

Zeitschrift: The Swiss observer : the journal of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK
Herausgeber: Federation of Swiss Societies in the United Kingdom
Band: - (1942)
Heft: 1000

Rubrik: Swiss Mercantile Society

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SWISS MERCANTILE SOCIETY.

The Monthly Meeting of the Society was held at Swiss House on Wednesday, May 13th, and was attended by about fifty members and friends. Mr. J. J. Boos presided.

The Chairman informed the members that the 'Delegates' Meeting of the S.K.V. had taken place at Baden on May 9th and 10th, and that he would report on the proceedings as soon as the necessary data was to hand. He also mentioned that Mr. Max Schneider, late Hon. Secretary of the S.M.S., had offered by telegram to represent the London Section and that he had gladly accepted, congratulating Mr. Schneider at the same time on his marriage which had taken place recently at Baden, where he now resided. The President was pleased to record that as a result of an intensive drive for new members, the association on March 1st had reached the impressive total of 41,278 active members and 4,460 junior members, an increase of 2,063 members for the year 1941. These figures showed that the S.K.V. was going from strength to strength and not far off from reaching its goal of an aggregate membership of 50,000.

The question of the First of August celebration was again discussed at length and it was agreed in principle to make arrangements in conjunction with the City Swiss Club and the N.S.H. for a modest celebration in keeping with the times. Messrs. J. J. Boos and W. Deutsch were elected as the Society's delegates on a Select Committee formed for the purpose by the three above-named Societies. The President also mentioned that he had received from the Swiss Legation a number of embroidered 1st of August badges; the proceeds of the sale of these badges were destined this year for the "Schweiz. Samariterbund" and the "Schweiz. Nationalspende."

The President then introduced two special guests to the members. Firstly the Rev. Father Lanfranchi, who had recently been entrusted with the Chaplaincy of the Catholic Swiss Colony in London and who, although no stranger to most present, paid his first official visit to the S.M.S. The other guest was Miss Lieper, London contributor of the *Courrier de Genève*.

The Chairman then took special pleasure in introducing Mr. and Mrs. Gottfried Keller. Ever since he first came to London, Mr. Keller has been intimately connected with the S.M.S., for he studied English at the College and many members have enjoyed his monthly lectures at Swiss House under the auspices of the N.S.H..

Mr. Boos said how proud the Society felt in welcoming Mr. Keller, who, as President of the Foreign Press Association for the second year in succession, had kindly spared some of his valuable time to address the members on "The Work of the Foreign Press in War-time England."

Mr. Keller, in his most interesting exposé, gave the members a clear insight into the activities of the Foreign Press and contribution its members make to the war effort on the propaganda front, perhaps robbing the work of a certain amount of the glamour which in many people's mind is connected with the expression "Foreign Correspondent," whilst on the other hand correcting the impression of certain other people who think foreign correspondents enjoy all the privileges of diplomats in return for doing nothing

else but reading the London dailies and cabling abroad a daily piece of summarised newspaper print.

The status of the foreign correspondent, and especially the representative of those countries which are still neutral, he said, had owing to the war undergone a very considerable change. His work, though important in peace time, had become doubly important through the war. First of all he had the responsibility of informing his readers as to the trend of events and secondly the added responsibility of bearing in mind that other belligerents were scanning his despatches with the utmost care. Thus the foreign correspondent had to inform his own people at home and help them shape their foreign policy and decisions, while at the same time he had become one of the most important sources of information to the enemy. Mr. Keller then proceeded to give the members a detailed account of the work, constitution and aims of the Foreign Press Association (F.P.A.), over which at the moment he has the honour to preside. The F.P.A. is part and parcel of the political life of London, for its big luncheons, between six and ten a year, are reserved as a platform for British Cabinet Ministers or important Allied Statesmen for their pronouncements. The F.P.A. was founded in 1888 and has 146 members, representing 36 different countries. Its headquarters are at the Ministry of Information.

The lecturer then proceeded to give a brief outline of the foreign correspondent's daily work, how he collates his messages and how they are transmitted abroad. He also gave a lucid account of the much criticised press censorship, how it functions and how it affects the foreign correspondent. He particularly stressed the fairness of the principle of censorship as practised in this country, where only military and security information can be cut, whereas political opinion is not censorable. He also paid tribute to the smooth working of the censorship and the comparatively quick manner in which news can now be got through to readers abroad.

Mr. Keller interspersed some of his explanations with personal experiences and incidents in his most interesting career as correspondent, which has brought him to almost every part of Great Britain and beyond, to parts where ordinary citizens have no access. Some of these stories will make very interesting reading when Mr. Keller publishes his "Diary of a Neutral Correspondent" at the end of the war.

The lecturer also gave a vivid account of the daily life at the M.O.I., such as conferences with outstanding personalities and all the numerous facilities at the disposal of the foreign correspondents which serve as a background for his despatches.

In describing the work of the foreign correspondent, Mr. Keller clearly distinguished between what he called the newsmen and the viewsmen. The former are the sleuths, the newshounds with a special flair for a story. It is they who set the wires humming and get the scoop. The viewsmen, on the other hand, work quite differently. It is they who gauge the temper of the political situation by cleverly piecing together small items of information into a complete pattern which gives a clear picture of a particular diplomatic or political situation. Both types are equally important and the ideal is therefore for an agency or paper to have both types in important foreign centres such as London, for together they form the ideal team.

The lecturer wound up his talk by emphasising the enormous power which can be wielded by the Press, how it can make and break Governments, shape public opinion and perform numerous other tasks. The power of the Press, a free Press, is best revealed by the fact that it is one of the first things to be gagged and muzzled in a Dictatorship. The lecturer expressed the hope that after having listened to him his hearers would henceforth read their papers with more understanding for the tremendous work and responsibility which lie behind all this newsgathering and view-forming of the journalist.

The lecturer's words were followed by prolonged applause from a highly appreciative audience. Mr. Keller finally answered numerous questions but to him by his listeners and in conclusion Mr. Ch. Chapuis proposed and Mr. A. Levy seconded a cordial vote of thanks to the lecturer for his most interesting and instructive address, expressing at the same time the hope that he would again favour the Society with another talk on some future occasion. All present heartily supported the motion.

The next Monthly Meeting of the Society will be held on Wednesday, June 10th, at which the usual club facilities and light refreshments will be at the service of the members.

WB.

NOUVELLE SOCIETE HELVETIQUE.

London Group.

We are pleased to advise our members and friends that by the kindness of the Swiss Legation we shall be enabled to produce a Show of the latest *Swiss Military Films* at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1, on Saturday, June 13th, at 2 o'clock and at 4 o'clock.

These Films which have been shown to the British Authorities will be doubly interesting since our Military Attaché at the Legation, Major Schlegel, has kindly agreed to act as commentator during the two shows.

The admission is free and the performance is intended in particular for the grown-ups. British friends of our Colony are welcome, so that they may get an idea of how Switzerland defends herself.

*The Council of N.S.H.
London Group.*

PERSONAL.

Mr. and Mrs. Walter Meier, of 53, Priory Road, Hampstead, N.W.6, are pleased to announce the birth of a son, Peter Martin, on May 15th. Mother and son are doing well.

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OUR NEXT ISSUE.

We hope to go to press with our next issue on June 26th. We take this opportunity of thanking the following subscribers who have kindly added various amounts, when remitting, towards our increased cost of production: R. C. Leutwyler, J. Gyser, M. Bachmann, P. Bucher, A. Maeder, S. Lanfranchi, W. Fuchs, A. Paris.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS.

Tuesday, June 2nd, at 5.30 p.m. for 6 o'clock — City Swiss Club — Monthly Meeting at Brown's Hotel, Dover Street, W.1. (See Advert.).

Wednesday, June 10th, at 6.30 p.m. — Swiss Mercantile Society — Monthly Meeting, at Swiss House, 35, Fitzroy Square, W.1. (See report).

Saturday, June 13th, at 2 p.m. and 4 p.m. — Nouvelle Société Helvétique — Film Show, at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1. Free Admission. (See special announcement).

Saturday, June 20th, at 2.15 p.m. — Nouvelle Société Helvétique — Monthly Meeting, at Swiss House, 35, Fitzroy Square, W.1, followed by Mr. G. Keller's "Comments on Current Events."

Printed and Published by THE FREDERICK PRINTING CO., LTD., at
23, Leonard Street, London, E.C.2.