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CITY SWISS CLUB LUNCHEON

on

SATURDAY, JUNE 7th, 1941

at the

DORCHESTER HOTEL, PARK LANE, W.

In the Chair:

THE SWISS MINISTER



There is nothing so stimulating in these days of mental and physical stress than to spend a few hours in congenial company, and amongst good friends.

The Luncheon party arranged by the City Swiss Club on Saturday, June 7th, at the Dorchester Hotel, London, was a great success in every respect; over 250 members and guests attended, and the President, M. L. Chapuis, in his short address, termed it in every sense a "family party."

Previous to the Luncheon, the guests assembled in one of the charming reception rooms which was turned, for the time being, into a cocktail bar. There was no official reception, with a red coated toast master announcing the arrival of the "celebrities" of the Swiss colony, and, I am sure, there will be no tears shed over this omission.

Hearty handshakes and bewitching smiles from the many ladies present were exchanged, and everyone seemed to be delighted to meet old friends again from whom alas one has been separated far too long.

What a host of experiences had to be related, everywhere one could hear tales of bombed houses, shattered windows, deserted homes, and families split up and separated through force of circumstances. One charming lady, with a hitherto unblemished record informed me confidentially and without even blushing that she is contemplating using some of the Margarine coupons belonging to her little baby daughter, to buy herself some of the fineries which always make her look so attractive. An old friend of mine told me with much concern that his wife deprived him of his share of coupons in order to attend this Luncheon in a smart summer frock; and as he had already earmarked those for shirts, shoes and socks, he is looking with gloom into a future which may bring him down to the level of a tramp. Quite a number of hitherto portly gentlemen who were proud of their *embonpoint*, told me with saddened faces that they were slowly wasting away, as a proof they showed me their waistcoats which looked more like draperies than a well tailored vest. I deeply sympathised with

them, but told them that they looked much younger and more handsome than ever.

In spite of these sad tales of woe an atmosphere of gaiety pervaded the gathering, which proves that we also can take hard knocks, and that we are following the splendid example of our English friends, who even in adversity show a fortitude and a courage which is worthy of this great nation. —

Shortly before 2 o'clock the company adjourned to the Banqueting Hall which was decorated with the Swiss flag and the Union Jack.

The Swiss Minister, accompanied by Madame Thurnheer, the President and Madame Chapuis, and his immediate collaborators, M. Girardet, Counsellor of Legation, M. Preiswerk, Head of the Special Division, M. de Rham, Secretary of Legation, Dr. Kessler, Special Attaché, M. Hunziker, Attaché, Captain Schlegel, Military Attaché, M. Dominice, Attaché (Special Division) and M. Hilfiker, Vice-Consul, made their entry and the "feast" began.

In accordance with the rationing restrictions an elaborate Luncheon could not be served, but the fare provided was good, sufficient and well served, and Mr. A. Bon deserves the thanks of the Club for having looked so well after the material wants of the members.

Towards the end of the Luncheon, Monsieur Thurnheer proposed the toast to H. M. the King and to Switzerland, both toasts were responded to with acclamation.

M. Louis Chapuis, President of the City Swiss Club then rose and in a very happy vein welcomed the Swiss Minister and Madame Thurnheer who had so kindly honoured the Club with their presence. He pointed out that the Minister has been entrusted with a very difficult Mission and with a great task, which he has so far fulfilled with great success. He mentioned the splendid work which Madame Thurnheer has rendered to various charitable institutions in the Colony which has endeared her to everyone. M. Chapuis extended, on behalf of the Club his best wishes

to the Minister and Madame Thurnheer for their future work on behalf of our beloved country.

The President then paid a splendid tribute to the ladies present, and told them how pleased all the members were to have them in their midst again. He concluded his address by thanking Captain Schlegel, the newly appointed Military Attaché for having consented with the approval of the Minister, to show various Swiss films.

M. Chapuis received a hearty ovation on resuming his seat.

The Minister, on rising, was enthusiastically cheered by the whole gathering. He said:—

In the name of my wife and myself, I wish to thank the City Swiss Club and its President for the kind invitation for to-day. Since I have seen you last, I have been for a short time in Switzerland. It might interest you to hear a few words about this voyage and my stay there.

The possibilities of leaving Great Britain by plane are very limited. Notwithstanding my position in priority class A and all the help from the British authorities, I had to wait many days for a seat. One passenger was turned back in the very last moment because the weight of the urgent mail was too heavy. You will therefore understand that I felt happy when I left at last on a beautiful April day.

The trip high above the sea and in or above the clouds was very pleasant. Still, we were all glad when we saw after seven hours flying the lovely Portuguese coast dotted with small white glimmering villages surrounded by vineyards. Portugal makes from the very start already at the airfield, the impression of a well-run country; it is now a very important gate, opening on one side to Europe, on the other to the Atlantic Ocean. You feel its international atmosphere immediately upon arriving when one sees Portuguese, Spanish, Italian, German, English, French and American aeroplanes, all on the same airfield. The hotels are packed with an international crowd. Lisbon at night gives one a most striking and pleasant impression of a city in peacetime, with all the streets and shops splendidly illuminated and the people walking gaily about. I had almost forgotten how nice and friendly an illuminated town looks at night. I looked at Lisbon like a child at a Christmas tree.

In Lisbon I met a Delegation of the International Red Cross from Geneva and postponed therefore my departure for one day. The following day the aeroplane for Spain left very early, at 6.30. Storm and heavy rain hindered the landing at the civil airfield in Madrid, so we had to come down far from the capital at one of the military airfields which has played an important part in the Spanish Revolution. From Madrid I continued directly to Barcelona. Flying over the mountains in Spain you still see trenches here and there, a remembrance of the civil war. They resemble scars on the beautiful surface of this famous country.

In Barcelona my air trip ended. The present train service between Barcelona and the Swiss border is not yet perfect. This is due to unrepared railways and to lack of coal and rolling stock both in Spain and France. Only two fairly good trains leave every week, the rest are slow ones. A fellow-traveller of mine who was in a great hurry, took in

Barcelona his chance in one of the slow trains, hoping to arrive in Geneva before the faster train for which I was waiting and which was leaving two days later. However, when I arrived in Grenoble, I overtook him there; he was worn out after three days uncomfortable travelling. Another drawback in one of the countries is that no traveller is allowed to cross the border with currency of that state in his possession, the change must be made after his arrival. This can cause much inconvenience as it takes time to find the money changer and you might wish to spend some money in the meantime. The same holds good when leaving that country. The food I got in Spain and France was everywhere sufficient, which does not mean that every inhabitant of these countries had enough to eat. The officials at the borders were everywhere courteous.

You can imagine my joy when I arrived home after a trip of seven days which in normal times would have taken 2½ hours by our excellent Swiss Air. This comparison is in itself an indication of all the difficulties Switzerland has to endure in its contact with the outside world not only in travelling, but in exports, imports and so forth.

The first impression on Swiss soil is the lack of motors; there are almost no private cars, all that remains of the former intense traffic are taxis and trucks and even these are considerably fewer, but one sees a great number of bicycles. The next surprise you get at the hotel or restaurant; when ordering a meal you have first to produce a ration card, one coupon for breakfast, two for lunch or Dinner. Rationing of many other products such as coal, clothes, several foodstuffs, soap, shaving cream, etc., is making daily life in Switzerland rather complicated. Most of my friends obtain only sufficient coal to heat two rooms in their house. A great inconvenience is caused by the blackout; you might smile when I mention this, but I can assure you that our blackout is considerably blacker than the one we are having here. Even small torches must have a dark blue light to be permitted.

As there are many fortifications, there are also a good many restricted areas; one sees lots of soldiers everywhere. The civil population is now intensely organised. In every family the different members do their bit, for instance Madame Paravicini is working for the prisoners of war and Mademoiselle Livia Paravicini belongs to an ambulance unit. The economic life of our country continues as best as it can. Unemployment is very small. This to a great extent thanks to the large orders our Government is placing with our factories and to the intensification and expanse of our agriculture. The allotment system is highly developed. The price control is far-reaching and strictly supervised. The Swiss National Bank is in a solid position. We try our utmost to keep up our exports and imports, but unfortunately find innumerable obstacles. The State is forced more and more to interfere with private enterprise as things have to be done on a big scale. In order to facilitate our international trade, we have created our own merchant marine. There are already a few ships sailing under the Swiss flag.

The Chief of the Political Department has recently made a speech concerning the relations between Switzerland and the other countries, in which

he said that these relations were always correct, and might be termed as fairly good. He mentioned specially that the British Empire has always shown much understanding for Switzerland.

I have now mentioned a few of the measures taken to carry us through these difficult times. You have heard that the situation of our country is not rosy, but on the other side not as dark as some appear to think. Life there is well bearable. Most important of all is the healthy spirit of our people with their strong will to keep up our traditions, meaning neutrality, freedom and independence in a way worthy of our forefathers.

I will finish by telling you that I have seen all the members of the Government, everyone inquired about our Colony here in England and expressed their admiration for the courage and endurance shown by all in these times of trial and difficulties.

Long applause greeted the words of Monsieur Thurnheer, and the whole company sang "Qu'il vive!"

The President then asked M. de Cintra, Hon. Treasurer of the Club to address the gathering, the latter informed the party that he had been commissioned by the Committee to announce the gift of a hundred pounds from the Club's Funds, to the Swiss Benevolent Society (Fonds de Secours) in celebrating the visit of Monsieur and Madame Thurnheer.

This generous *geste* of the Club was much applauded. This is, as far as I can remember, the second time that the City Swiss Club has celebrated the attendance of the Swiss Minister by a similar donation, and I would respectfully suggest to Monsieur and Madame Thurnheer to visit the City Swiss Club as often as possible for the benefit of our less fortunate compatriots, notwithstanding the distress caused to our Hon. Treasurer.

M. Anton Bon, President of the Swiss Benevolent Society expressed his thanks for this splendid gift.

The generosity of the City Swiss Club has become almost proverbial; during the last twenty-four years of my membership I have witnessed the distribution of substantial sums for various Swiss charitable institutions, amounts which would easily enable me to buy a well stocked farm and grow onions and cabbages for the rest of my earthly pilgrimage.

The last speaker was Captain Schlegel, who recently made his *début* at a monthly meeting of the Club.

In a few words he introduced the three films, which he intended to show. He warned his audience that they might not come up to the quality of a Hollywood Film, but that they would have to be judged as belonging to the class of amateur films. He expressed his appreciation to M. Fer, a member of the Club, who so ably assisted him in the necessary preparations and who had lent the projector.

The lights were then lowered and five hundred eyes (two per person, as far as I know) were glued on to the screen.

The first picture thrown on the screen depicted various views from the Swiss National Exhibition, which was held in Zurich in the year 1939, and which proved to be such a splendid success. As most of the members have visited the exhibition I need not go into any further details, but I may mention that some of the lovely pictures brought back to many of us happy memories of carefree hours spent in our beautiful homeland, and few will forget the sight of the

"Höheweg" with its hundreds of banners and flags, or the trip on the waves of the "Schifflibach."

Then again, who, without an ache in his heart, could forget those "sittings" in the various inns in the dear old "Dörfli" where one met so many old and young friends; for a few fleeting moments we could transport ourselves back to the shores of the Lake of Zurich and revive memories of days, that now seem to be so full of delight and happiness.

The second picture showed the retreat of large units of the French and Polish army into Switzerland; it was a sad sight to see thousands of tired and weary soldiers marching into Switzerland to find a haven of rest; amongst them were a number of French Colonial troops, who seemed to greatly amuse the Swiss children who lined the roads to witness the internment of two large armies. Hundreds of Tanks and various other mechanised vehicles passed through our frontier towns followed by the picturesque squadrons of Polish cavalry. Thousands of rifles, ammunition, machine guns, and other weapons were thrown in great heaps along the dusty roads, and sorted out by Swiss soldiers. Swiss Red Cross Detachments attended to those who were injured, and Field Kitchens fed the thousands of hungry mouths.

How glad these soldiers, who must have gone through Hell, must have felt when they crossed our frontiers to find peace and forgetfulness from the horrors to which they were exposed during their hasty retreat; and so once more Switzerland nobly fulfills her mission to stretch out a helping and friendly hand to mankind.

The third and last film illustrated an attack of Swiss army units on a fortified enemy trench, supported by an intense artillery barrage, and heavy and light machine guns, trench mortars, flame throwers, hand grenades and portable mines for blowing up barbed wire obstacles; it was a very vivid picture full of excitement, and one could imagine what a ghastly business modern warfare has become. Those amongst the audience, who, like the writer, took part in the 1914-1918 frontier occupation could see with amazement how the Swiss army has progressed during the last twenty-five years; in these days many of the weapons now used were an unknown quantity. Let us all hope that these instruments spreading death and destruction will never have to be used in earnest; but we also know that our Army is ready to face whoever attacks our homeland. The second part of this film acquainted us with the work of a mountain "Telegraphen Kompagnie" laying permanent lines of communications over passes and mountain tops; showing the difficulties they have to encounter in transporting all the necessary implements from the valleys up into the snow and ice regions, especially how hard it is to bring the large wooden telegraph poles, which are carried by horses and mules into position. The second half of the film portrayed the laying of temporary military communication lines by using cables of 1 km. lengths wound on spools. The lovely scenery in this film was much admired, and the silvery mountain peaks made many of us feel homesick, when shall we see them again?

After the film show the lights were switched on again, and M. Chapuis warmly thanked Captain Schlegel and Mr. Fer for the pleasure they had given us in projecting these interesting films. This ended a function, which in its simplicity and homeliness was

a great success, and all those who were lucky enough to attend will remember these all too short hours with joy. —

There will come a day, when again the church bells will ring, not to warn the population of an approaching foe, but to herald in peace, the hour will come when a maddening world will come to its senses, — until then may God Almighty protect us and our dear country, may a kind providence allow us and our dear ones far and near to witness this hour of relief, may all the families which have been wrenched asunder be united once more, and together we will start again to work to heal the wounds which this terrible catastrophe has brought on us. Whatever is in store for us, we will bear with the same spirit of our forefathers who, in the darkest hours stood steadfast, and to whom we owe the independence and liberty of our homeland, — until then

COURAGE.

ST.

* * *

Amongst those not already mentioned, were:

Mr. and Mrs. Aeschimann, Dr. Arpel, Mr. and Mrs. Bachofen, Mr. and Mrs. Bachmann, Mr. and Mrs. Beckmann, Miss Beglinger, Mr. and Mrs. Bernheim, Mr. and Mrs. Bessire, Mr. and Mrs. Beyli, Mr. and Mrs. Billeter, Mr. and Mrs. Bindschedler, Mr. and Mrs. Bingguely, Dr. Bircher, Mr. Bloch, Mr. and Mrs. Boehringer and party, Mr. Bon, Mr. and Mrs. Boos, Mr. and Mrs. Borel, Miss Bossard, Mr. Bucher, Mr. and Mrs. Buhler, Mr. and Mrs. Burn, Mr. and Mrs. Candrian, Mr. Causer, Mr. Chapuis, jun., Mr. and Mrs. C. Chapuis, Mr. and Mrs. Chappuis and guest, Mr. and Mrs. Charnaux, Mr. de Cintra, Miss Cotti, Mr. Dean, Miss Deplihet, Mr. and Mrs. Deutsch and party, Mr. Devegney and guest, Mr. Dreyfuss, Mr. Eberli, Dr. and Mrs. Egli, Mr. and Mrs. Eha, Mr. and Mrs. Enz and guests, Mr. and Mrs. Epprecht, Mr. and Mrs. Fankhauser, Mr. Fattet, Mr. and Mrs. Fer, Mr. and Mrs. J. Fischer, Mr. and Mrs. W. Fischer, Mr. and Mrs. Flory and guests, Mr. and Mrs. Frei and guests, Mr. and Mrs. Gamper, Mr. and Mrs. Gattiker, Mr. Glauser, Miss Goy, Mr. and Mrs. Grau and guests, Mr. and Mrs. Grether, Mr. Guggenheim, Dr. Haefely, Mr. Haepenschiller, Mr. and Mrs. Heimerdinger, Mrs. Heinzelmänn, Miss Homard, Mrs. Honegger, Mr. Huber, Mr. and Mrs. Jenne, Miss Jeannot, Mr. and Mrs. Jobin, Mr. J. Keller, Mrs. Kessler, Mr. and Mrs. Kienast, Mrs. Klinger, Mr. Krucker and guest, Mr. and Mrs. Kung, Mr. Laemlé, Dr. Lewis, Mr. Lewis, Miss Lovering, Mr. G. Marchand, Mr. R. Marchand and guests, Mr. and Mrs. Margot, Mr. and Mrs. Matthey, Mr. and Mrs. May, Miss Meyrat, Miss Michaut, Mr. Nater, Mrs. Oertli, Mr. and Mrs. Oswald, Dr. Pettavel, Mr. and Mrs. Pfaendler and party, Mr. Pfrter, Miss Phillips, Mr. and Mrs. Pradervand, Dr. Rast, Mr. and Mrs. Reichenbach, Mr. Renou, Mrs. de Rham, Mr. and Mrs. Rohr, Mr. and Mrs. Rueff, Dr. Ruegg, Mr. Rult, Mr. and Mrs. Ryf, Mr. and Mrs. Sager, Mr. and Mrs. de Salis, Mr. Schad, Mr. and Mrs. Schmid, Mr. and Mrs. Scott, Mr. and Mrs. Seiffert, Mr. and Mrs. Seinet, Mr. and Mrs. Shapland, Mr. and Mrs. Sommer and party, Mr. and Mrs. Stauffer, Mr. H. Steiner, Mr. and Miss E. Steiner, Mr. Steinmann, Mr. Strahl and party, Mr. Suter, Mr. Trepp, Mr. and Mrs. Tustin, Mr. and Mrs. Ulmann, Mr. and Mrs. Valon and party, Mr. Wallimann, Mr. Walser, Mr.

and Mrs. Weber, Mr. and Mrs. Weil, Mrs. and Miss Weil, Mr. and Mrs. Weist, Mr. and Mrs. Wetter, Mr. Wettstein, Mr. Wetzel, Mr. Widmer, Mr., Mrs. and Miss Willi, Mr. and Mrs. Wintsch, Miss Womfor, Mr. G. Wuthrich, Mr. Wuthrich, Mr. and Mrs. Wyss, Mr. Zimmermann, Mr. Zobrist, Mr. and Mrs. Zogg.

SWISS CLUB MANCHESTER. FILM SHOW AND MEMORIAL GATHERING.

After serious reflection and consideration by the Committee, it was decided not to cancel, but to carry on with the arranged film show and light dinner on the evening of Wednesday, the 21st May, 1941, at the Café Royal, Manchester, notwithstanding the sad news of the death of our esteemed Honorary Consul and Honorary Member Dr. Arnold Schedler, which occurred at Ruthin Castle, Wales, on the previous morning. The Committee came to the conclusion that the proposed gathering would be a suitable occasion for the members of the Colony, especially those unable to attend the funeral, to mourn in union the death of their veritable "Father." Consequently the President, Mr. E. Kuebler, spoke the following appropriate words before the meal:—

Ladies and Gentlemen!

Most of you, no doubt, expected that to-night's arrangements would have been cancelled, in view of the sad event which has overtaken us.

We decided after thorough reflection to carry on for the following reasons:—

It may be quite some time before we have an opportunity to meet again and as we feel we would like to pay tribute to those who have left us, we considered that this was the opportunity, when so many of our members are gathered.

In addition, we feel that we are carrying out the desire of our late Consul, had he been able to give expression to his wishes for our Club, and in this we are especially grateful that we have been able to obtain the view of the family.

We meet to-night in very sad circumstances and you will forgive me if I say only a few words in memory of our three friends who have been taken from us.

The news of the death by enemy action of Mr. and Mrs. Caspar at the beginning of this month was a terrible shock to all of us and our sincere sympathy goes out to their daughter in this tragedy.

For us there remains only a memory of two dear friends, who for so many years have been closely connected with all the Club's activities. Their homely characters, ever ready to help where help was needed, will be remembered for long in our hearts and their passing will leave an empty place in our midst. How could it be otherwise when for over 40 years there was hardly a function at which our dear friend Albert Caspar was not present. And many a young Swiss found a friendly home and friendly guidance at Mr. and Mrs. Caspar's. Though resident in Manchester for so many years, their characters remained truly Swiss to the core.

Although they have gone, their memory will live within us and we are proud to have counted them our friends.

What makes this occasion trebly sad is that to-day we are mourning the death, at the age of only