOSTEL FOR GIRLS
9, Belsize Grove, N.W.3.

Dr. H. W. EGLI

will speak on:

**STATE AID AND SELF-HELP
FOR THE SWISS ABROAD**

Free admission to all Swiss and friends.