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SWISS MERCANTILE SOCIETY.

The prospect of hearing Dr. H. W. Egli attracted quite a few members and friends to the monthly meeting held at Swiss House on 13 October, 1954.

Mr. John Henry Thornton, who was a member of the Geneva section before taking up a position with a London firm, was elected a member. There were no resignations.

Mr. W. Meier then referred to the appointment by the Federal Council of Mr. Henry de Torrenté as Swiss Minister in Washington, and he expressed the hope of seeing our Swiss Minister at Swiss House before his departure to take up his new duties.

The visit of Mr. A. Schwander, head of the department for professional education of the Bundesamt für Industrie, Gewerbe und Arbeit in Berne, had gone well according to plan. He spent two days at the College, visiting all classes with our President and Mr. Slade, the Headmaster. Mr. Schwander was also received at the Swiss Legation. The business meeting at Swiss House with representatives of the Council and the Education Committee was successful and the opinion prevailed that Mr. Schwander was favourably impressed by what he had seen and heard.

February 19th, 1955, was agreed as the date of our Annual Dinner and Dance at the Dorchester Hotel.

Mr. Meier reported that the Fête Suisse held last Spring showed a small financial surplus. The next fête was fixed for Thursday, 21st April, 1955.

A circular had come to hand in connection with the proposed renovation and enlargement of the home at Altdorf of the late Albericht Zwissig, composer of the Schweizerpsalm "Trittst im Morgenrot daher". This building is to be a home for composers and musicians. The General Purposes Committee will in due course come forward with a proposition if it is decided to make a direct contribution.

At the November meeting Mr. H. Miesch of the Commercial Division of the Swiss Legation will speak about the Anglo-Swiss agreement on Double Taxation. He has authorised us to say that if any member has

any problem on this matter which may be of general interest, he will — on receiving advance notice in writing or over the telephone — gladly deal with it in his forthcoming address at Swiss House.

After welcoming warmly our former Secretary, Mr. J. J. Schneider, who looked fit and alert, our President called upon Dr. Egli to address us on "Recent Political Agreements". He introduced this vast subject by saying that the future of the world was being influenced, in fact decided by the agreements arrived at in the recent past. He then dealt in this order with the subject matter.

The Truce in Korea, July, 1953. Although this has not been converted into peace, the agreement has been observed and there has been no more fighting.

Indo-China. Efforts were made in Berlin early this year to arrive at a settlement. These led to the Geneva conference where the cease-fire agreement was signed on 21st July, 1954. Both agreements brought about a cessation of fighting on terms favourable to the rebels. They are a frank recognition of the weakness of the Western Powers, and of the need for them to become strong to hold what they have got.

The South East Asia Defence Agreement signed at Manila is a promise of practically automatic defence reaction whether peace be threatened from without, or by internal forces supported by Communism. India, Ceylon and Burma are outside this agreement. The fact that Moscow and Peking propaganda is attacking this pact is evidence that it is nevertheless a good thing for the signatory powers.

Germany. The attempts made at Berlin in January/February, 1954, to solve the German problem, failed. The rejection of the E.D.C. treaty by the French produced a dangerous tendency for the U.S.A. to withdraw from Europe. Mr. Eden's tour of European capitals was of decisive influence for the success of the London Conference which agreed to the integration of Germany in Western Europe on terms of equality and provides for a German army of 500,000 men as part of the Western Army under Nato.

The good news about the agreement about Trieste under which Italy gets zone A, while Yugoslavia retains zone B, is a great relief, particularly to the Western strategic planners. This can also be said for the military and economic agreement between Yugoslavia, Greece and Turkey, which provides for a later setting up of a joint parliamentary assembly for these countries.

In the Middle-East some progress has also been made, as witness the Persian Oil Agreement and the Anglo-Egyptian settlement regarding the Suez Canal.

Looking back over the last few months it must be conceded that hardly if ever in world history has so much agreement been arrived at in so short a time. While fault can be found with much that has been done, nevertheless it constitutes a triumph of common sense and is evidence of a readiness to compromise and to co-operate on an international plane.

Both the speech and the answers to questions which followed left one with the welcome feeling of assurance that things are looking up and are certainly more reassuring than they were even twelve months ago.

E.H.S.



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