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SWISS TRADE RECOVERS.

(From the "Economist," April 12th.)

Despite all handicaps Swiss foreign trade returns for 1940 were not so bad as was expected. Imports for the year totalled 1,863 million francs, and exports 1,315 millions, thus leaving a low adverse balance of 548 millions. It is the result, on the one hand, of the decrease in imports owing to transport difficulties, and, on the other hand, of the relatively favourable maintenance of exports. Information received concerning activity in industry is not bad at all, and, despite the partial demobilisation of the Army, unemployment has not risen noticeably, Swiss imports are always higher than exports, as the country possesses no raw materials and not enough foodstuffs, and the maintenance of exports is therefore necessary to assure the country's revictualling. The outstanding features of 1940 are that during the last three months exports exceeded imports, and that exports amounted in December to 143 million francs, the highest figure since October, 1938, when they were 134 millions.

Commercial exchanges, which were almost normal until June last, then showed a sharp decline, but they slowly recovered towards the end of the year. This is remarkable in view of the transport difficulties and the disappearance of one of Switzerland's markets, France.

At the beginning of the war Switzerland chartered a number of neutral ships, mainly Greek, for transporting her goods. These ships were flying the Swiss flag, and, though sometimes detained by the British control, they were nevertheless able regularly to bring their cargoes to the French and Italian ports and ship others there. The situation was changed after the Italian attack against Greece; new ships had to be found, and the question of sea transport reconsidered. The Swiss navy may be a reality in the near future, and no longer a practical joke. The Swiss Federal Government is examining the question of creating a Swiss mercantile marine and of getting the right to fly the Swiss flag on the seas recognised. Once the latter point is settled, Switzerland will be in a position to assure — with the untiring good will of Great Britain — the transport of her goods, thus enabling her trade and industry to work and her people to exist.

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APPRECIATIONS.

Letters of encouragement continue to reach the Editor and the milk of human kindness flowing in our Colony is not affected by rationing.

Mr. F. G. Sommer in a postscript to a communication says: "I do not remember when my subscription to the S. O. is due, but I herewith enclose cheque value £5. 5. 0 as a little 'Leg-up'."

Several other subscribers when renewing remitted 20/- for "one year's subscription." We have taken this to mean 12/- for 52 issues and 8/- towards extra expenses as we cannot foresee when — if ever — we shall revert to weekly publication. We are thus indebted to W. Graf, Mlle. C. Rougemont, G. Ferrari, Mlle J. H. Magron, and Gottfried J. Keller.

A "Compatriot" thinks:

Dear Mr. Boehringer,

I was glad to see that one of our compatriots, at the last meeting of the City Swiss Club, took up the question of finding "ways and means" of keeping the Swiss Observer going and that the matter is to be opened for discussion at the next meeting. I am certain that all good Swiss will agree the "S.O." must remain in existence; it is to my knowledge, with but one exception which is receiving the necessary support, the link between the Swiss Colony in England and the Home country. Few of us have these days any money to spare, most of us are hard hit by the War but notwithstanding all that all of us, able to do so, will give freely towards such an object. I enclose my cheque as a small contribution towards your effort and sincerely hope that others will follow the lead already given us by some of your readers.

Yours sincerely,

COMPATRIOT.

Mr. W. Graf writes:

Dear Sir,

Enclosed please find £1 in payment of fresh subscription and balance towards expenses. Needless to say, I was delighted to see the re-appearance of the "Swiss Observer." Please accept my thanks for your untiring work and success in its reconstruction.

Yours faithfully,

W. GRAF.

CITY SWISS CLUB.

The Annual General Meeting of the City Swiss Club took place at Brown's Hotel on Saturday, April 19th, 1941. It was preceded by a Luncheon, and our friend, Mr. Candrian, can be heartily congratulated on having achieved a huge success: not only was the treat highly successful from a culinary point of view, but it greatly helped in creating an atmosphere of satisfaction and joy.

The President was in great spirits and received the Members with that inimitable touch which makes one feel immediately at home. In fact, everybody seemed so happy that it was a relief to be in an atmosphere which made one forget for a few moments the tragic times through which we are living.

The meeting was well attended and the Legation was worthily represented by our good friend Mr. Girardet.

The important business of a General Meeting was dealt with in great style. The Committee retired as usual "in orderly fashion," but on the suggestion of the temporary Chairman — another personality of the Colony, Mr. Gattiker — the Committee was unanimously re-elected. It would appear by the ovation which was accorded by the Members that the "young new Committee" will prove quite popular.

Some kind friends suggested that the Secretary is probably over-worked in other directions, as summonses for Meetings do not appear to reach every Member. It was, however, made clear that all members' names and addresses are registered with our Printers, but owing to the severe ordeal which our Printers have sustained the list has been somewhat disarranged. In this connection it is hoped that Members may feel inclined to help the Secretary in getting a new list in order, particularly as far as their new addresses are concerned: although an appeal has already been made only thirty-three have responded. Our kindly critic must have felt quite happy all the same, because he suggested that arrangements should be made to meet not only once a month but every week, and the opportunity would certainly be welcomed by a great number of Members, particularly those who have time for a social lunch once a week. The Committee will be dealing with this matter before the next Meeting.

No meeting of the City Swiss Club would be considered a first-class success if there were no new candidates, and two outstanding figures of the Colony were unanimously elected, namely Mr. Gottfried Keller, the well-known Swiss Press Correspondent, and Mr. E. Reichenbach.

An important topic discussed was the support which should be given not only by the City Swiss Club but by the Colony and our official Swiss Institutions to the Swiss Observer. Members of the Club were unanimous in recognising that the Swiss Observer had been most helpful in keeping alive the affairs of the Colony and particularly those of the City Swiss Club, and the opportunity was once more taken to thank Mr. P. F. Boehringer, the publisher of the Swiss Observer, for the untiring efforts of his Paper in keeping our Swiss Flag flying.

With the difficulties encountered in these days, it was realised that every effort should be made to keep the Swiss Observer in full vigour and the Committee promised, with the agreement of all present, to do all they could to co-operate to this end.

The time to part arrived all too soon, and at 4.30 p.m. Members unfortunately awakened to the fact that once more we had not the privilege now to be in happy, peaceful Switzerland, but had to face cheerfully the fact that we are the guests of our British friends, and at war.

The next meeting of the City Swiss Club will take place on May 3rd. When those Members who unfortunately could not be present hear from their personal friends of the outstanding success of the General Meeting, they will no doubt wish to be present. It is hoped, therefore, that they will advise the Secretary in good time of their intention to do so, so that arrangements may be as successful for the next meeting as they were for the last.

Bee.

SWISS BENEVOLENT SOCIETY.

The annual general meeting of the Society was held on Saturday the 29th March; it took place at "Westfield," Hatfield, in order to give an opportunity to members of the Executive, General and other Committees to view the present home of the Swiss Relief Centre, which now houses the inmates of the Home for Aged Swiss evacuated last December from Conway Street, London, besides carrying on its great work as a temporary refuge for compatriots who are victims of the war.

Mr. Anton Bon, the President of the Society, very kindly acted as host and, before the meeting, entertained the company of some thirty members of the various committees to an excellent picnic lunch which he had brought along from London.

A general review of the situation was made by the President and reports were delivered by Mr. F. M. Gamper in his dual capacity as member of the Society's Finance Committee and President of the House Committee of the Home for Aged Swiss and by Mr. Louis Chapuis as President of the Swiss Relief Centre.

The accounts of the Society, of the Home and of the Relief Centre for the year ended 31st December, 1940, were submitted by the respective Treasurers and were duly approved. Without going into detailed figures, which will appear in the printed report to be distributed in due course, mention may be made here that the Society's accounts closed again with a deficit, which, though considerably less than that of 1939, brings the total deficiency for the two war years to nearly £800, a serious strain on the Society's resources.

Every effort will be continued to check this regrettable development and hope was expressed that all possible help by all who can will be given to the Society during this third year of crisis, so that its charitable mission may go on and the good name of our colony for looking after its own fellow-citizens in need be upheld. Thus also, one might add, will the sad pilgrimage to the Society's office remain not without its ray of hope to those whom age or misfortune has deprived of the bare necessities of life.

The President, in thanking the officers for work well done, singled out Mr. Th. Ritter, the ever popular and very hard working Secretary, for a well deserved tribute — which the meeting heartily endorsed — to his competence and fine qualities of heart and mind alike which he brings to the discharge of his onerous duties.

The various committees were re-elected for a further year.

If the weather was not ideal for a trip to the country that day, the cheerful atmosphere inside "Westfield" more than made up for the cold drizzle outside. Even so, and having inspected and duly praised the comfortable arrangements of the house, the visitors would not be denied a tour also of the gardens and of the private wood adjoining them, which, in warmer spring and summer days, will mean so much to the residents there. No happier conditions could indeed be wished for in that haven of rest and peace.

J.Z.

OUR NEXT ISSUE.

All being well our next number will be issued on May 23rd a.c.