

News from the colony

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NEWS FROM THE COLONY

FEDERAL DAY OF PRAYER

Ecumenical Service at the Swiss Church

It is well known that London is a shining example of real ecumenical co-operation amongst the Swiss Protestants and Roman Catholics. Another mixed service took place on Sunday, 20th September, when the two Protestant communities (French and German-speaking) and the R.C. community celebrated the Federal Day of Thanksgiving, Atonement and Prayer at the Swiss Church in Endell Street, W.C.2. The Church has rarely been seen so full. The guest preacher was Pastor E. Schwyn from Bienne, who gave an impressive sermon in French. While the Communion was taken by the Protestants, the Roman Catholics celebrated the Eucharist in the ante-room. They all joined again for the final prayer for peace and unity and to hear the organ voluntary so expertly played by Mr. Lennart Rabes, the Swedish organist of the German-speaking Swiss Church. The collection was in aid of the Swiss Benevolent Society.

And when many of the churchgoers remained for lunch afterwards, there were even one or two other nationalities and it became an international as well as an ecumenical event, a true "agape" on this most important day in Swiss national life.

THE PROBLEMS OF A MODERN AIRLINE PRESENTED AT THE N.S.H.

Mr. Franz Fraefel, the new general manager of the Swissair offices in London, was the speaker as the Nouvelle Société Helvétique resumed its monthly meetings. This most interesting evening was to begin by the presentation of a new Swissair film entitled "One minute of Swissair", depicting the clockwork and multifarious activities of this vast enterprise—one of the top ten Swiss companies—and its 12,000 employees between 5.00 and 5.01 p.m. on a normal working day. The most awesome parts of the film were magnificent shots of soaring jumbo jets. Despite their nickname, these majestic and graceful machines have nothing pachydermatous about them.

Mr. Fraefel then resumed the milestones of his career, which in 23 years of service to our national carrier, brought him to London (twice), Manchester, Calcutta, Bombay and Zurich. He had lived through the fantastic growth of a company which had only just received the status of a national airline when he entered it in 1947 and which at that time employed barely 800 people. Mr. Fraefel told us a number of unusual and little known facts about Swissair. It was, for example, a private company with a third of its capital in the hands of the state—a ratio which had hardly changed in 20

years, although the capital had increased many times and now stood at about 300 million francs. Swissair had recently issued bearer shares which were negotiable abroad. Among the wealth of information given by Mr. Fraefel on his company, we can mention the fact that Swissair owned only 11 DC2's and Dakotas at the end of the war and that their combined seating capacity was 160, about as much as that of a single DC-8. The company now has 36 machines, all of them jets, which carry some 10,000 passengers a day.

The end of Mr. Fraefel's exposé was devoted to the principal problems faced by Swissair. Hijacks predictably came foremost in the list. Swissair was most concerned about this new threat and was giving all the co-operation it could to the legal authorities. All departures from Switzerland were now prolonged by lengthy searches at the airport, but passengers in the main were resigned to this inconvenience knowing that it was all in their own interest. Mr. Fraefel spoke of the difficulties of securing new routes. The "freedom of the air" was, he said, a rather ineffectual notion as each new destination was obtained at the cost of lengthy bargaining or exhaustive market research. Mr. Fraefel said that if Swissair wished to remain a competitive airline, it had to enlarge its network as far as was commercially possible. Swissair now served 50 countries and 75 cities. Other topics mentioned by our speaker were the problems of choosing new aircraft and recent maintenance agreements with KLM, SAS and UTA. Mr. Fraefel expressed Swissair's grave concern over the outcome of a popular initiative in Zurich against the enlargement of Kloten airport.

Question time had to be somewhat limited as Mr. Fraefel's exposition had lasted for about two hours. But the hijacking problem was raised again, as well as that of supersonic transport and why Swissair had placed an option on them. Mr. Fraefel assured the meeting that Swissair had gone into every detail of "Concorde" most deeply and, basing themselves on the planes actually known specifications had reached the conclusion that it could not be profitably run by a company like Swissair.

Mrs. Meier, our president, thanked Mr. Fraefel for his inspiring talk and welcomed us all to meet Mr. Henri Dumur, chief editor of the "Freuille d'Avis de Lausanne" at the next meeting and examine with him the problems resulting from the Schwarzenbach Initiative.

OBITUARY

It is with sincere regret that we announce the death of Mr. Alfonso Pianca, of 23 Hazelwood Lane, Palmers Green, N.13. He died on 3rd September

after a short illness, at the age of 72. Mr. Pianca has been a particularly keen supporter of the activities of the Unione Ticinese. We tender our deep sympathy to his family.

We deeply regret to announce the death of another of our subscribers, Mr. Alphonse Dreux, of St. Gallering 172, 4000 Basle. He died on 5th September after a short illness. He was in his 70th year. Mr. Dreux was a well known figure in Basle Stock Exchange circles where he was head of the Commissariat of the Basle Stock Exchange. We extend our sincere sympathy to Mrs. Dreux and the family.

BIRTHDAYS AND ANNIVERSARIES

We announce three wedding anniversaries for October: On the 11th of the month, Mr. and Mrs. F. Streit will have been married 43 years, and on 24th October, Monsieur l'Ambassadeur and Madame J. de Stoutz (Moscow), and Consul-General and Madame E. Tosio (Karachi) will have been married for 28 years. Congratulations!

There will be three special birthdays in October.

On 17th, Mr. Pierre Savoie, of 33 Leithcote Gardens, Streatham, S.W.16, will be 80. Mr. Savoie is an artist of no mean standing, and many will remember his contributions to the "Swiss Observer" and his beautiful postcards which used to be sold at the souvenir stall at the Fête Suisse.

Monsieur l'Ambassadeur Jean Revilliod, of Djakarta, at present in Geneva, will be celebrating his 65th birthday on 20th October. His many friends in London will remember him well from the time when he was Press Counsellor at the Embassy.

On 23rd October, Dr. Ernest M. Bircher, of Casa Bianca, Via San Nicolao, 6816 Bissone, Ticino, will be 75. He, too, has many friends in London,

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