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SWISS MERCANTILE SOCIETY. A Departure and a Tragic Experience.

In opening the Meeting of the Swiss Mercantile Society at Swiss House on Wednesday, December 12th, the President, Mr. W. Meier, expressed the regret of everyone at the forthcoming departure from London of Mr. and Mrs. E. H. Schlatter, who were both present. Mr. Schlatter had been a valued member of the Committee and the Council of the S.M.S. and his reports on the activities of the Society in the Swiss Observer must have been read by many with interest and pleasure. Mr. and Mrs. Schlatter will be missed by a wider circle of friends, in the "Schweizerkirche," the Male Choir, the "Naehverein", and elsewhere. In taking farewell of them, Mr. Meier wished them every happiness in their new abode at St. Gall.

The speaker of the evening was Mr. G. Tier, Dr. phil., a member of the teaching staff of the S.M.S. College, who held his audience in rapt attention for well over an hour with his impressions and experiences of life in Central Europe before and after the fall of the Iron Curtain. His eloquence was clearly that of a man of profound learning, of a strong personality and endowed with the gift of easy communication. Mr. Tier first went to Prague in 1924 to accept a teaching appointment in history and English. His appreciation of the different characteristics of life in the various countries formerly belonging to the Austro-Hungarian Empire threw much light on their history during the inter-war years. He saw the Nazis enter Prague and subsequently left to join the staff of a High School in Hungary where he remained through-

out the war. It was in Budapest that he and his wife were caught by the Russian advance late in 1944 and they took shelter with Monsieur Charles Lutz, Swiss Consul, and his staff, then in charge of British affairs. Together they endured the continuous bombardment of the town for seven weeks. They lived in the cellars of the British Legation which was completely destroyed over their heads during the fighting. In the opinion of Russian officers the battle for Budapest ranks with that for Stalingrad and Cassino as the bitterest of the whole war.

Fortunately the food supplies laid in by the Swiss in the underground passages held out, but the horrors of the Russian entry into the town and the subsequent occupation rivalled those of the seemingly interminable battle. The courage and personal heroism of Monsieur Lutz in rescuing people on many occasions from certain death was beyond praise. Nearly every one of the handful of Britons who were eventually repatriated owed his life to Monsieur Lutz and his staff.

Later Mr. Tier was in charge of the Press Department of the British Embassy in Prague, but life there, as has so often been described and which he illustrated graphically, became unbearable in the course of years and in 1955 Mr. Tier and his wife decided to return to England.

Everyone was deeply moved by the picture that had been unfolded, a prologue indeed to the tragedy that had so recently struck down Hungary.

W.M.

SWISS MERCANTILE SOCIETY.

On Saturday, February 2nd, 1957, the Swiss Mercantile Society is inviting its members and friends to its Annual Dinner and Dance at the Dorchester Hotel, Park Lane, W.1.

The guests of honour will be the Swiss Minister and Madame Daeniker.

We understand that the Society has circulated its members regarding this function, and it is, therefore, hardly necessary to enlarge here on the arrangements which have been made. We consider it, however, our duty, and a pleasant one at that, to bring this event to the notice of a wider circle, hoping that many of our compatriots, whether members or not, will make it a point to be present at this Dinner and Dance.

The Swiss Mercantile Society has a long and distinguished record; eminent members of the Colony have in the past directed the destiny of the Society. It would therefore be a befitting opportunity to express an appreciation for the long and faithful services rendered to the Swiss community by attending this gathering, which, we have no doubt, will be a most enjoyable one in every respect.

The spirit of comradeship and patriotism has been through all these many years an outstanding feature, and has made the Society a little corner of "Home" on foreign soil.

It is our most ardent wish that this function should be well attended, thus proving to this enterprising Society that we are grateful for what it has done for us.

Tickets at 30/- (including dinner and gratuities) are obtainable from the Secretary, Swiss Mercantile Society, 35, Fitzroy Square, W.1.

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