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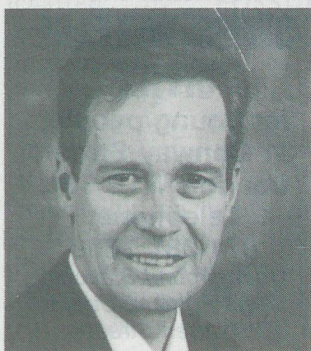
Consular Changes

Two well-known and greatly respected members of the Swiss consular staff in the UK have announced their departure from office. Gilbert Schlaefli, Consul-General in Manchester, is leaving to take up a similar position in Nice and Gertrud Drysdale, Honorary Consul in Scotland, is retiring in October. Mr Schlaefli will be replaced in September by Ernst Keller, who joined the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs in 1959. Since then he has served in London, Bucharest, Johannesburg, Osaka, Freiburg and Accra, returning to Bern in 1979 as Administrative Inspector. Since 1988 he has held the post of Consul-General in Toronto. Mrs Drysdale's replacement will be Alan Stewart, who has worked for several years as the Swiss Bank Corporation's representative in Edinburgh. Below, we carry an appreciation of Gilbert Schlaefli's contribution to the Swiss community, in the form of an open letter written by Bernard Simon.

Dear Gilbert and Dear Jackie,

A letter of farewell is not the easiest thing to write, as the writer has to cope with conflicting emotions made up by the warm, friendly feelings one harbours and the sad undertones of having to say good-bye.

You came to Manchester in June 1987 after, as we understand, a wonderful spell in Houston, Texas. At the beginning we were wondering how Manchester could live up to your previous posting. You came from a vast area in the US to a compact part of the UK. This

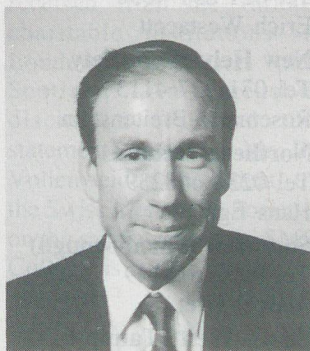


Ernst Keller

change, however, proved to be a great advantage for all of us in the consular district of Manchester.

You spared no effort to visit our friends in Scotland and Northern Ireland time and time again, thus providing a coherence rarely experienced before in the consular district. We, in Manchester in particular, were the beneficiaries of your uninhibited enthusiasm, drive and generosity. I refer not just to the local Swiss community, but to numerous other organisations and contacts, be it in the arts and industry, commerce and education and any institution working to the good of your beloved Manchester. You also stood in very high regard among your colleagues in the Manchester Consular Association who elected you as their president.

As far as the Swiss community is concerned, we also were the recipients of your tireless efforts and benevolence. We remember your words and deeds of encouragement when we tried to organise our '700 Years Switzerland' festivities, just to mention one particular event. Our Swiss Club Manchester has greatly benefitted from your continual support. We are here for the benefit of the local community: you provided us with renewed energy to work to this aim.



Alan Stewart

One of the most striking features of your stay in Manchester was your ability to forge so many personal and lasting friendships with so many different personalities. Whenever one mentions the names of Jackie and Gilbert Schlaefli a broad smile appears on people's faces, followed immediately and enthusiastically with an expression like, 'Aren't they a super couple!' Such reactions stem from your warm and friendly personalities which shine through at official and private functions.

Some of us, who had the privilege of knowing you on a more private basis, are also struck by your deep affection for your three daughters and your grandchildren. Your care finds its expression in your home at Sandbach. That is the place where you are able to regenerate your batteries, enabling you to cope with all the demands of an arduous job.

Now, regrettably, the moment has come for us to convey to you our very sincere good wishes for your new area of activity in the south of France. Their gain is our loss. We still harbour the hope that one day you will come back — so we don't say good-bye but a hearty *au revoir mes chers amis et à bientôt*.

Yours sincerely,
Bernard Simon.

It will be a sad moment for the Swiss in Scotland when Gertrud Drysdale retires as Honorary Consul. Trudy has represented our interests for the past eight years with dedication and determination. Her workload was heavy. There were many daily enquiries and numerous functions to attend ranging from football matches and concerts to the inauguration of new Swiss businesses.

Trudy is a member of the West of Scotland Swiss Club. As consul she went



Gertrud Drysdale

out of her way to get to know the members of the other Swiss societies in Scotland too. She attended meetings in Aberdeen and Edinburgh and is a frequent guest in Dunfermline, where her daughter Fiona is an active member.

Helped by husband George, Trudy revitalized the Swiss Benevolent Fund Scotland, taking a personal interest in the problems and hardships of Swiss nationals in Scotland.

We shall all miss Trudy's enthusiasm but hope that despite her retirement as consul she will maintain her friendship links with the Swiss throughout Scotland.

[UD]

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—Mothers' Group

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Johanna von Orelli

Swiss Economic Council

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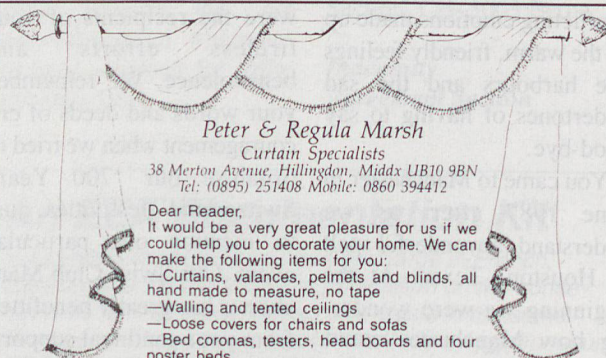
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FOSSUK in Torquay

On the weekend of 3-5 July the Federation of Swiss Societies in the United Kingdom (FOSSUK) held its annual general meeting in Torbay. That beauty spot was chosen at the kind invitation of Max Singer, president of Torbay Swiss Club.

The AGM was attended by over twenty society delegates, supported by Messrs. Christian Faessler (Minister), Livio Huerzeler (Cultural Attaché) and Eduard Juan (Consul) from the embassy in London and Consul-General Gilbert Schlaefli from Manchester. The Organisation of Swiss Abroad was represented by Dr Rudolf Wyder, director of the OSA's secretariat, and Mrs A Gueissaz, from the service for the Swiss Abroad of the Confederation. Also in attendance were three of the four British delegates to the council of the Swiss Abroad, who are elected by FOSSUK, though regrettably FOSSUK's

vice-president, Dr Hans Egli, was not well enough to attend. The meeting was chaired by FOSSUK president Jeffrey Long, who in spite of his English name had a Swiss grandfather.

The agenda included a great many important items affecting the whole community, including the Swiss Review and its Green Pages, or, as they are now called, Regional News UK. An appeal was made to representatives that members of Swiss clubs all round the country should be induced to procure advertising for the Regional News UK. The community here now has to bear the whole production costs of the Regional News UK, except for printing and despatch which is done in Switzerland. If there is not sufficient advertising, we may lose the local pages. The other appeal was for more news about societies' activities — just short reports about events and where

possible advance notification of meetings.

Verbal reports were received from the various charitable institutions in London, Manchester and Scotland. An extensive discussion followed the statement given by Mr B. Vollenweider, president of the Swiss Mercantile Society, on the sad news that the SMS College is to be closed. A proposal by FOSSUK committee members was accepted that the building in Fitzroy Square, London, must be retained for the Swiss community if no language school is to be housed there and that the Schweizerische Kaufmannische Verband in Zurich should be approached immediately.

The two addresses by Mrs Gueissaz and Dr Wyder were received with great interest. Then, inevitably, finances were discussed and the accounts accepted. The suggestion and hope made previously that the bulk of

member societies should pay FOSSUK £1 per head has not been taken aboard, other than by a minority of groups.

Apart from the actual AGM, the Torbay Swiss Club had arranged a number of social gatherings, including a civic reception by the mayor and mayoress of Torquay. The sixty-odd delegates from all corners of the British Isles were given an opportunity to watch the video of last year's Swiss Fair at Battersea Park and the chance to enjoy lovely walks through park and woodland down to the sea, even though the weather was not always clement. There was also a coach outing over Dartmoor and via Plymouth to the Saxon Buckfast Abbey, a living Benedictine monastery. Throughout the weekend the atmosphere was an extremely relaxed and happy one, a most enjoyable one for adults and youngsters alike.

■ Mariann Meier

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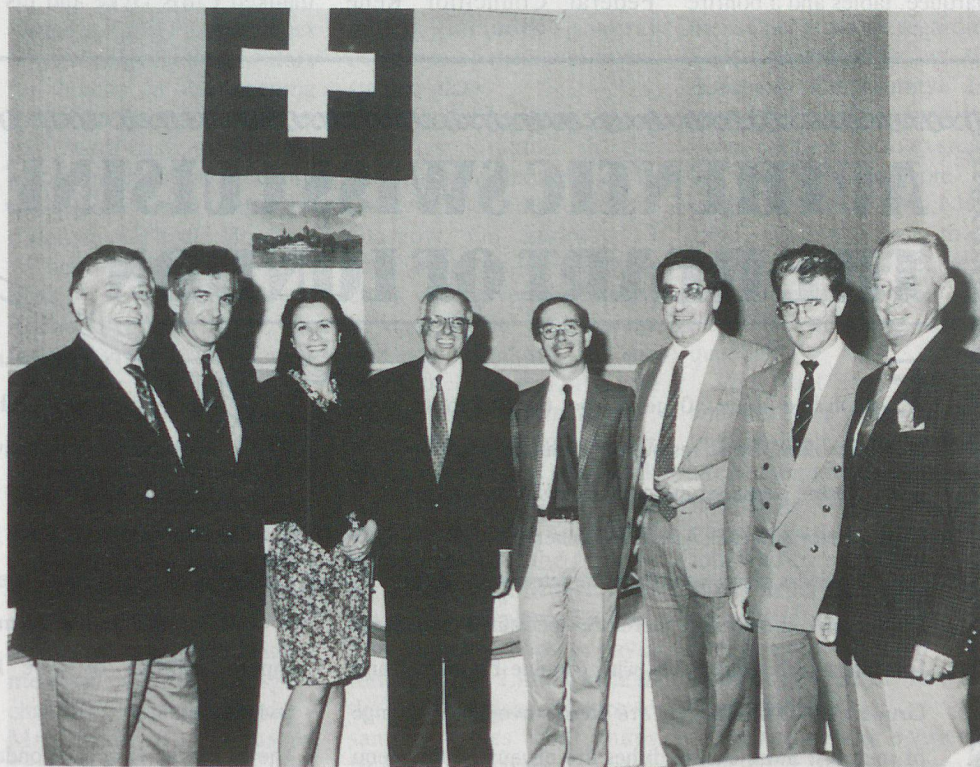
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FOSSUK delegates assemble in Torquay: From left, Gilbert Schlaefli (Consulate-General, Manchester), Livio Huerzeler (Swiss Embassy, London), A Gueissaz (Service for the Swiss Abroad, Bern), Eduard Juan, Christian Faessler (both Swiss Embassy, London), Jeffrey Long (Yorkshire Swiss Club and FOSSUK president), Dr Rudolf Wyder (Secretariat of the Swiss Abroad, Bern) and Max Singer (Torbay Swiss Club). Photograph by courtesy of the Herald Express.

1st August Celebration in London

After the overwhelming success of the 700th anniversary celebrations at Battersea last year, the 1st August Committee were encouraged to revert once again to making the National Day celebrations an outdoor event as they had been in the years past.

In January, under its new President Chris Dyke, the Committee set about looking for a suitable location. This they found at King Alfred School in Golders Green which not only had a delightfully rural setting, but unbelievably, a Swiss style wooden hut. The 18th July was chosen to enable those who would be away during the summer holidays to join in the celebrations. Armin Loetscher agreed to organise the culinary delights and the Swiss band UR-LI-JU, which had been such a success at Battersea, agreed to entertain us. Arrangements for a marquee, tables and a bonfire

were made. All that was needed to complete the occasion was a day of 'Battersea weather'.

Our request for financial backing was answered with some very generous donations. We are grateful to all the sponsors, all of whom were listed in the official programme, for their support which enabled us to break even.

On the day the weather was fine and encouraged over 800 people to come and join in the festivities. For the vast number of children the Mothers' group organised numerous activities: games, face painting and lantern making etc. All very popular and ideally located in the infants playground.

After a short sermon and prayer by Reverend von Orelli the Ambassador Mr F. Muheim addressed the gathering. He quoted from Federal Councillor Rene

Felber's speech encouraging solidarity among mankind and referring expressly to the solidarity between Switzerland and its citizens abroad.

The Ambassador continued by reminding those present of the importance of 1992 and in particular the introduction of the right to vote by post by the Swiss abroad in Federal ballots and in elections to the National Council. This right comes at most significant time when Switzerland has to make far reaching decisions on determining her future position in Europe. He went on, 'I would like to encourage you, the Swiss abroad, and in particular you, the Swiss in Britain, to take an active part in this debate.'

Finally Mr Muheim paid tribute to the former 1st of August Committee and especially to its President Vergil Berti for his long and devoted service. He then thanked Chris Dyke and his

Committee members for organising this year's event.

After the official opening the tables and benches quickly filled. The very efficient and charming waitresses, all of them Swiss Au Pair girls, were busy serving Bratwurst, Cervelat, Fondue, Raclette and drinks for hours whilst the music played by UR-LI-JU quickly helped to fill the dance floor.

At ten o'clock the children's Lampion procession moved to the bonfire which was lit and burned strongly to the solemn accompaniment of the Alphorn — bringing the evening slowly to a close.

The positive feedback has encouraged the Committee to start provisional arrangements for 1993. Building on this year's comments and experiences it is hoped to hold an even more popular event on the 17th July 1993 at the King Alfred School.

■ Margrit Lyster

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Zurichoise, Bratwurst and the best Rösti outside Switzerland itself are but three items on a menu which characterises distinctive aspects of Swiss cooking. There is also a good selection of seasonal dishes like Bernerplatte. And game, such as venison is another of the restaurant's specialities.

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Around and About Aberdeen

Catherine and Paddy Inhoff kindly invited Aberdeen Swiss Club to hold its national day celebrations at their farm — a warm thank you to them! The children had a walk carrying lanterns. Later in the evening everybody tried hard to remember Swiss-German and French songs and the resulting choir sounded quite impressive. There was a mouth-watering buffet of both savoury and sweet dishes, some of which were truly spectacular. This has given rise to the idea of compiling an Aberdeen Swiss Club Cook Book, so members don't have to wait too long before sampling their favourite dishes again. Recipes, with artistic illustrations, should be sent to club secretary, Brigitte Marshall.

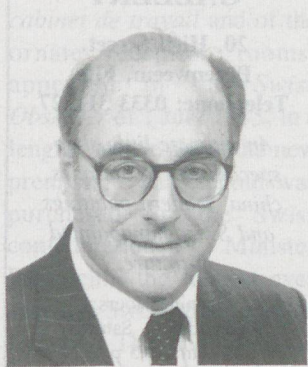
■ Brigitte Marshall

Taunton

On 1 August seventeen Swiss families spent a delightful day at the Taunton home of Swiss Club South-West organizer Lotti Burrows and her husband, Charles. The national day celebrations started with brunch, followed by a Swiss buffet and wine. In the afternoon the happy group gathered around a bonfire and refreshed their repertoire of Swiss songs. The celebrations were recorded by BBC Radio Somerset Sound and broadcast on 3 August.

■ Ruth Cole

Ambassador in Scotland



Ambassador Muheim

The Swiss ambassador undertook an official visit to Scotland from 9-15 June, during which he took the opportunity both of meeting members of the Swiss community and holding discussions with civic dignitaries and businessmen.

On Wednesday 10 June the ambassador's party, which included Consul-General Gilbert Schlaefli and Honorary Consul Trudy Drysdale, visited Aberdeen Art Gallery, after which they were received in the Town

House by Lord Provost James Wyness and other councillors for lunch. In the evening forty-five Swiss nationals in the north-east joined the ambassador at a cocktail reception held in the Caledonian Thistle Hotel.

The following morning Mr Muheim visited the factory of Roche Products Ltd., in Dalry, Ayrshire. The managing director, J.B. Hornibrook, organised a tour of this thriving Swiss-owned factory which employs 790 workers. Later the ambassador was entertained to lunch at the City Chambers in Glasgow by Lord Provost Robert Innes and fellow councillors. The busy day continued with a meeting at the Glasgow chamber of commerce, where Mr Muheim discussed Scottish-Swiss trade with executive members of the chamber. From there Mr Muheim departed for the Burrell Collection, one of the city's splendid art collections,

Letters

Sir,

I have read letters about Swiss Fest (issues 3/91 and 1/92) with incredulity. We too came to Battersea on that glorious summer's day. We had a wonderful day. We saw plenty of Swiss costumes, beautifully decorated carts and majestic Bernese mountain dogs. We heard Swiss music aplenty. The bands were second to none and the atmosphere was great. The children were busy all day.

The opening ceremony was very moving. I am not sentimental about my nationality, but I was moved and proud. Lord Hunt would certainly not have accepted an invitation to a 'fundraising exercise for the Swiss government'. Of that I am certain, knowing something of him through my work.

There were plenty of small gifts for the children and we enjoyed delicious Swiss servalats, bratwursts and

bread as well as raclette and strawberries. We bought chocolate, biscuits and Swiss wine.

In fact, Gabriella Williams, it feels as if we were at a different event altogether. We were impressed by the resourceful and efficient way in which the ever increasing number of visitors were accommodated.

Congratulations and thanks to all those involved. You made Battersea Park a lovely place that day in 1991. Incidentally, whenever we return after a day out with the children and ask about their favourite part of the day, my godson answers with shining eyes, 'the best bit was the dancing cows'.

Yours sincerely,
Ursula Steiger,
Hertford.

■ This correspondence is now closed. Due to lack of space other letters will be published in the next edition. Ed.

which includes several examples of medieval Swiss stained-glass.

There are three Swiss societies situated in the Scottish Lowlands, based in Dunfermline, Edinburgh and Glasgow. On Saturday 13 June members of all three clubs were given the chance of meeting the ambassador and the consuls in the beautiful grounds of Little Castle near Lesmahagow, home of Iqbal Singh and his Swiss wife, Trudi. To mark the occasion, which was attended by over a hundred members of the Swiss community, Mr Muheim and his wife each planted a tree. The Muheims hope to pay a return visit to Little Castle in the not too distant future to sample apples and plums from the two trees.

Both in Aberdeen and at Lesmahagow Mr Muheim addressed the Swiss community about the Federal Council's decision to com-

mence negotiations regarding Swiss membership of the European Community. He strongly encouraged the Swiss community to exercise its new right to vote on federal matters as from 1 July 1992, since decisions to be taken by the Swiss people in the European context will have far reaching consequences.

The last day of the ambassador's visit was spent in Edinburgh. In the morning Mr Muheim held discussions with the governor of the Bank of Scotland. This was followed by a meeting at the Edinburgh chamber of commerce and another civic reception, hosted by Edinburgh's Lord Provost, Norman Irons.

The ambassador's visit was concluded with a lecture on *Switzerland's Way to EC Membership*, delivered at Edinburgh University's Europa Institute.

■ Gertrud Drysdale

The Swiss in London New Helvetic Society

The New Helvetic Society is one of the most active Swiss societies in the country. Lectures on a range of issues relating to Switzerland figure strongly in the society's programme. Most recently the society has been addressed by Professor Hans-Christoph Binswanger of the University of St Gallen and Dr Clive Chruch, reader in European Studies at the University of Kent at Canterbury. Professor Binswanger delivered a lecture in German on *Geld und Gold — Macht und Gier: eine literisch- (zeit)kritische Betrachtung und Lesung ueber Goethe's Faust*. His lecture was supported by the Centre of German-speaking Writers Abroad and the City Swiss club.

Reforming the Swiss Political System? was the title of Dr Church's lecture which

was organised in conjunction with the cultural section of the Swiss embassy. The speaker is an authority on Swiss history and politics and this was amply demonstrated by his lucid appreciation of Swiss institutions and the country's direct democratic political system. Dr Church painted a vivid picture of changes that were necessary though he saw change in the Swiss political system being more evolutionary than revolutionary. Yet problems must be addressed for in an integrated European Community there will be no place for a *Sonderfall Schweiz*. Switzerland requires more emphatic political leadership, he suggested.

The first event planned by the NHS for the autumn is a lecture by former British ambassador John Sankey, to be held, as usual, at the Swiss embassy on 23 September. The title of Mr Sankey's lecture is *Saints and Sinners: Unusual Visitors to Geneva from 1550 to 1900*. Further information about membership of the NHS and forthcoming events may be obtained from NHS secretary, Rosemarie Breitenstein (Tel. 071 727 4113).

■ **Mariann Meier and Rosemarie Breitenstein**

Do not miss the first ever concert in the UK of only Swiss music, performed by a prestigious orchestra with a world-class soloist at the Barbican Hall, London, on 26 April 1993.

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Felicity Kinross

The *Regional News* — UK has learnt of the sad death a short while ago of Felicity Kinross, whose book, *Coffee and Ices*, was reviewed in the last edition. Her book, a study of the Gatti family in nineteenth-century London, is still available, published by Lavenham Press at a cost of £9.95. (ISBN 09517745 0 6).

Consistoire

Did you know that 230 years ago — in 1762 — the first Swiss church in London was founded? The then Église Helvétique's members were an elite of diplomats, bankers, officers and teachers of la Suisse Romande. Today our parishoners come from all walks of life, with one common aim: to attend a church service in the traditional Swiss Protestant manner.

A consistoire of twelve members deals with the running of the church and a general church assembly is held annually. This year's assembly was attended by 35 people. It was a rather low turnout, so the consistoire assumes that everybody is more or less satisfied with the way things are being run.

The annual accounts were in a healthier state than usual,

with only a small deficit, mainly because of the income generated from the bi-annual bazaar. More donations than usual were also received both from Britain and Switzerland, probably due to the 700th anniversary of Switzerland which made people more supportive of the work done by the church. To help augment our funds for this year a jumble sale, organised by Ursula Talery (Tel 081 778 4878) will be held on 7 November.

The Swiss church is situated in Endell Street, near Covent Garden. Services at the Swiss church are held in German on the first Sunday of the month, in French on the second Sunday and in English on the third Sunday. Why don't you come along and join us? And don't forget the jumble sale!

■ **Edith Crack**

New Fellow

Walter Curati-Alasonatti

has been elected as a fellow of the Royal College of Radiologists in London. Born in 1943, he obtained his doctorate from the University of Geneva in 1970. In the early 1970s he worked in hospitals in Montreal and London, before taking up a post at the University Hospital in Geneva in 1976. In 1987 he returned to London on his appointment as a senior research fellow, and then consultant radiologist, at Hammersmith Hospital. He is also engaged as an honorary clinical assistant at the National Hospital for Nervous Diseases. In addition to his clinical duties, Dr Curati-Alasonatti has held several academic positions at the Universities of Geneva, Mainz and, since 1988, as a senior lecturer at the Royal Postgraduate Medical School of the University of London.

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The Swiss Embassy in London: A Brief History

by Mariann Meier

Although several Swiss lived in London in the eighteenth century — a sufficiently large number to warrant the founding of the Swiss Church in 1762 — it was not until 1817 that the Helvetic diet sent a professional diplomatic representative to London. A legation was established in 1891 and in the early 1930s its inadequate premises in Queen Anne Street were vacated when the Swiss diplomats and consular staff moved to 21 Bryanston Square and 18 Montagu Place, London.

Bryanston Square was laid out on the estate of Edward Berkeley Portman in 1810. The present number 21 was formed by two houses overlooking the spacious square with its lawns, shrubs and beautiful trees. Pictures of the building's elegant interior, of the minister's *cabinet de travail* and of the ornate reception rooms, appeared in the *Swiss Observer* of 1 July 1933, in a lengthy article about the new premises. The freehold was purchased for the Swiss confederation by Minister Paravicini, the longest ever serving Swiss diplomat in London. The confederation bought the plot of the adjoining house in 1962. Number 19 was then turned into a car park for the staff, the original building on the plot having burnt down during the war.

The legation itself had suffered severe damage too. A 1000lb German bomb was discovered in the foundations in 1969. While the residence was repaired the Minister moved to a suite at the Dorchester Hotel and, at one time, also lived in a house in Virginia Waters. After the war, 21 Bryanston Square

became habitable again. In 1957 the legation was raised to the status of an embassy and the then Minister Daeniker was appointed ambassador.

In March 1965 the Swiss parliament voted Sfr 11.7 million for the construction of a new embassy. But it took a long time to work out the plans for the building which had to be approved under the terms of the Town and Country Act, by the Fine Arts Commission and the Georgian Society. It was

Gloucester Place. A charming, small residence was taken over in Upper Brook Street, giving on to the side of the American embassy in Grosvenor Square. The Special Division, looking after the interests of belligerent nations, had been installed since the war in the former Japanese embassy, further down the square, near Duke Street.

Gradually the new embassy began to take shape. On 14 May 1970 the lord mayor of

accompanied by a number of eminent dignitaries from the federal administration and Ambassador Weitnauer who was head of the Swiss mission in London at the time. Several 'other' inaugurations followed: for Swiss societies, for British dignitaries, for the press and for neighbours. The new premises were opened to the Swiss community and several hundred compatriots availed themselves of the opportunity to view the new embassy.

It is an impressive building. The Bryanston Square part of the building houses a lecture hall and foyer, with reception rooms on the first floor, the ambassador's private suite and flats for guests on the second floor, and a library, canteen and maids' rooms on the top floor. The office block, all modern and practical, has an extra storey, though the roof is the same height as the residence block. The basement, covering the full site, has accommodation for 33 cars and the sub-basement has more storage room.

When the hopes for a cultural forum at the Swiss Centre were finally dashed, the embassy lecture hall became more and more a venue for a cultural events. Its importance was particularly evidence during last year's Festival of Switzerland in Britain, when a more than usual number of lectures, concerts and official social events were held there.

The imposing building of the Swiss embassy certainly underlines the considerable Swiss presence in London and the Swiss community may be grateful to Ambassador Muheim and his predecessors for putting the premises to such good use.



The old Swiss Embassy.

essential that the new building was exactly like the other three corner houses of Bryanston Square. But finally on 26 February 1969 Ambassador Keller invited the Swiss press in London and some other personalities for a last stroll through the dignified, but no longer adequate, rooms. Then the demolition began. The chancellery was moved to a semi-completed block of flats a few minutes away on the corner of Montagu Place and

Westminster laid the cornerstone of the new embassy building during a reception in a marquee specially erected in Bryanston Square. In November 1971 the offices of the consulate and chancellery were moved to the modern block at the back of the Georgian front elevation. And in February 1972 Federal Councillor Pierre Graber, head of the then political department, officially opened the new premises. He was

Book Review

by Julie Duthie

Piero Scanziani: A Man for Europe (Eureka Publishers, Windsor: 1991. 232pp. ISBN 1 873414 04 8. £13.99). Piero Scanziani, *The Entronauts* (Eureka Publishers, Windsor: 1991. 288pp. ISBN 1 873414 03 X. £14.99).

A Man for Europe is a collection of essays by twenty European writers, who take as their subject, Piero Scanziani, journalist, playwright, novelist, naturalist and publisher. Scanziani is an Italian-language writer of European stature who, over the past fifty years, has published a wealth of literature, including novels, essays, plays, biographies and diaries. He is the recipient of the 'Premio Viareggio', the 'Schiller Prize' and the international 'Prix Veillon' and has twice been shortlisted for the 'Nobel Prize for Literature'.

Despite these achievements, his books have only recently been published in the United Kingdom, so if you have never heard of Piero Scanziani, *A Man for Europe* provides the perfect introduction to the man and his work. The book is split into three parts dealing with his literature, his spiritual vision of the world, and personal recollections from his friends and colleagues. Taken separately, each essay provides an informative and perceptive analysis of the various aspects that have contributed to Scanziani's life and found expression in his writing. Taken collectively, the essays combine to form a concise and highly-readable introduction to the work of a writer who has devoted his life to the search for peace and happiness.

Each contributor acknowledges that this search

has been the driving force behind Scanziani's work, and their essays have been collected in this one book to provide a sympathetic study of the writer's progression from journalist and first-time author to finalist for the 'Nobel Prize for Literature'. A lucid and stimulating book, *A Man for Europe* encourages the new reader to discover Scanziani's work, and provides useful background information and critical appraisals of his books for those who have already encountered them.

The Entronauts (a word invented by the author) are those people who have dedicated their lives to the search for perennial wisdom, and who, by doing so, have discovered the secret of true happiness. Their search involves an inner journey, a journey into what we call the soul. This spiritual journey is paralleled by Scanziani's physical travels as he moves through four continents, in his attempts to track down the Entronauts. Once he has found them, he too must embark on the inner journey in order to reach an understanding of both them and himself. This concept of a dual journey, physical and spiritual, is evocative of Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, but Scanziani's journey is more compelling because it is reality, and not just a work of fiction.

The Entronauts is not primarily concerned with religion, although several religions, such as Christianity, Buddhism and Hinduism, are explored to varying degrees; rather it is a book about spirituality and metaphysics, and it shows how different religions may be both similar to, and yet distanced from, the true

spiritual aspect of man. By taking such a topic as the subject of his book, Scanziani is obviously aware that he is open to the criticism and cynicism of the Western world. Yet he too is a Westerner, and also at various times throughout his 'pilgrimage', a cynic. His own reasons for the journey and the resulting book which chronicles his encounters with the Entronauts, are rooted in his acknowledgement of the increasingly widespread feelings of dissatisfaction and destruction throughout the world. His simultaneous outer and inner journeys mirror his desire to reconcile the corporeal with the spiritual in order to reach harmony. It is, at the most basic level, a search for meaning: "Later, as you reflect on your experiences, you discover that the journey has a meaning. But does it really have that meaning or is it that we give it that meaning?" He contemplates the Great War and finds that it had no meaning: "The Great War required ten million victims, and it was satisfied. That decimation served no purpose, and had no motive, and everyone knew it: the emperors, the kings, the ministers and the generals. Yet they continued to kill and to die, without reason or purpose. What could explain this?"

Scanziani does an admirable job in his handling of such a difficult, and often obscure, subject. His prose flows effortlessly along, capable of transforming even the most complex of metaphysical terminology into everyday, easily-understandable words. He himself, as the narrator, emerges as being sincere in his quest, without being either

gullible or smug. He is sceptical at times and often angry when he can't quite grasp the understanding which the Entronauts possess. His impatience, his fears, his doubts and his guilt render him a thoughtful and very human narrator, and as a result the reader can identify with him, even though he may not understand his need for spiritual enlightenment. Although Scanziani's book focuses on the mystical, he never loses sight of the corporeal, and his metaphysical discoveries are finely balanced with humorous observations about the people he meets along his travels and the minutia of everyday life: "In London you spend a lot of time waiting in queues. If three people should happen to form a queue quite by accident on the street, the passers-by will stop and queue up behind them automatically."

Although metaphysics is not a subject which appeals to everyone, Scanziani's gentle, beautifully-written book holds something of interest to Entronaut and cynic alike, and is a definite "must-read" for anyone who has ever questioned where they are going, why, and whether it will be enough.

Regional News — UK

The editor welcomes readers' views, comments and reports. Letters and articles for the December issue 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) as soon as possible.