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Autor: Mariann
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SWISS CENTRE

PROGRESS REPORT



*Photo of model by
courtesy of Swiss
Bank Corporation.*

A little over a year ago, the Swiss Bank Corporation announced their plans for a Swiss Centre in the neighbourhood of Piccadilly Circus. Details of the scheme were published in the "Swiss Observer" of 24th May 1963. In the same issue the Editor offered to put space at the disposal of readers who had any constructive proposals to make with regard to a Social and Cultural Centre. For, obviously, if ever there was an opportunity of realising a need which has been felt for decades it was at the moment when an impressive commercial and trade centre was being erected.

No views or proposals have been put forward by readers, but the subject has been well and truly aired in practically every society, group and set, and whenever two or three Swiss met. And it has thus been established beyond doubt that a Swiss Cultural and Social Centre is a necessity, especially in view of the fact that the Colony is aging and every effort must be made to rejuvenate it by inducing as many of the young Swiss temporarily in this country to become resident.

But much more has been done than just talking. The sub-committee appointed by the Assembly of Presidents of Swiss Societies in Great Britain, in conjunction with the Embassy, have been working hard, and the time has now come to inform the Swiss Community in general that real progress has been made.

The two photos show the state of the building between Leicester Square and Piccadilly Circus a few weeks ago, and it is hoped that most of the Centre will be ready for occupation by middle of 1965. The West End Branch of

the Swiss Bank Corporation, the Swiss National Tourist Office and Swissair, as well as a large number of Swiss firms will move in when the premises are ready. It is hoped to have a Swiss restaurant in the building.

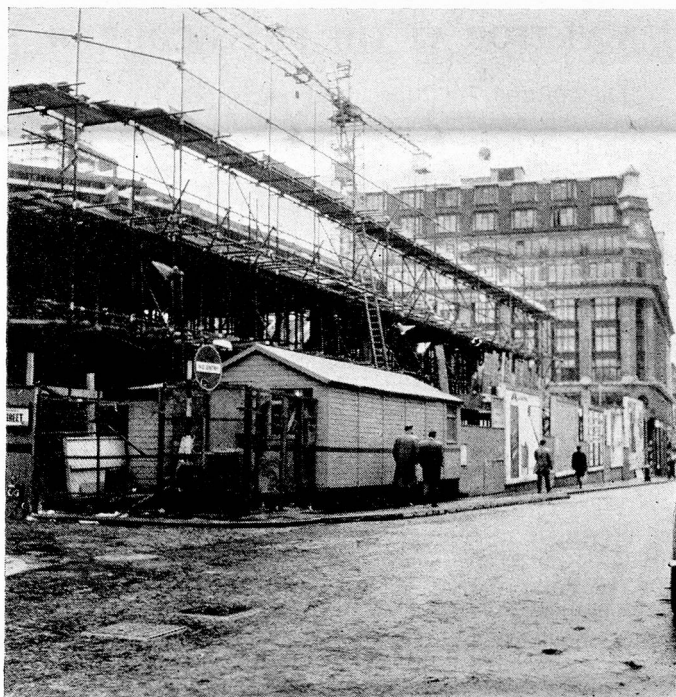
The burning question is now whether the Swiss Centre will include a Social and Cultural meeting place for the Swiss Community. It may be stated that the chances are growing better almost every day. It has been established by those studying the scheme that the aim should be a Multi-Purpose Room where societies and groups could meet, where lectures, concerts, exhibitions, film shows, dances and other get-togethers could be arranged, where young and old, resident and "temporary", well-to-do and less affluent, would find a truly Swiss atmosphere, where much that is good in Swiss art, culture and way of life could be shown to our English friends and not least to our second generation Swiss, and where Swiss youngsters at a loose end in the metropolis would find a refuge.

To realise such a scheme, three problems must be solved. The first is to find the very large sum needed to make structural adaptations to equip and furnish such a room. The second problem is how to get the high rent guaranteed, a sum which is inevitably very large in such a splendidly central position as the very heart of London. The third problem is how to make ends meet in running the Centre once it is established.

But even when all these problems have been solved the biggest task and continuing responsibility devolving on all of us will be to ensure that proper and full use is made of this happy realisation of our fondest wishes in

the sense intended by the federal authorities as well as by all the contributors to the accomplishment of the scheme: that it should not only provide us with a convenient and pleasant meeting place of the Colony for all sorts of social functions, but also and above all become a worthy focus of Swiss cultural, artistic and literary interests and achievements for our own and our children's benefit, as well as for the urgently needed function as a cultural bridge between England and our home country.

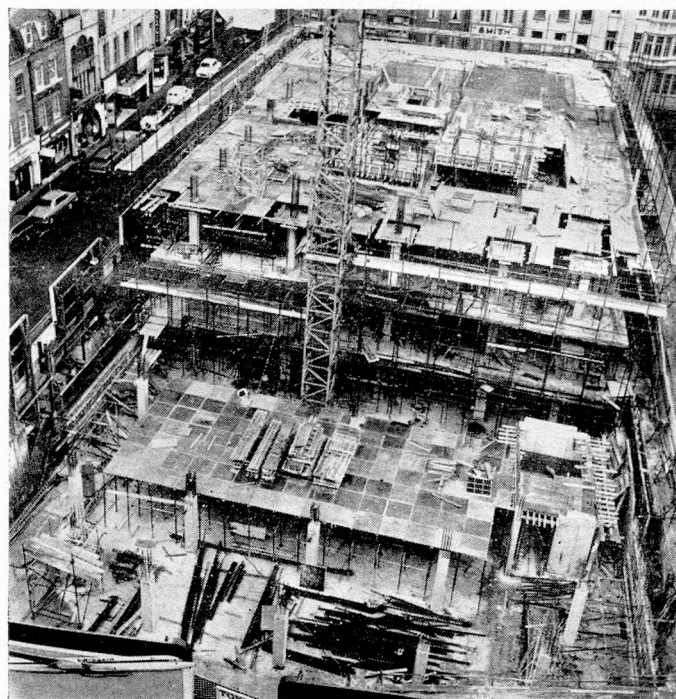
Much careful consideration, sustained effort and hard work have gone into finding a solution to these vital problems. The federal authorities in Switzerland are favourably disposed towards the idea. Monsieur Maurice Jaccard, in charge of affairs concerning the Swiss abroad in the Federal Political Department in Berne, has been in London to study the matter, and it is now more than a pious hope that the Swiss government may guarantee the rent for a fair period of time. This, in turn, would impose an obligation on the Swiss Community in this country to produce a maximum effort both moral and financial to bring about the establishment of such a Centre. Funds amounting to about half the needed total for equipment, furniture and installation have already been promised by societies, firms and individuals, and in due course there will be an appeal to the Swiss Colony at large.



The Presidents' Assembly meeting on 2nd June at the Swiss Embassy in London have appointed Dr. X. M. Speckert, lawyer and fellow countryman of ours, resident in London and deeply interested in the realisation of the scheme, to study every aspect of the plan. He will, in conjunction with the Embassy and the Colony (through the societies' presidents) evolve a detailed scheme acceptable to the authorities in Switzerland and the Swiss Community in this country.

In the meantime it is up to us to show conclusively our very real interest in the scheme and our determination to make a great success of it.

Mariann.



(Photographs by courtesy Swiss National Tourist Office.)

TWO LONDON SWISS ARTISTS AT THE WIGMORE HALL

On Monday, 8th June, the Kirckman Concert Society presented the eleventh concert in their series of Chamber Music Concerts at the Wigmore Hall, London W.1. The Alberni String Quartet opened the programme with Shostakovich's Quartet No. 8. This was followed by "La Bonne Chanson" (Fauré), beautifully performed by Miss Hazel Schmid (Soprano), Mr. Albert Ferber (Piano) and the Alberni Quartet. The programme ended with the infrequently heard Piano Quintet in C minor, Op. 115 No. 2, by Fauré.

Miss Schmid has been having notable successes in recitals and as soloist in oratorios and broadcasts. She has been called an accomplished singer, an exquisite stylist and a potential "star" singer. Mr. Ferber hardly needs any introduction. His concert tours have taken him to twenty-five countries, and he will be returning to Latin America for his sixth tour later this year. He has recorded the entire piano works by Debussy, and his recent appearance at the Royal Festival Hall was received with great enthusiasm.

The concert at the Wigmore Hall on 8th June was an unforgettable experience for anyone present.

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