

Anglo-Swiss Society inaugural dinner

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ANGLO-SWISS SOCIETY INAUGURAL DINNER

at the

DORCHESTER HOTEL, ON THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 17th, 1949

In the Chair :

The Right Honourable PHILIP NOEL-BAKER, P.C., M.P.

On Thursday, February 17th, 1949, the Inaugural Dinner of the Anglo-Swiss Society took place at the Dorchester Hotel, Park Lane, W.1.

The foundation of such a Society was already envisaged whilst Monsieur C. R. Paravicini held the post of Swiss Minister in London, but with the outbreak of the last war, the matter was shelved for the time being.

Last year a further attempt was made and a duly representative executive committee was appointed.

The Anglo-Swiss Society, which is the counterpart to the Swiss-British Society in Switzerland, is essentially a British institution, but all friends of Switzerland and, of course, Swiss nationals can apply for membership.

The main feature of this Society is to maintain and develop closer unity between the two nations, and to promote social and cultural relations between Great Britain and Switzerland. The activities of the Society are strictly non-political.

It will function by means of receptions, luncheons and dinners in celebration of special occasions, in honour of distinguished guests, and in order to provide regular opportunities for the members to meet. It is proposed also to arrange other activities such as exhibitions, films, lectures and discussions on art, literature, music, science, discovery, travel and social life in Switzerland.

* * *

Previous to the Dinner, a reception was held by the President of the Society, The Right Honourable Philip Noel-Baker, P.C., M.P., Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations, who was accompanied by Lt.-Colonel Stuart Townend, O.B.E., and Mrs. Townend.

On this occasion, a large number of British and Swiss guests were invited, amongst them: The Swiss Minister, Monsieur Henry de Torrenté, Constance, Lady Honeywood, Sir George Warner, K.C.V.O., C.M.G., Count O. Scheel, Air Cdr. V. B. Bennett, D.F.C., Sir Harold Butler, K.C.M.G., C.B., Air Cdre. F. M. E. West, V.C., C.B.E., M.C., Major H. R. Spence, O.B.E., M.P., Sir John Forbes-Watson, K.C.M.G., Professor J. Chodat, The Rt. Hon. L. S. Amery, P.C., C.H., Mr. C. T. Lehmann, The Lord Chorley, J.P., Sir Harry Britain, K.B.E., C.M.G., LL.D., Mr. Edward Wolfe, Lady Millington-Drake, Sir Patrick Abercrombie, F.R.I.B., Lady Forbes-Watson, Mr. Gerald A. Steel, C.B., President, Association of British Members of the Swiss Alpine Club, Dr. Raymond Green, D.M., M.R.C.P., Vice-President of the Alpine Club, M. E. de Graffenried, Counsellor of Legation, V. Umbricht and Dr. Bircher, Secretaries of Legation, Mr. E. Steiner, President Swiss Economic Council, Dr. H. W. Egli, Chairman of the Assembly of Presidents of Swiss Societies in the U.K.,

Mr. W. Meier, Hon. Sec. Assembly of Presidents of Swiss Societies in the U.K., Mr. R. de Cintra, President of the City Swiss Club, Mr. H. O. Ernst, Manager of the Swiss Federal Railways, Mr. A. Stauffer, Editor "Swiss Observer," Mr. J. H. Buchi, Dr. Buhler, etc.

On the conclusion of the reception the company, numbering nearly two-hundred, adjourned to the Banqueting Hall (Orchid Room) which was beautifully decorated with flowers and English and Swiss flags. An excellent dinner was provided by the Management of the Dorchester Hotel. The large and beautifully-decorated "Inauguration Cake" was cut by Madame de Graffenried.

Our compatriot, Mr. A. L. Gandon, together with two of his colleagues from the Accordion Club, dressed in Swiss costumes, provided the musical fare.

Towards the end of the dinner, the toasts to H.M. The King, and the President of the Swiss Confederation, were proposed by the Chairman, The Rt. Hon. Philip Noel-Baker. The toast: The Anglo-Swiss Society was proposed by Sir George Warner, British Minister at Berne 1935-39, who in his address referred to the friendly relations which for centuries have existed between the two countries, which he said had so much in common, especially a deep love of freedom. The speaker paid a touching tribute to the many humanitarian actions which Switzerland had undertaken, and in conclusion expressed the wish that the Society would be blessed with a long and prosperous life.

The reply to this toast was given by the President of the Society, The Rt. Hon. Philip Noel-Baker, who expressed his pleasure of seeing the Swiss Minister, Monsieur Henry de Torrenté, present as the principal guest of the Society, regretting the absence of Madame de Torrenté owing to the serious illness of her little boy. He expressed on behalf of the gathering, best wishes for a speedy recovery.

The speaker rendered thanks to Lt.-Colonel Stuart Townend for his splendid work done in connection with the foundation of the Anglo-Swiss Society, and for having so efficiently organised this first dinner.

The Society," the President said, "consists of people who want good relations," describing Switzerland as a nation which combined unity with diversity, a country which had developed security without oppression.

Referring to the present Trade Negotiations he expressed the hope that the Swiss Minister would find the way to soften the heart of the Chancellor of the Exchequer and make him disgorge the francs which for so many brought joy and happiness.

"The Anglo-Swiss Society," he continued, "is above all else a Society who loves the Swiss and Switzerland, and wants to talk about Switzerland which

means so much to us. We love Switzerland because it is democratic."

He concluded his oration with the wish that British and Swiss would always work together.

Professor G. R. de Beer, a member of the Executive Committee, proposed the Toast to the guests, and in his address referred to Switzerland as a clearing house for the ideals and ideas which are known as western civilization.

The reply to this Toast was entrusted to the Swiss Minister, who said :

"When a Continental first comes into contact with an educated, cultured Englishman, he has to be careful, he must beware of the Anglo-Saxon habit of understatement.

I was reminded of this failing the other day, when an insurance salesman told me of his experiences. He was writing a life policy for a charming and harmless looking English lad. Since extra hazards call for extra premiums, he asked his client: "Do you go to winter sports? Do you ski? Do you race?" The truthful answer was: "Occasionally." The company was satisfied with the insurance; but my friend felt rather a fool when they informed him that the man, whose life he had insured, was the British Ski-ing Champion.

Modestly you call yourselves "Friends" of Switzerland. But when I look around me to-night, I see that most of you are "Experts", who know more about the history, geography, and culture of my country, than many a good Swiss. Therefore I am not going to talk about Switzerland. It would not only be presumptuous, it would amount to that foolish and useless activity you so aptly describe as "carrying

coals to Newcastle." In spite of this, I am delighted to be here to-night, and to have the opportunity of saying a few words.

This first dinner of the Anglo-Swiss Society is a momentous occasion in the history of the relationship of our two countries. You aim not at propaganda, not at commerce, nor is it your intention to become interpreters of Switzerland to the masses of Great Britain. Your purpose is simply: to gather together the friends of the country I have the honour to represent at the Court of St. James.

That rather cynical soldier and philosopher, La Rochefoucauld, maintained that friendship is but a commerce, an exchange of good offices. I have no quarrel with this statement but, methinks, he left out one essential. If friendship be a commerce, it is a commerce *where no accounts are kept*. It is this aspect that raises friendship above the common run of human intercourse. Accounts have surely *not* been kept between our two countries and (who knows) this may be the reason why we never had a reckoning.

The real friendship between our two peoples began in the 15th and 16th century, and has grown steadily ever since. I am proud to acknowledge that Great Britain has given much to my country in the past, and will, I am sure, give generously also in the future. Your economists may try to make you believe that Great Britain is poor to-day and Switzerland better off. But even if John Bull should feel "the pinch" a bit just now, I can assure you that you are infinitely richer than we are. Richer in materials, richer in men, richer in opportunities. England and the English stand high in the estimation of my countrymen; not

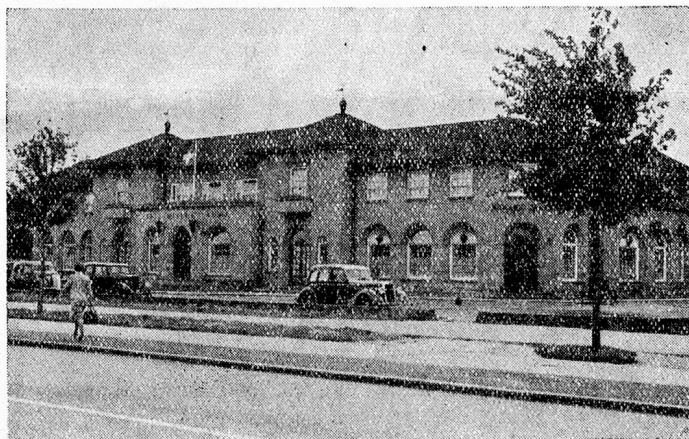
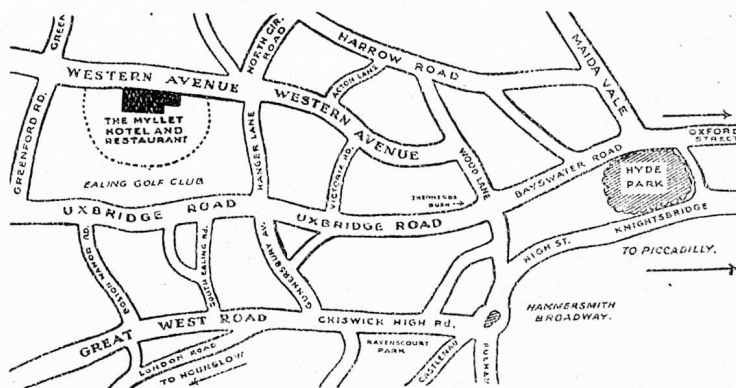
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only for what they have given to us direct, but also for what they have given to mankind. The Battle of Britain has done far more than save the British Isles; and Switzerland, for one, will not forget it.

But, as I have said, friendship depends neither on the wealth nor on the strength of the respective partners. It depends on character. Some wit once said: "Give me two hills, a pass, a dose of equity — and I will deduce for you the Swiss character." In the same way I might say: "Give me an ocean, an island and a dose of fair dealing, and I will deduce for you the character of the British." There are so many common traits, so many similarities in outlook between our peoples, that I see no reason why this friendship should not continue from one generation to the other.

The Anglo-Swiss Society will open a new era in this relationship. You will be a focal point of cultural pursuits. We have long felt the want of such an organisation. The contacts between our two peoples are numerous. In every sphere of human activities there is growing common interest. The artist, the poet, the musician; the universities, the professions, the politicians; old and young desires to know more of each other, and are keen to learn what their opposite numbers are thinking and doing. Up to now there has been little cohesion, and many groups have lacked the means either to make themselves known, or to get to know the activities of others. All this and more, the Anglo-Swiss Society can do in Great Britain, just as the Swiss-British Society is doing in Switzerland. A rich and untilled field lies before you; may you cultivate it, and reap a harvest that is not only bound to benefit our countries, but bring new interests, new joys, and an expansion of the mind, to many thousands of our people.

As a final word, Mr. Chairman, let me couple this sincere wish for your Society's future well-being with the thanks of my fellow guests and myself for this charming evening."

The last speaker was Lt. Colonel Stuart Townend, who expressed warm thanks to the Chairman for having consented at the time to become the Society's first President, and after having read out a great number of congratulatory telegrams this most enjoyable first official function of the Anglo-Swiss Society came to a close, and we too wish this institution great and lasting success.

ST.

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SWISS INTERESTS IN POLAND.

Communiqué received from the Swiss Legation.

In view of the negotiations now taking place between Switzerland and Poland, it is essential that all information concerning Swiss assets in Poland be completed and carefully sifted.

Swiss nationals in Great Britain who have already informed the Swiss Compensation Office in Zurich, or the Federal Political Department in Berne, of their claims need not do anything further in the matter. A last chance is, however, given herewith to those compatriots who have not yet registered their claims. They should submit the necessary particulars to the Swiss Legation in London, 18, Montagu Place, W.1, if possible before the end of this month, but certainly not later than the 15th March, 1949. These particulars should contain all information concerning:

- (a) Real estate in whatever form;
- (b) Participation in mines, electrical undertakings, industrial and commercial firms, banks, insurance companies (partnerships, bonds, shares, etc.);
- (c) Claims in whatever form, including bonds, debentures, certificates, against a debtor residing in territories under Polish administration.

Special attention is drawn to the fact that after the 15th March, 1949, no further claims can be considered.

This communiqué concerns also nationals of the Principality of Liechtenstein who may be resident in Great Britain.

* * *

Swiss nationals possessing similar interests in *Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Rumania or Bulgaria*, should proceed likewise in submitting their claims to the Swiss Legation, also not later than March 15th, 1949. The claims for each country should be made out separately.

OUR NEXT ISSUE.

Our next issue will be published on Friday, March 11th, 1949.

We take the opportunity of thanking the following subscribers for their kind and helpful donations over and above their subscriptions: M. Buchmann, J. Wanner, R. J. Keller, E. Hofmann, P. H. Conrad, E. Oggier, R. Mathez, A. B. Chivers, V. Tenger, Mrs. W. Meier, Paul Barras, J. J. F. Schad, W. Renz, L. Audemars, F. Conrad, A. J. Portman, F. Battilana, R. H. Zwink, Mrs. S. Spink.

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