

News from the colony

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NEWS FROM THE COLONY

Under these, the department requires the world-wide accounts of manufacturers to assess the real cost of drugs or new materials imported into this country. For international companies like these arrange the "transfer prices" of their goods—that is, the price at which one subsidiary sells to another—to make the bulk of their profit in the country with the lowest taxes—in this case Switzerland; so that a British subsidiary—and thus the National Health Service—could be paying high and unknown profits to the Swiss parent company.

To give an extreme example, if a company were to import a drug for £100 a kilo and sell at £101 here there would be no profit, and unless the Government can see that the import price is inflated it cannot bring pressure to reduce prices.

But the rules under the Voluntary Price Regulation Scheme are anathema to the Swiss companies with their history of secrecy and they have little intention of enlightening the British Government on the overall consolidated accounts of their organisations.

In the case of the largest and most secretive firm, Hoffman La-Roche, sources believe there is little chance that the company will divulge the figures wanted by Britain. Other companies, like Sandoz and the giant CIBA, are also unlikely to comply.

However, already the British Government has invoked powers under a 1964 act against a Cheshire-based subsidiary of the Swiss Geigy company, requiring it to prepare detailed accounts for each of the last three years. Geigy's accountants are now preparing these figures but are still undecided on how much information on their international operations from Switzerland they are prepared to include.

(Sunday Times)

THE FIRST OF AUGUST WITH THE SWISS OF THE NORTH

"and this was the beginning"

History tells us that the 1st August, 1291, is the actual birthday of the Swiss Confederation, when a small group of humble, but honourable citizens of the Inner-Kantone bordering the Vierwaldstaedter-See or as our British friends know it, Lake of Lucerne, decided in their quest for fair play and freedom, to unite and defend themselves against foreign intervention, an unsupportable and ruthless dictatorship. I like to think that this is the simple and clear truth which will also hold good despite doubts and criticisms raised at times, by what I believe can only be a very small section of our younger intellectuals. I could read in a Swiss Paper specially issued for this occasion and for the benefit of the Swiss abroad: "... the so-called birth of the Eidgenossenschaft, namely the foundation of the Confederation of the Waldstaette sealed with the Bundesbrief of the 1st August, 1291, was nothing else than the conspiracy of some privileged peasants against the progressive policy of the Habsburger, read Austrians, but not anymore of great importance to the Swiss of today..." A strange thought indeed, mainly if we think that precisely thanks to this rebellion—as our intellectuals may wish to call it—we are enjoying today this large degree of responsible freedom of thought, action, and speech, which unfortunately makes the above remarks necessary at times.

What a relief to think that this particular day, in the past, in the present, and let us hope for many generations to come, will be for the greater majority of us the cause of great rejoicing, veneration and thankfulness. For us in Manchester and District this annual reunion at the Cotton Hotel in Knutsford, has become a cherished tradition and we always look forward to this meeting of compatriots and friends, representing so many sections of activities and interests, of all age groups, and from all walks of life. The younger ones giving a good account of themselves, particularly by bringing to such an occasion much freshness and infectious enthusiasm, all auguring well for the future of our country. It is regrettable that due to distances and transport difficulties, members from neighbouring clubs are sometimes prevented from attending such functions. Although we noticed a family with four young children who had travelled from Liverpool and the Vice-President of the Yorkshire Swiss Club. Our gathering has gradually grown in num-

ber and everyone was attracted to the well-stocked bar for our first appetizers, which resulted in our first contacts. We were particularly pleased to notice the welcome presence of our Consul and Madame Born.

Soon we started to move to the room next door where tables of various sizes were all nicely arranged around a central dancing floor. There was no difficulty for parties, separate or corporate to find a cosy little corner for the evening. A huge Swiss flag very fittingly filled the back of the room overlooking a slightly elevated platform where we could see an impressive array of musical equipment and loudspeakers. It must have required the services of an expert to wire things up in the correct way so that everything worked in the proper place and at the proper time. While we listened to the ever-changing music, intermingled with laendlers and yodlers which we never tired of hearing, and nearby the hotel staff very discreetly and efficiently made the preparations for our cold buffet supper which once again did not disappoint us. Again, as in the past, it consisted of a most generous helping of Swiss Schueblig (a gift of Swissair for which both Mr. Kunz and the new manager, Mr. Weber, were most warmly thanked), and some good potato salad, the necessary complement to this special dish. The "Mont Dorin" growing on the borders of Lake Geneva, a treasured possession of the "caves Dr. Bolliger" gave us a special kick for which our Vice-President deserved and received all our gratitude. A happy finish was "les tartlets de fraise" of our able committee member Monsieur Duerig and his wife, his handicraft being truly admired.

When everything was ready for the big rush, priority was given to the old and the young, but mercifully and in good taste these two extreme sections of the community were almost immediately joined by the rest, thus avoiding any possible embarrassment or hard feeling. Also this year the 1st August badges were on sale, perhaps representing "Berg-Kristalle", I could not find out, and sold "Pour les femmes au service du pays", a worthwhile and happy decision indeed. Although I overheard a comment from a neighbouring table, that this collection was serving for the "production des petits suisses". This may be so, but we are all well aware of the fact that the Swiss woman, an exemplary mother and the de facto ruler in the family, plays very often an important role in the profes-

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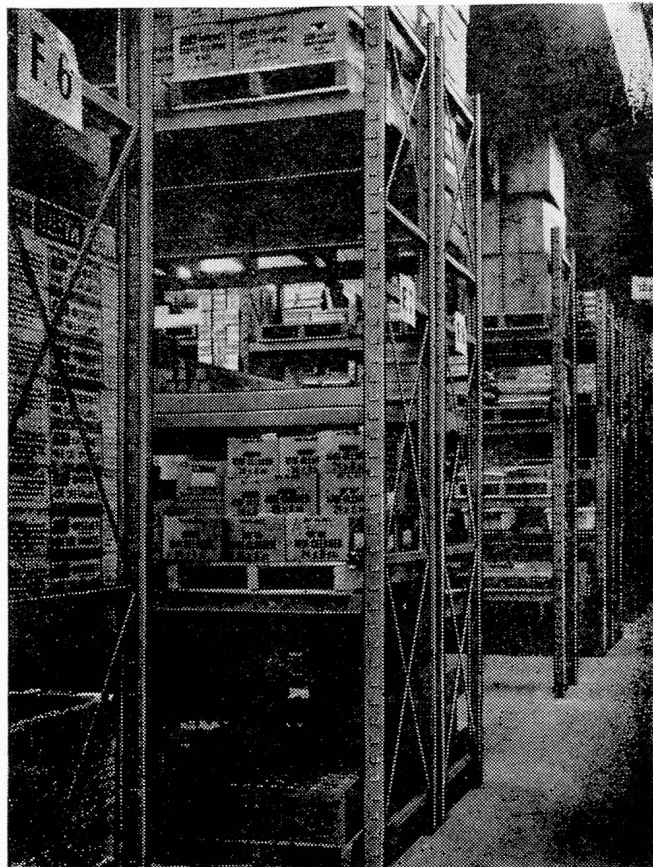
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sional and business fields, in the service of the State and its many institutions and organisations.

Eventually our President, Mr. Bernard Simon, stood up to give us an official welcome, thanking his Committee for the fine work done and singling out especially Messrs Kunz and Weber of Swissair, Dr. and Madame Bolliger and Mr. Duerig, for their generous and active material and other help. He did not forget the management and staff of the hotel which supplied us also with the material for our "Hoehen-Feuer". Surely enough, this year's function had to start on the 31st July, but I am glad to say that the fire burned well into the 1st August.

After these well-received introductory remarks, Mr. Simon gave the word to our Fest-Redner Consul Born, who opened the official part of our programme. Consul Born delivered an address which we all followed with great interest and in perfect silence, proving once again how capable our Consul is of captivating our attention through his clear reasoning and appropriate choice of subject. He started by telling us how during his first year of office amongst us, he and his wife greatly appreciated the warm, friendly spirit, and happy atmosphere ruling our community, and gave thanks to the Presidents, Secretaries and Members of our Clubs and Societies, not forgetting the ladies for their continuous and hard work done in our favour. He then mentioned, etc. . . (see speech of Consul Rolf Born).

He concluded by extending to us the greetings of our Ambassador in London, Dr. René Keller. His words were very well received by everyone present and warmly applauded. We then had the privilege of listening to the message of our "Bundes President" Hans Peter Tschudi. For the benefit of our British friends the more important passages of it were given in excellent English and followed by the singing of our National Anthem, everyone respectfully rising to their feet for this, and thus bringing the official part of the evening to a close.

In the meantime "our fire" had been lit in the grounds of the hotel and its bright, lively, and welcoming glow, was an invitation for us all to join again in the darkening night and enjoy a fine display of fireworks which kept us spellbound for a long time. We managed to gradually improve our sing-songs, some of the tunes awakening in us memories of long ago.

By then our lines had started to thin out, some having to leave for the journey home, others re-assembling again in the hotel to continue the feting by song, drink and dance. Mainly the young, or the ones who felt so, enjoyed themselves in their own particular way. Even so, the time regretfully arrived for everyone to leave, most of us doing so with the firm resolve to meet again under similar circumstances. *Ermanno Berner*

MR. ROLF BORN'S SPEECH

In the invitation which you received, you may have read that I would contribute to this celebration with what was termed "The patriotic greetings". I asked myself what was meant by that. Should I start with the year 1291 and give you a small lecture on Switzerland's history? Should I dwell on the merits of our forefathers and say how we should live up to what we have inherited? Should I speak of the hundreds of bonfires which will be set alight on our mountains tomorrow evening, and of the message they convey?

No. I thought that the First of August celebration should be a suitable occasion for the Swiss abroad to look back for a while at recent events and developments in our home country. There would be many such events well worth mentioning here. I shall, however, pick out only a few of particular interest to the Swiss abroad.

Let us then briefly look at the Old Age and Survivors Insurance, the A.H.V., because once more developments are to be reported: three initiatives have been tabled with a view to improving the scheme of Social Security recently.

One comes from the "Partei der Arbeit", or Communist Party; the other from the Social Democrats and the third from the camp of the Conservatives. All three have one aim in common: they want to assure that people reaching the age of retirement are provided with a pension sufficient to cover all their usual needs. The initiatives vary widely in the methods of reaching this goal. It will be quite some time until the proposals will have been studied and possibly, true to tradition, a compromise will have to be reached. The Federal Council has therefore proposed, as an intermediate solution, to raise all pensions by ten per cent as from the beginning of next year. Needless to say, this will also apply to the pensions paid abroad.

Some progress has also been achieved in the system of registering persons liable for Military Service. The new regulations came into effect a month ago. As far as the Swiss abroad are concerned, the system boils down to the fact that extensions of Military Furlough are no longer necessary. If you have obtained such a furlough in Switzerland, it is valid for the whole duration of your stay abroad. It is therefore no longer necessary to apply to the Consulate every year or two for a new one. Those of you to whom this applies will, I am sure, be rather glad—so are we at the Consulate.

And what news about the vote for women? Eleven years ago in 1959, there was a referendum on this question. Its result was not in favour of the cause as 650,000 voted against, and only 320,000 voted for it. The Federal Authorities then thought that the matter should be shelved for some time and a second attempt only be made

when the chances for a favourable outcome would be considerably improved. During the last years, several Communes and Cantons have, as you know, granted the right of vote to their women. The Federal Council now believes that the time is ripe. In a message to the two Chambers, it had proposed an amendment to our Constitution in order to give our women what they should have had long ago. Provided that the two Chambers accept the proposition laid before them—and there is not much doubt about it—a referendum will take place probably in February next year. Should the results this time be in favour of the proposition, then our women would have the right to vote in Federal matters. It would, however, still be left to the discretion of the Cantons and Communes to let them participate in cantonal or communal matters. This rather curious fact is the result of a fundamental principle, namely, the federative structure of Switzerland. It is to be remembered that the Cantons are a kind of independent states.

When speaking about events at home, I must not forget to mention the referendum held in June on what has become known as the "Schwarzenbach Initiative". It has been turned down, although not very convincingly. What would have become a disaster for our economy and many other aspects of our national life has been avoided. We Swiss abroad are particularly grateful for this result because the opposite would most certainly have had adverse repercussions on us, not to mention the damage to Switzerland's image abroad.

Another topic of considerable interest is the forthcoming meeting of the representatives of the Swiss living abroad at the "Auslandscheizertag" at Zofingen. One of the main subjects to be discussed there will be the possible total revision of our Constitution. Through the A.S.S. we have been given the opportunity to state our views on this most complex question. You have received a questionnaire through the

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Swiss Club, and in a Club meeting in June our Vice-President, Mr. Bolliger, who will represent us at Zofingen, gave explanations on the very complicated questions put before us. Some 25% of the questionnaires have been returned and the views therein forwarded to the A.S.A. I cannot go into details here, but I would like to stress that the fact alone of the Swiss abroad being consulted in such a vital matter is for all of us most reassuring. For the 300,000 Swiss living outside their homeland, a new era seems to have begun in the last decade or so; we are officially recognised as an important part of Switzerland.

Mr. Tschudi, this year's President of the Confederation, in his message to the Swiss abroad confirms it when he says:

"You have made an essential contribution to the reputation of Switzerland by your successful work and by your helpfulness. Switzerland owes you gratitude for it".

Let me now turn to some other aspects. What part does our small, neutral country take in world affairs? We Swiss often have the tendency to think of ourselves as a special case. Are we not one of the oldest democracies? Do we not enjoy the only direct democracy in the world? Do we not know how four linguistic and cultural groups can live together peacefully? Can we not set an example to the rest of the world?

It is true: some great ideas have had their impact beyond our borders, as for instance, the ideas of a Henri Dunant which culminated in the foundation of the International Red Cross, or the new educational ideas of a Pestalozzi. A positive echo can also be found on our political and financial stability. The achievements in both the technical and industrial fields, are widely recognised and our scientists, engineers and technicians contribute in a high degree to our economy and thereby to the image of Switzerland abroad.

But this is not sufficient. Other problems have to be tackled, such as

Switzerland's position in the economic integration of Europe; our share in the aid to developing countries; our participation in international technical co-operation; the problem of our relations with the family of the United Nations; the task of the preservation of a healthy environment, and many others. The ideas of Dunant and Pestalozzi, although still recognised, belong to the past. Ahead lies the fascinating task for our country of helping to find practical solutions to these international problems. Let us hope that Switzerland will be able to contribute to this, in her small way, with patience and common sense.

May I conclude by conveying to you the greetings of our Ambassador in London, Dr. R. Keller. He has asked me to present to you all his very best wishes for a healthy and happy future.

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The concert is of special interest to Swiss readers for two reasons. Firstly, Mr. Lennart Rabes, the brilliant Swedish pianist who is also organist at the Swiss Church in London, will take part. And secondly, the distinguished Swiss soprano, Miss Madeline Baer, is coming over from Switzerland specially for the concert. Miss Baer is the niece of Mr. Frank Conrad who is well known in the London Swiss community.

There will be music by Frank Liszt, also works by Schubert, Pfitzner, Schumann, Debussy, Bartok, etc. featuring "Animals in Music". The Lord Somers will address the audience.

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