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Regional News - UK

FOSSUK Shuns SLDI

The Federation of Swiss Societies in the United Kingdom (FOSSUK) has turned down an application for affiliation by the London branch of the Swiss Liberal Democrats (SLDI). The Liberal Democrats set up their branch in London in 19 and, since most other Swiss societies are affiliated to FOSSUK, an application from the political party to join the umbrella organisation for Swiss societies in the UK was long since expected. Its rejection was equally to be expected.

Ever since the Swiss abroad were granted the vote, it was inevitable that Swiss political parties would attempt to organise in foreign countries. Newly enfranchised voters meant potential new sources of support for the Swiss political parties.

But the new electoral scenario has presented a problem for Swiss communities across the world. Traditionally, their organisational principals have been apolitical.

The whole issue was already one which was addressed at the meeting of the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad on the Lenz-erheide earlier this summer.



In the UK this clash of cultures came to a fore at FOSSUK's autumn executive committee meeting. There, the FOSSUK executive rejected the SLDI's application for membership by, it is understood, an overwhelming majority.

The grounds for this decision are spelled out in a document which has been obtained by the Regional News-UK. This states that FOSSUK 'must preserve a politically neutral position'. It is undesirable, the document continues, for FOSSUK to grant membership to a political body when FOSSUK itself is non-political. Moreover, it is implied that

political parties are not Swiss societies and not therefore entitled to membership. But just in case any doubts remain, the committee will propose, at FOSSUK's next annual general meeting, to amend its rules in order to specifically debar the membership of political parties.

Sources close to the FOSSUK chairman, Jeffrey Long, insist that the decision was not directed specifically at the SLDI, but rather at all political parties. Considerable anxieties were expressed that if the SLDI were to be admitted, other extremist organisations might also organise and seek

Wishing all
Readers A Very
MERRY
CHRISTMAS

Diary

3 February
FARNBOROUGH
Annual General Meeting and Films of Switzerland. Details from Club President Vreni Rudkin, Tel 0252 547948.

11 February
MANCHESTER
Fondue and Raclette Party at Wilmslow Parish Hall. Details from Club President Marianne Reuter. Tel 0260 273681.

17 February
WEST OF SCOTLAND
Illustrated talk on a journey through Oz by Annemarie and George Hogarth. Details from Club President

admittance.

In a grudgingly conciliatory move it was however agreed that FOSSUK could not prevent political parties from approaching affiliated societies directly and seeking access to their functions.

Comment

So, FOSSUK has decided to reject the affiliation of the Liberal Democrats (SLDI). The decision is not surprising: private comments made by several FOSSUK committee members over recent months have demonstrated an antipathy towards party political activities and, until recently, FOSSUK instructed this magazine not to carry adverts placed by political parties.

Yet, FOSSUK's decision should not go unquestioned. Firstly, let us dispel as chicanery the disingenuous view, advanced by at least one committee member, that

political parties are not Swiss societies and not therefore eligible for membership. What are they? Martians?

FOSSUK additionally justifies its decision on the grounds that since it is a non-party political organisation, no party political organisation may be affiliated. Indeed, FOSSUK should be an apolitical organisation. But presumably FOSSUK would also consider itself a religiously neutral body. Yet it has not prohibited the affiliation of various Christian organisations. Presumably FOSSUK considers itself an industrially neutral body. Yet it has not prohibited the affiliation of various

business (i.e. employers') organisations. It would seem as if double standards are being applied.

They are, moreover, retrospective double standards: having decided not to accept the SLDI, the FOSSUK committee is now going to suggest to its next annual general meeting that its rules are re-written to prevent political bodies from joining. There are, in other words, no constitutional grounds at present for barring political parties in principal from membership.

FOSSUK retorts that its stance is to prevent infiltration by extremist groups. But the SDLI and the other main-

stream political parties are hardly extremist. Besides, banning political parties will not ban extremists societies. What of religious fanatics? They are apparently not covered by this proscription and presumably could still seek admittance to FOSSUK.

When the FOSSUK delegates assemble in Edinburgh in 1995 to discuss the rule change, perhaps they should first contemplate the purpose of their organisation. If that purpose is to represent the Swiss community in the UK, FOSSUK can not do that by pretending that the political parties do not exist.

Editor

Louis R Guenin
B.D.S., L.D.S., R.C.S. (Eng.)

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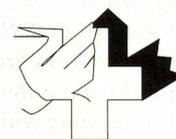
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Scotland and Switzerland: Some 15th Century Connections

From the Baltic to the Mediterranean fifteenth century Europe was awash with Scots. Wine bags and nut-ton guzzlers was the ungracious verdict bestowed upon these Scottish travellers and emigrants in France while in northern Germany the word Scot became synonymous with pedlar. But, compared to the strong links which developed between Scotland and Switzerland at the time of the Reformation in the sixteenth century, little attention has been given to those Scots who visited Switzerland in the preceding century.

Many who did were probably only passing through the Alpine region, perhaps on their way to conduct ecclesiastical business at the papal court or perhaps to visit the shrine of St Andrew at Amalfi in Italy. The route which most of these Scottish travellers took across the Alps is uncertain and sadly no contemporary account of their experiences survive to compare with the sheer terror recorded by the Welshman Adam of Usk, who crossed the St Gotthard in 1402 with his eyes blindfolded lest he see the dangers of the pass.

Some details do, however, survive of a journey made



Fribourg: plenty of apostles, too few cooks.

through the Swiss lowlands by Eleanor Stewart, daughter of James I. She travelled to Kempten in 1448 to meet her new husband, Sigismund, the Habsburg archduke of Tirol. She passed through Geneva, Fribourg, Bern and then on to Luzern, Zurich and Konstanz. Eleanor's arrival in Fribourg was a matter of concern to host and visitor alike. The town could provide but one cook for the princess and her party, while, some years later, the citizens of Fribourg were still complaining about the exorbitant cost of accommodating Eleanor and her entourage.

Eleanor Stewart's Swiss connections were not confined to causing Fribourg's impoverishment. She was

back within the bounds of modern Switzerland in 1458, visiting Basel, where she returned in 1467 to celebrate Fasnacht. On the latter occasion the Basel Chronicle reported that she was much alarmed at the over enthusiastic participation of her husband in a jousting tournament.

More significantly, in 1457, Sigismund granted his wife numerous Swiss territories, including Rapperswil, Winterthur, Frauenfeld and much of Thurgau. By then the Eidgenossen had ousted Sigismund from most of these lands and Eleanor acquired actual possession only of Wintherthur. Eleanor was now, however, personally drawn into the conflict between her Habsburg hus-

band and the expanding Swiss confederation and, from a distance, the Scottish government too began to develop an interest in the matter. In 1460 it approached the French king, Charles VII, seeking his assistance in the recovery of Eleanor's lands.

Nothing came of this appeal for French help but it was typical of the audacious, and at times outrageous, policy of overseas territorial aggrandisement pursued by Scotland's Stewart kings.

Eleanor and her sister Annabella - who for some years resided at the Savoyard court and was betrothed to the count of Geneva - were the most socially prominent but not the only Scots to visit Switzerland in the fifteenth century. Over sixty Scottish clerics attended the proceedings of the general council of the church held in Basel between 1431 and 1449. Many of these clerics, such as John Carmichael, the Scottish bishop of Orleans, attended only some of the council's sessions, though Carmichael's visit between 1433 and 1436 was commemorated by the erection of a memorial window in the church of St Theodore. Oth

Continued on page V



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Scotland and Switzerland: Continued...

Continued from page IV

ers, however, became very closely associated with the ecclesiastical reforms discussed at the council and none more so than the ardent conciliarist Thomas Livingston, abbot of Dundrennan. Livingston was invited to preach to the assembled church fathers on at least four occasions. He undertook much diplomatic activity on their behalf and remained loyal to the council when others were alienated by its growing radicalism which culminated in the deposition of Pope Eugenius IV and the election of the anti-pope Felix V.

The presence of humbler Scots in fifteenth century Switzerland is less well attested than that of other social groups. Far removed from the controversies of Basel, some perhaps undertook a pilgrimage to one of Switzerland's religious shrines. Pilgrimage is often regarded as the medieval equivalent of modern tourism, but it served another function too. In 1471, when a Scotsman called Peter Black was found guilty of manslaughter, he was ordered to undertake a penitential journey to four far-flung shrines including that of Einsiedeln (SZ). Pilgrims were only visitors but it was

in the fifteenth century that the exodus of emigrant Scots first began on a major scale. This emigration was directed in the main towards northern Europe, though some Scots sought a new livelihood further south and it has been suggested that one of these was 'Meister Jakob Schott aus Schotten buertig' who is recorded in the Kirchenbuch of Zug in 1491.

Swiss visits to fifteenth century Scotland were altogether more rare than visits made by Scots to Switzerland. As the Scots themselves asserted in the Declaration of Arbroath, Scotland was on the fringe of civilization, beyond which there is no dwelling point at all. It was not the sort of place through which one just happened to pass and there were no obvious political or commercial reasons to entice Swiss to Scotland. As for the potential pilgrim Scotland's religious shrines were distant and decidedly second rate when compared to those elsewhere in Europe, though one Swiss, by the name of Conrad von Scharnachtal, did in 1446 undertake the arduous journey to the even more remote St Patrick's Purgatory in Co. Donegal.

Yet one of the few recorded instances of Swiss travelling to the edge of



Einsiedeln: medieval pilgrimage centre.

Christendom arises in circumstances which are far from surprising. By the fifteenth century Swiss mercenaries had acquired an international reputation for the skill and their services were eagerly engaged by the wealthier powers of Europe. When, in 1482, war broke out between England and Scotland, those retained in the English army which attacked Scotland included a contingent of 213 Swiss soldiers led by Hans Cruse and a further twenty Swiss ('Swyches') mercenaries whose remuneration amount to 6d a day for 56 days of service.

This was not the first occasion upon which Scottish and Swiss soldiers had encountered one another. Both the Swiss and the Scottish soldier abroad were a common

sight in fifteenth-century Europe. The French crown, in particular, engaged substantial numbers of both in the Scots Guard and the Cent Suisse which composed the French royal body guard.

Yet, ironically, it was the Scottish attempt to copy the successful military tactics of the Swiss which led to the horrendous military defeat which marks the close of the middle ages in Scotland. At Nancy in 1477 a phalanx of Swiss pikemen had rushed the opposing Burgundian armies, leaving the latter's leader, Charles the Bold, dead on the field. The imitation of these tactics thirty-six years later sank in the mud of Branxton Hill. At Flodden poorly adapted Swiss tactics resulted in the death of James IV and carnage among the Scottish army. [DD]

CHEESES FROM SWITZERLAND

Proudly presents a regular RECIPE SERVICE featuring a member of the SWISS ALPINE SKI TEAM

Heidi Zeller's Favourite Recipe - CHEESE ROESTI

Ingredients:

800g potatoes, boiled in their skins the previous day

Salt

3 tablespoon butter

60g Gruyere SWITZERLAND, coarsley grated

100g Gruyere SWITZERLAND, thinly sliced

1/2 bunch of chives, snipped

1. Peel and coarsley grate the potatoes and season with salt.
2. Heat the butter in a frying pan and add the grated potato. Constantly turning, saute for 5 minutes, then add grated Gruyere.
3. Press together into a potato cake, then fry on a low heat for approx. 20 minutes until golden brown.
4. Using a pan lid or flat plate, turn the potato cake over and slide back into the pan.
5. Sprinkle the remaing Gruyere over the top of the roesti, cover and allow to melt.
6. Place on a flat plate, garnish with chives and serve immediately.



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Letters

Bern Slum

Sir,
We read with great interest the recent items on modern architecture in Switzerland, but would suggest that at least one architect turn his/her urgent attention to the design of a new home for the poor, four-legged slum dwellers of the Baerner Baergrabe. Hopefully he/she would take account of up to date views on the housing of wild animals.

During our last visit we were appalled by the pitiful living conditions of these symbols of our nation's capital, some of whom were displaying the classic symptoms of a bear under great stress. We left the city feeling extremely depressed and would like to think that that it is not only the human Baerner who deserve the services of a caring architect.

*Yours faithfully,
R and F Craven-Maeder
Ringmer,
East Sussex.*

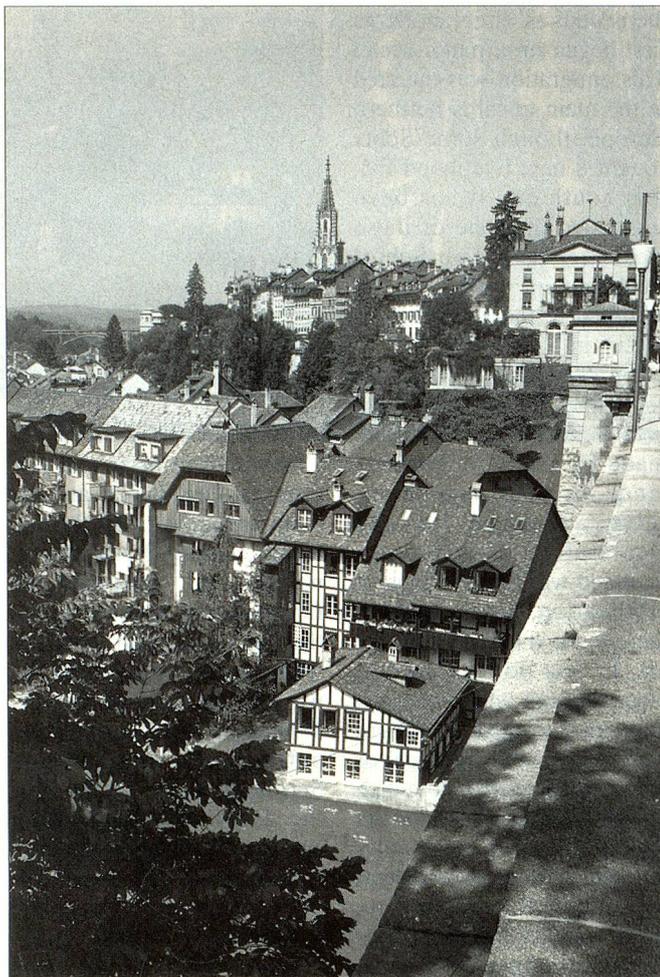
Rough Guide to Politics

Sir,
How can one send a letter for the Swiss Review by 4 November when one only receives the mag on 5 November !?

I would like, however, to suggest that to help the voting Swiss Abroad and provide them with information about the Swiss political scene, how about a 'rough' guide to Swiss political parties with a scale of how far 'left' or 'right' each Swiss party is to the 'right' or 'left' of its nearest equivalent to a UK party.

*Yours faithfully,
K. A. Kunzli,
Spaxton,
Somerset.*

■ The deadline for this issue



Bern: beautiful or slum?

was set once information was received from Bern to the effect that the last issue would be dispatched on 19 October. It clearly was not, but, even though the Regional News-UK has no control over production problems in Bern, apologies to all readers for this unsatisfactory situation. Ed.

Bruder Klaus

Sir,
In January this year a good friend of mine died. She was an English woman who had spent many years in Switzerland, for some time in Geneva, but mostly at the Ecole d'Humanite at Goldern in the Bernese Oberland, where she taught English. It was during her time at Goldern that she became fascinated by what she discovered when investigating the

source material about Niklaus von Flue (later Bruder Klaus). As would be expected she met contradictory opinions about him: was he a saint? or a fraud? how could he exist without food or drink for twenty years? why did he leave his wife and children to spend time at prayer? History books honour him for the conciliatory part he played at the Covenant of Stans in 1471.

I myself was born in Switzerland but have lived most of my life in England. It was most interesting to share with Christina Yates some of the details of her discoveries about Nicholas von Flue and it seemed only right that she would want to publish the results of her research. Her little book addresses many questions in my own mind and I am sure

Embassy Up-date

At the time of going to press (in mid November) there was still no word as to the appointment of a successor for departing Swiss ambassador Franz Muheim. 'We're all being kept in suspense as well,' said a resigned embassy spokeswoman. A successor to cultural and press councillor Livio Hurzeler has, however, been named. He is Rene Schaetti, who arrives in London from a previous posting in Bern. The next issue will include a brief biography of Mr Schaetti.

that it would do the same for other Swiss people in English-speaking countries.

I trust that the comments about Christina Yates' book are not out of order. Our poor, disorientated world could do with one or two leaders of Nicholas von Flue's calibre.

*Yours sincerely,
Rosa L. Aylward,
Oadby,
Leicestershire.*

■ Christina Yates' book is available from Session of York, York YO3 9HS, at a cost of £3.85. See last issue for details. Ed.

Regional News-UK

The editor welcomes readers' views and comments, as well as reports from Swiss clubs and societies. Letters and articles for the issue 2/1995 of the Regional News-UK, to be published in April, should be forwarded to Editor, The Swiss Review (Regional News-UK) c/o The Swiss Embassy, 16-18 Montagu Place, London W1H 2BQ, by 15 February 1995.

Swiss Bauernmalerei in the UK



Switzerland in Britain's Cultural Life

The bulletin *Switzerland in Britain's Cultural Life*, published every two months by the Cultural Section of the Swiss Embassy, can be obtained by writing to the Cultural Section of the Embassy at 16-18 Montagu Place, London, W1H 2BQ (Tel 071 723 0701). It contains detailed information about Swiss musical, theatrical, and artistic events held in the UK and also relevant lectures.

Illustrations by Edit Opprecht (above) and Ursula Ditchburn (right)

Until recently the British have been very fond of stripped pine furniture in their homes. Most towns have a Dip and Strip shop where old painted furniture can be restored to its original pine look.

Recently, however, the popularity of the pure blond designs, associated with the Scandinavian north, have been challenged by the brighter and more decorative designs of the central European countries. The handpainted furniture so often found in Austria and Switzerland, along with the Barge painting of London, has become especially popular.

In Switzerland this tradition has been called 'Bauernmalerei'. It is a style of painting which was first developed in a number of Swiss cantons in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Designs were mostly floral, but some painters also made use of figurative decoration such as animals and landscapes. Patterns were traditionally handed down from family to family though

nowadays it is possible to attend classes on the art of 'Bauernmalerei'. Once the basics regarding composition have been grasped - and the difficulty of working with two or three colours on the paintbrush at the same time - the technique is not difficult.

Edit Opprecht from London is one of a small number of Swiss furniture painters in the UK. Inspired by what she saw on trips back to her native country, she started painting as a hobby. Now she restores and paints full time and has adapted many of the Swiss patterns to suit British tastes, but every piece which she produces is totally original. She restores slightly damaged furniture and repaints it to look new.

Scotland, too, has its practitioner of 'Bauernmalerei' in Ursula Ditchburn, who, at her Little Gallery in Pittenweem, also produces original rather than stencilled works which are adapted from Swiss designs to suit Scottish tastes. [UD]



Readers' Survey: More, More, More

The results of the readership survey published earlier in the year make interesting reading in themselves. 233 responses were received, with approximately equal numbers in all age groups from those in their 20s to those in their 60s - but just 3 from those under 20. A large majority came from those who are not members of Swiss societies, which perhaps explains the comparatively small majority voting for more Swiss club news. Thereafter, people wanted more information about Swiss business; more about food and drink; more readers' letters; more about Swiss personalities; more about consular services; more about cultural events; and more book reviews. Generally, 217 respondents liked the content of the magazine and only 7 did not. Among the many suggestions for new items were sport, films, current affairs, and a job corner. Several readers also said Swiss-British historical contacts. On that score, see pages 4 and 5. The new editor will have much to contemplate when compiling future issues. Many thanks for all who responded: prize winners have been notified directly.

SAD NEWS.

WE COULD LOOSE SOME OR ALL OF THE REGIONAL PAGES.

Since January 1992 the costs of production have to be funded in the UK.

Unfortunately not enough income is received from advertisements to meet these costs.

We are now in a CRISIS situation.

In view of the fact that everyone receives the Swiss Review free of charge, may I appeal to you to make a donation to rescue our pages ?

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Thank you in anticipation for your support.

Yours,

Jeffrey Long
(on behalf of the editorial committee)

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