

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: - (1963)

Heft: 1443

Rubrik: Swiss Mercantile Society

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HOW THE SWISS MERCANTILE SOCIETY CELEBRATED THE 75th ANNIVERSARY

It is difficult to explain the close friendship which exists between the Swiss Mercantile Society in London and its parent society the "Schweizerischer Kaufmännischer Verein" in Switzerland. It is not because the S.M.S. is the largest of their societies abroad, it is not because of the vital work its College does for hundreds of young Swiss students, it is not because its members take an active interest in the work of the S.K.V. and regularly send a full delegation to the Annual Delegates' Meeting. Granted, these things are of importance, but there is more to it. The bonds between the two bodies have grown in the course of the years and have become one of those indefinable and valuable human relationships which add a glow to life.

When I first attended one of the Delegates Meetings with my husband who was then President of the S.M.S. — it was in Zurich in 1953 — I was immediately struck by the warm welcome and the friendly atmosphere which made everyone feel at home and proud to belong. Sorrows and success are acknowledged with deep understanding on both sides, and when there are changes at the helm, either here or at home, the new men are spontaneously received and included in the friendship, which incidentally invariably includes wives.

What was more natural, therefore, than to invite a group of personalities from the Swiss headquarters to share the happiness with the S.M.S. in London on reaching seventy-five years of age!

The delegation arrived on 18th October at London Airport, and already on the first evening a first get-together took place at the Montana Hotel with Council and Committee members and a few specially invited guests like Honorary Members and the Editor of the "Swiss Observer". The happy atmosphere from the first moment onward was a significant omen for a successful jubilee and a confirmation of the happy relationship which is particularly valued by us Swiss abroad.

On Saturday morning we took our friends from Switzerland to the Houses of Parliament and Westminster Abbey. The beautiful autumn weather induced most of the party to visit Hyde Park and Whitehall after lunch.

On Saturday evening 19th October, the President of the Swiss Mercantile Society London, Mr. André Jaccard, and the Hon. President, the Swiss Ambassador, accompanied by Madame Daeniker and Mrs. Jaccard, received about 160 members and friends for the official celebration at the Dorchester Hotel. The festive crowd enjoyed an excellent meal in the beautifully decorated Orchid Room. After the loyal toasts, the President welcomed "the Guests, the Ladies and the Veterans". He referred to the history of the Society and the loyal members who had made it. He then extended a special welcome to Monsieur and Madame Daeniker and regretted that this was their last appearance at the S.M.S. as they were retiring from the Diplomatic Service at the end of the year. In appreciation of the keen interest the Ambassador had taken in the affairs of the Society and the College and as a token of our esteem, Monsieur Daeniker, whose Hon. Presidency comes to an end on relinquishing his diplomatic post in London, was made an Honorary Member. The prolonged applause which greeted this award as well as a presentation made to Madame Daeniker, showed how much the

members of the S.M.S. appreciated the Ambassador and Madame Daeniker. Their best wishes accompany them to their place of retirement in Berne.



The President, Madame Daeniker, the Ambassador, Mrs. Jaccard and the Mayor and Mayoress receiving the guests.

The President next welcomed the Worshipful the Mayor of St. Pancras, Councillor Mrs. Hilda Chandler, and the Mayoress, whose Borough's hospitality the Society and the College have enjoyed since 1926. Mr. Jaccard made special reference to the lack of women's suffrage in Switzerland.

The next welcome was for Mr. and Mrs. J. Hamilton, an Official of the Home Office, and for Monsieur and Madame Marcel Heimo, Counsellor of Embassy and a good friend of the S.M.S. He also welcomed the Consul and Madame Tosio and regretted that Monsieur and Madame Burgunder were unable to be present owing to a family bereavement. For similar reasons the President of the Swiss Economic Council and Mrs. Christen were unable to accept the Society's invitation. Mr. V. Berti, the Chairman of the Assembly of Presidents of Swiss Societies in Great Britain, and his daughter were welcomed, and so were Mr. and Mrs. Charles Westcott, Vice-President of "the Times" Football Club with whom the College is in the habit of meeting in valiant combat. From the Swiss Churches the President welcomed Herrn Pfarrer Kaegi and the Rev. Father J. Scherer.

"As most of you know," continued Mr. Jaccard, "our College is recognised and subsidised by the Federal Authorities, and by delegating to our 75th anniversary Fürspreh Hans Dellsperger, a high official of the Office Fédéral de l'Industrie, des Arts et Métiers et du Travail we feel that they have singled us out for special honour.

"We welcome Fürspreh Dellsperger and Madame Dellsperger and we hope that they will enjoy their short stay with us.

"Our Guest will of course be combining business with pleasure and it will be up to us to satisfy him that Swiss tax-payers' money is being spent to good effect.

"Among our friends from Switzerland we were expecting the greatly beloved Hon. President of our Central Society, Monsieur le Conseiller National Philipp Schmid-Ruedin, Honorary Member of our Section, and Madame Schmid-Ruedin.

"He has not been enjoying the best of health of late and his acceptance of our invitation to be with us to-night was with the proviso of his health permitting.

"Unfortunately the improvement hoped for has not materialized and, much against his own inclination, he has yielded to his doctor's advice not to travel to England at this time of the year.

"Over these many years Monsieur Schmid-Ruedin has rendered untold services to our society and we should have liked to express to him once again our gratitude and admiration. Not to be denied entirely, we are sending him a greetings telegram on behalf of all present here to-night.

"Although our activity as a section of the S.K.V. is being exercised so far from our homeland the Central Committee has done us a great honour by sending a most imposing delegation to represent it at our 75th jubilee celebrations."

Mr. Jaccard then introduced the Central President of the "Schweizerischer Kaufmännischer Verein", Mr. Heinz Büchi, who is following in the footsteps of many distinguished men and has no easy task in directing the affairs and shaping the future of the mother society. But he has great qualities of leadership.

Next, the Secretary-General and Honorary Member of the London Section, Mr. Arnold Meier-Ragg, was welcomed, needing no introduction as he and his wife are well-known in the S.M.S. Another guest was the Editor of the "Zentralblatt", Mr. R. Buss, Central Secretary, a former parliamentary journalist and a man of energy and purpose, who has given the paper a new impetus. The Editor of the French part of the "Zentralblatt", Monsieur René Pidoux, *Secrétaire Romand*, was also of the delegation, and so was Dr. W. Winkler, Central Secretary, in charge of the Education Department at Headquarters. All these Gentlemen, with the exception of Monsieur Pidoux, were accompanied by their wives and Mr. and Mrs. Meier-Ragg by their daughter.

The President then addressed a few words of special welcome in French to the Swiss guests, and then proceeded to welcome the Editor of the "Swiss Observer" who attended also as a member in her own right and as the widow of the late Honorary Member Mr. Walter Meier. Three Trustees and seven other Honorary Members were then welcomed, among them five former Presidents of the Society. The President also greeted the Principal and Vice-Principal of the College with their wives, and Mrs. Pfandler, widow of the late Honorary Member, Mr. J. Pfaendler.

Next, Mr. Jaccard mentioned the Veterans, and Mr. J. Zimmermann was presented with the stained glass panel in recognition of his fifty years of membership of the Central Society. Two members, Messrs. Brand and Grützner, who used to be in London in the twenties had specially come from Switzerland for the occasion. The President ended his well-received speech with a special word of welcome for the ladies.

The next speaker was the Swiss Ambassador, who gave the toast "The Swiss Mercantile Society and its College". He expressed his gratitude for the honour bestowed on him and his pleasure to meet the Mayor and a large group of distinguished visitors from Switzerland, though he, too, regretted the absence of National Coun-

cillor Schmid-Ruedin, a great friend of the Swiss abroad. He referred to the other two jubilees in the Swiss Colony in London during the past few years, the Centenary of the City Swiss Club in 1956 and the Bicentenary of the Swiss Church in London last year. "Such happy occasions", said the Ambassador, "bear testimony to the vigour which ever since their inception have inspired and animated these institutions: they make us revert our minds to more distant times when the founder fathers with great enthusiasm and vision conceived the aims and patiently brought them into shape". The speaker continued by referring to the important factor the S.K.V. was in Switzerland's political life and to the similar role the S.M.S. played in the life of the Swiss Colony in London. He praised the high standard of the College and the social life which the S.M.S. fostered in its ranks. The Ambassador also thanked the S.M.S. for its readiness to help solve any problems and said he was counting on it to help with that of rejuvenating the Colony.

The Mayor followed the Ambassador with a short and appreciative address in which she referred to Anglo-Swiss friendship and thanked the Society for their hospitality on behalf of the guests.



Herr Fürsprecher Dellsperger addressed a few words of English and then brought greetings from the Swiss Minister for Economic Affairs, Federal Councillor Schaffner. He said that he was always greatly impressed by the devotion and idealism with which the Swiss abroad tackled tasks like the College, which brought no financial reward but only hard work and even criticism and ingratitude. He referred to the new laws which will enable the Confederation to make better provision for the schools abroad. He thanked the College for the important work, the excellent language tuition and the widening of the horizon of the young people. He thanked the London Swiss and the S.M.S. in particular for all the work done directly or indirectly for the homeland.

The Central President gave his address in excellent English. He referred to his predecessor, Mr. K. Strickler, who died an untimely death early in the year. Mr. Büchi compared the fine pioneering spirit of 1888 when the S.M.S. was founded with the present which is overshadowed by boom and revolutions of a technical and political nature. He was struck by the founders' motto: Education, but always coupled with good companionship. This was still valid in the world of today with its

tremendously accelerated pace and its inherent dangers. He referred to the worries and concerns of the Swiss abroad as expounded by the delegate of Great Britain at the Assembly of the Swiss Abroad last August.

"We are proud", Mr. Büchi continued, "to see how the Swiss spirit continues to live abroad and critically follows happenings at home. We at home should realize that we are observed; tourism and communication media, such as radio and television, reduce distance. Our Swiss house with its old thick and stout walls becomes a glass-house in the fullest sense of the word. A glorious history, the knowledge of the oldest and most direct democracy, the, as it were monopolized, concept of quality of our products alone are no longer sufficient for the future. In the economic sphere new areas are forming and political changes are taking place which may influence life in Switzerland too. That is why it is so important for us to know that our Swiss ideas and ideals are also represented abroad, and who is better qualified to do this than the Swiss people who have settled in foreign countries.

"We are grateful to you for helping to eliminate mistakes, this will enable us to tackle big jobs. We all know that the immediate and the distant future will bring tremendous tasks in the sphere of education and social policy."

Mr. Büchi next talked about the influx of technical employees into the ranks of the S.K.V. and the ever increasing use of technology with which the commercial employee came into contact. This made no difference, however, to the basic training of the commercial employees. He thanked the Society who had done so much in the past and whose wide experience would be of great help in the future when facing the new and difficult tasks of finding a synthesis between the traditional and the future. In recognition of the good work in the service of the common cause Mr. Büchi presented the S.M.S. with a beautiful Neuchâtel *pendule* on behalf of the S.K.V. which was accepted with great pleasure by the President.

The Secretary-General followed with words of thanks and good wishes. He gave the golden pin of merit to Mr. A. Jaccard and to Mr. R. Chappuis, his immediate predecessor in recognition of their services. Mr. Meier-Ragg then presented a considerable number of members with the golden veteran pin for forty and more years of membership and a further group of members with the silver pin for twenty-five years.

The surprises were not yet at an end. The President handed the ladies from Switzerland and a few other lady guests a silver pencil each as a souvenir of the celebration. Next, Miss P. Gillingham entertained the party with expert accordion playing and delighted the audience particularly with some Swiss "Ländler" tunes. And in the meantime the Golden Book of the S.M.S. was passed round, and everyone present signed with a fervent wish for the success of the S.M.S. in the future.

The next day the weather was unfortunately no longer kind. But the happy and joyful mood of the three dozen guests and members who were on a coach outing to Herne Bay and Canterbury made up for all the wind and the rain. After a walk along the sea front, a true English Sunday lunch was served at Harvey's and this time all formality was lacking. The only toast was that of "Absent Friends". Later in the afternoon, the Cathedral of Canterbury greatly impressed the visitors, and after tea the coach drove the party back to London.

The fine sunset had heralded a sunny day, and sure enough, Monday morning presented us with one of those

exquisite autumn skies which are only possible in England. The ladies were shown the luxuries of Harrods and the gentlemen visitors went on the official visit to the College.

The Principal, Mr. C. Slade, received the guests and showed them some of the classes at work. Later, the President, Mr. Jaccard, introduced the visitors and reminded the students that the College depended on the S.K.V. As representative of the BIGA (Bundesamt für Industrie, Gewerbe und Arbeit), Fürsprech Dellsperger, congratulated the students on their decision to study in London, and stressed the importance of thorough vocational training. He thanked the College and the S.M.S. on behalf of the BIGA.

Dr. Winkler called it unique that a Swiss professional organisation possessed a section and a college in London, a school of immense value to Swiss employees. It provided not only for excellent language tuition, but also for the widening of the young people's horizon. The sympathy which English people have for Switzerland gave an obligation also to the Swiss, and he hoped that the students left with a clean visiting card.

The *Secrétaire Romand* Monsieur Pidoux addressed the students in French and reminded them of what Switzerland owed to Great Britain for her efforts in the war.

A communal lunch took place at Martinez's and then the London members took the Swiss visitors on various rounds of the metropolis according to individual inclination and interest. At six o'clock the whole party re-assembled at the Victoria Palace for a performance of the "Black and White Minstrel Show". It rained again when, after the show, the party returned to the Montana Hotel for a final get-together when all the old and new friendships were once more cemented before the delegation left Switzerland the next morning.

They assured us that they spent unforgettable days in London, and we, the S.M.S. members and their friends are happy to have been able to share our pleasure. The hard work which the Jubilee Committee has put in to make the celebration a success (Messrs. A. Jaccard, R. Chappuis, O. Grob, L. W. Krucker, and W. Burren who is entirely responsible for the Jubilee Booklet) has paid excellent dividends, and they can be heartily congratulated. And in the Members' Room of the S.M.S. a beautiful Swiss clock reminds us of the kind friends who gave it. May they be happy hours which it chimes for the S.M.S. on its way to the Centenary . . .

Mariann.

IMPORTANT NOTICE

The Swiss Embassy have asked us to insert the following announcement:

Further inquiry concerning Swiss property affected by Egyptian nationalization laws.

This year the authorities of the United Arab Republic have introduced new nationalization laws affecting an appreciable amount of Swiss property. It is necessary, therefore, to supplement the inquiry made in 1962.

Swiss nationals who think that their property may be subject to these laws are requested to apply to the Swiss Embassy, who will give them details of the new legislation and provide forms, if necessary, on which they can notify the Federal Political Department accordingly.