

News from the colony

Objekttyp: **Group**

Zeitschrift: **The Swiss observer : the journal of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK**

Band (Jahr): - **(1970)**

Heft 1604

PDF erstellt am: **01.05.2024**

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NEWS FROM THE COLONY

MONSIEUR RENE KELLER IS CALLED BACK TO BERNE

Our last issue was already on the press by the time the news of Monsieur Keller's departure from London had officially broken out. Two and a half years after having taken up his present assignment in London, he is being called back to Berne to head the Division for International Organisations at the Political Department, one of the most important posts of Swiss diplomacy. He succeeds Mr. Ernesto Thalmann, who is to succeed Mr. Pierre Micheli as General Secretary of the Political Department on January 1st. Monsieur and Madame Keller deeply regret having to leave the post, the stimulating town and the friendly colony which they loved so much.

The unexpectedness and the timing of this transfer have been criticised in many quarters. The "National Zeitung" had some harsh words against the casualness in high level diplomatic transfers, and so had the "Vaterland", whose article is reproduced below. The following comment is by the Chairman of our Advisory Council.

BRYANSTON SQUARE'S "MUSICAL CHAIRS"

Many—very many—compatriots in this country will have learned with deep regret that there is to be yet another change at the top level of our country's diplomatic representation in London. "Regret" might even turn out to be an understatement, since "consternation" would, in fact, be a more appropriate term. Consternation about the apparent lack of appreciation in Berne of the impression such frequent changes are bound to make abroad.

Ever since Ambassador Armin Daeniker reached the retiring age some years ago, the Swiss Embassy in London has been subjected to a kind of stop-gap (or stop-go) policy by Berne. Who in the Swiss Colony did not hope, after a 3 year tenure of office by Ambassador Beat de Fischer, and a 1 year "look-in" by Monsieur Olivier Long, that Ambassador René Keller's was, at last, a long term appointment when he

arrived in May 1968? Who among the many who knew and liked him from his previous stay as Secretary of the then Legation was not delighted when Berne nominated him as *Chef de Mission* early in 1968? And now Berne takes him away again.

Are they, one may well ask, really so short of qualified men in the Swiss diplomatic service that nobody else could have been appointed as Chief of the Political Department's Section for International Organisations? Admittedly the Section is an important one, for which Ambassador René Keller is eminently qualified, since before coming to London he was the Swiss Ambassador at the United Nations headquarters in Geneva. But it is an open secret—or no secret at all—that Ambassador Keller was by no means enthusiastic when first told of the plan to recall him to Berne. Has he not, one may ask, two important London-Swiss developments—quite apart from cultivating good relations with this country's new authorities!—to guide to their successful completion: The new Embassy building-cum-Residence, and the much discussed and much wanted Swiss Cultural Forum?

Whenever the 1st August comes again or when the Swiss Abroad meet at their yearly assembly in the home country, our high magistrates are in the habit of making beautifully-sounding speeches about the so-called 5th Switzerland and their alleged deep care and consideration for it. But have such speeches any practical value whatever? If anybody in Berne had ever bothered to find out what the wishes of the Swiss in Britain in this respect might be, and had the result of such soundings been given the slightest consideration, Ambassador René Keller would not now have to be packing his bags. But there is even more to it than that. A highly successful post-war German diplomat in London once said that owing to the size of the British Capital City and the peculiarities of the British system and way of life a foreign ambassador here is really worth his salary only from the third year onwards. This, in view of his

previous stay and his exceptional gifts, would obviously not apply to Ambassador Keller. But—and this is an important point—one cannot but begin to wonder whether the British Government and Establishment will not one day take umbrage if the Confederation keeps on changing its highest diplomatic representative in London so frequently. What about continuity, what about the importance of personal relations, especially when the value of British support in Switzerland's future negotiations for association with the EEC are taken into consideration. Do all these things not matter?

On every count, seen from London, Berne's decision to recall Ambassador René Keller after only 2½ years "en poste" in London seems an extremely regrettable one.

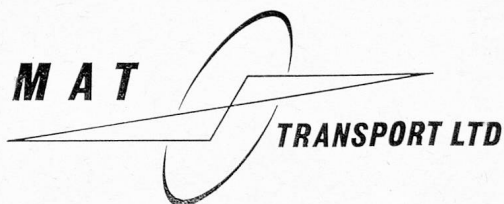
Gottfried Keller.

NEUER CHEF DER ABTEILUNG FÜR INTERNATIONALE ORGANISATIONEN

Unverständliche Personalpolitik im Politischen Departement

Der Bundesrat hat Dr. René Keller, zurzeit schweizerischer Botschafter in London, zum Chef der Abteilung für internationale Organisationen des Politischen Departementes ernannt. Botschafter Keller übernimmt so die Nachfolge von Botschafter Ernesto Thalmann, der auf Jahresende Chef der Abteilung für politische Angelegenheiten und Generalsekretär des Politischen Departementes wird, als Nachfolger des in den Ruhestand tretenden Botschafters Pierre Micheli.

Botschafter René Keller, 1914 in Paris geboren und heimatberechtigt im zürcherischen Marthalen und Cologny (Genf), 1940 in den Dienst des Politischen Departementes eingetreten, war—nach Auslandsposten in Prag, Den Haag und London—von 1954 bis 1957 Chef des Informations- und Presseedienstes des Politischen Departementes. Als tüchtigen Mann und umgängliche Persönlichkeit lernte ihn so auch die Bundeshauspresse schätzen. Als Chef der Abteilung für internationale Organisationen erhält er nun ein überaus



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weites und heute besonders wichtiges Arbeitsfeld. Schon der Hinweis auf UNO, Unesco und Europarat mit den zahlreichen spezialisierten Organisationen belegten das.

Erneut zeigt nun aber auch diese Wahl, wie rasch schweizerische Diplomaten durch die Welt gejagt werden—in einem Tempo, das ein richtiges Einarbeiten in die wechselnden Aufgaben kaum ermöglicht und vor allem der wirksamen Konstanz schweizerischer Interessenwahrung zweifellos abträglich ist.

René Keller war ab September 1960 Botschafter in Ländern Westafrikas. Bereits 1962 übernahm er die Botschaft in der Türkei, 1966 wurde er schweizerischer Beobachter beim UNO-Sitz und den internationalen Organisationen in Genf und schon im Februar 1968 wurde er dann Botschafter in Grossbritannien. Nach nicht einmal zwei Jahren wird er nun wieder—gegen seinen Willen—abberufen, kaum dass er seine Beziehungen in London aufgebaut hat. Ganz abgesehen von den Nebenkosten ist solch übersetzte diplomatische Rotation ganz einfach unverständlich, weil den Anliegen und Interessen unseres Landes schädlich.

Im Politischen Departement scheint die notwendige und unumgängliche Disposition auf längere Sicht völlig abhanden gekommen zu sein.

Der Londoner Posten, einer der wichtigsten unserer Diplomatie, belegt dies besonders eindrücklich; Seit dem Weggang von Botschafter Armin Däniker, der neun Jahre als Schweizer Botschafter in London wirkte, herrschte dort das Provisorium: Botschafter Beat von Fischer war zwei Jahre in London, sein Nachfolger Olivier Long nur ein Jahr und René Keller wird nun nach nicht einmal zwei Jahren ebenfalls wieder zurückberufen. Für unser Land ist eine solche Politik nicht von Gutem—and auch in London wird man sich seine Gedanken machen...

(Article which appeared in the "Vaterland" issue of 22nd October by Martin Rosenberg, Federal Editor and former General Secretary of the Christian Social Party.)

A SUCCESSFUL CHURCH BAZAAR

The spacious floor of Westminster's Central Hall was already packed with a bustling throng of Swiss Church parishioners when the President of the Consistoire, Mr. O. Béguin (the Editor's father) welcomed Madame René Keller and invited her to open the Swiss Church Bazaar 1971 officially. He mentioned the sad news about our Ambassador's imminent departure and stressed the friendship and goodwill which he and Madame Keller had shown to the parish. He said that we were not only losing an Ambassador, but very dear friends. Madame Keller then expressed her pleasure at opening the Bazaar, whose success meant so much to her. She congratulated the many ladies of the Church who had

contributed to furnishing the stands in preparing pastries and making garments and she thanked all the others at large who had helped in organising the Bazaar. She ended her address by encouraging us all to spend our money unstintingly and help the wonderful work of the Churches.

The buying which had already begun before the official opening was resumed at a yet livelier pace. The bazaar shoppers evolved around the many stands and palpated the innumerable items they displayed. Central Hall was converted into a genuine supermarket. There was indeed a most jarring variety of objects on sale. There were postal stamps, seed bags, toothpaste, cacti, writing pads, perfumes, after shave lotions, shampoos, mountains of Swiss chocolates, cheese, jewels, gew-gews, spangles, tricots, jackets, woollen dresses, baby's vests, old books, alluvial quantities of jam and home-made cakes. This cross-section is far from exhaustive and only gives an idea of what a mixed sale can bring forth when goodwill is there. The Embassy was very much involved with this sale and did a splendid job in finding donors for a great part of the goods. It had its special stand, serviced by the "ladies from the Embassy"—the wives of the diplomatic and consular staff.

As the regulations of the Central Hall, a Methodist sanctuary, forbid the sale of alcoholic drinks on the premises, much trading in wine was carried out with the goods being delivered outside. It was a pity that the supply was rather small this year. Wine is a particularly good line at any bazaar and a more sizeable supply would have increased the proceeds even more. There was a strong demand for cheese and the supply dried out quite fast. Another highly active sector was the clothing stand.

A special distraction for the children had also been organised. They could test their aiming skills on the hall stage by throwing balls at a pyramid of empty cans. Pastor Hostettler raised a few more welcome pounds by hanging a salami on a string and offering it to the one who gave the best estimate of the length of string.

The queue for cervelas, sauerkraut, schublig and tea voucher tickets never subsided and gave plenty of work to the voluntary cashier and the many devoted ladies serving out lunches and the younger ladies performing the mundane job of washing up. The hunger of the Swiss parish exceeded all calculations so that, shortly before 2 p.m., the lunch stand had run out of bread and later-comers had to chew their cervelas without the balancing accompaniment of a roll.

When the bazaar was drawing to its end, prices were knocked down to clearing levels and some of the stands were soon literally empty. Mr. Burkhalter, the Church treasurer, assisted by Mr. Godet and Mr. Oggier were busy

counting the money, silver and notes, as it poured in on their table. When the hall had been almost cleared up and when most of the parishioners had left the scene lugging cardboard boxes stacked with good things, the treasurer put the provisional sales figure at £1,850, a most encouraging result and an increase of £300 on the proceeds of the last bazaar. Certainly proof that there is feeling and support for the Swiss Churches in London, despite their half-empty pews.

(PMB)

THE DIPLOMATIC WAY OF LIFE EXPLAINED AT THE CITY SWISS CLUB AND THE NOUVELLE SOCIÉTÉ HELVÉTIQUE

Mr. Fritz Adams, General Consul in London, came to speak to the Nouvelle Société Helvétique on a few of his many experiences in the Swiss consular service. His exposition was in replacement of the planned talk by the famed Swiss journalist Henri Dumur, who was to speak to us on the problems of aliens in Switzerland but whose visit had to be cancelled at the last moment. Monsieur Jürg Iselin, First Counsellor at the Embassy, was the guest speaker at the City Swiss Club's October meeting and he too depicted the various facets of the work of a diplomat.

Mr. Adams' exposé was more personal. He included a colourful account of his life as a Swiss abroad in Austria, describing his first encounter with the motherland. He gave a detailed description of the consular profession and gave us a good idea of its many intricacies. His exposé was crowned with a beautiful film made by him in Rumania, where he was stationed. This film was embellished with Mr. Adams' running commentary and an appropriate choice of Rumanian music.

Monsieur Iselin's speech was of a more historic and general nature and brought to life many interesting diplomatic facts to his fortunately large audience. He had the kindness of giving us a copy of his speech and we shall be bringing it out in a future issue.

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Both speakers share a strong sense of humour (of a Viennese and a Basler brand) and this made their respective exposés all the more enjoyable.

(PMB)

SWISS MERCANTILE SOCIETY

The Monthly Meeting of the Society, held at Swiss House on Wednesday, 14th October, was chiefly dedicated to the veterans, no less than 10 of whom had earlier in the year received the "Wappenscheibe" of the S.K.V. for 50 years' membership of the association.

Some 25 members have obtained this coveted distinction during the last decade, seven of whom, viz Messrs. A. Baenziger, R. Chappuis, O. Grob, E. Hardmeier, G. Hediger, J. Oertli and E. Zwicky, with an aggregate membership of 374 years (an average of 54 years), were present. They were extended a cordial welcome by the Chairman, Mr. A. Jaccard, who thanked them for their long-standing and devoted support of the Society's activities.

He had a special word of welcome to the doyen of this venerable company, Mr. E. Hardmeier, who had come down from Ipswich for the occasion.

On behalf of the Central Committee, Mr. Jaccard presented the "Wappenscheibe", with a suitable commendation, to Mr. E. Zwicky, a member of the General Purposes and House Committee, who had been unable to attend the ceremony in Switzerland in June last.

A message of goodwill, signed by all present was sent to Mr. F. Streit, another veteran member, whose health prevented him from attending.

Adjourning to the ante-room, where a buffet, as well as liquid refreshments, awaited the company, the second half of the meeting was spent in lively conversation and exchange of reminiscences. Special thanks were expressed to Mr. D. Paschoud, a member of the Society, for making such excellent catering arrangements. Thus came to a close a most enjoyable and well-attended meeting.

W.B.

A "SWISS EVENING" AT JOHN LAING LTD.

Lady Kirby Laing, wife of the chairman of the John Laing group of companies, patroned a charity ball in the company headquarters for the benefit of the John Grooms Crippleage, Mill Hill. She was keeping up a family tradition as the Laings are a well-known Derbist family involved in many charitable organisations. The style of this particular charity function varies from year to year. Last year it took the form of a Halloween Party. This year's, as Lady Kirby Laing explained to me, was placed under the sign of Switzerland for no deeper reason than that she had spent a holiday in Switzerland and had fallen in love with the place.

In order to get this so-called "Swiss Evening" organised it was necessary to find Swiss costumes, a Swiss décor and Swiss specialities. John Laing's established contact with Mr. A. Schalch, manager of the Institute of Swiss Trade Promotion, who helpfully secured the co-operation of the Swiss Cheese Union, the Dorchester Hotel, the Swiss National Tourist Office, Hürlimann Beer and other Swiss com-

panies.

The modern refectory of Laing's Hendon headquarters were thus decorated with posters and flags supplied by the SNTU, with a "chalet" jointly owned by Hürlimann and the Swiss Cheese Union. Mr. Kaufeler, head chef of the Dorchester, had delegated two cooks to supervise the concoction of the fondues and the preparation of reuchtis and Swiss veal sausages. In fact, everything "Swiss" at this function with the exception of the colossal St. Bernard dog panting at Lady Laing's feet as she greeted her guests were supplied by Swiss personalities or Swiss firms. Their helpfulness must surely have been appreciated by the management of Laing's great contracting empire and served towards the cause of Anglo-Swiss relations.

This charity was in fact a local one. With the exception of a handful of Swiss Centre employees and one or two Laing managers, the 400 guests present were local residents supporting a local charity. We enjoyed an hour-long reception before dinner, during which we drank punch and supplied ourselves with raffle and tombola tickets. The Blue City Five were playing slow rocks to an empty dance floor but their tunes supplied an agreeable background to the reception hum. Dinner began with a highly successful fondue. Guests were pressed around the fondue pans, dipping their bread morsels with cocktail sticks ornated with a Swiss flag into the unctuous molten cheese.

This entrée was followed with other recipes from home and a prolonged dinner gave way to the raffle draw, performed by the celebrity of the



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