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THE SWISS ABROAD HAVE LOST TWO GREAT FRIENDS

PROFESSOR DR. ARNOLD LAETT †

The death of Dr. Arnold Laett on 23rd November is a great blow to all his friends. He was the great and constant friend of the Swiss Abroad and our best historian. He has done more for us than any other individual person, at home or abroad.

Laett was born in Mühledorf, Solothurn, and worked first as primary school teacher in his native village. Later at the universities of Berne, Geneva and Florence, he studied history, languages and journalism. In 1912 he absolved his doctorate in history in Berne. Then the newly founded NEW HELVETIC SOCIETY became his great attraction and, in course of time, the centre point of his life's work. In 1917 he decided to take over the secretaryship of the London Group and as such acted most successfully for 4½ years. He gave himself heart and soul to this attractive ideal where he could employ all his qualities of teacher, translator and journalist.

His studies of, and services to, the Auslandschweizerwerk, the Swiss Abroad, both in England and the various Swiss colonies in the U.S.A. brought him fame and high position when he finally returned to Switzerland. He was indeed the historian of the Swiss Abroad *par excellence*. It is astonishing what Laett, in his forty years of activity, has been able to achieve as pioneer and historian. He was successful in all his undertakings for the Swiss Abroad because all his love and understanding was for them.

Back in Switzerland he acted as editor of the "ECHO" from 1926 to 1941, being at the same time President of the Commission of the Swiss Abroad. He spoke regularly each week from the Beromünster Station to us. The great patriot, at the same time, was from 1943 to 1955 at the head of the "STIFTUNG PRO HELVETIA".

It is due to the great Leader Dr. Laett that we Swiss Abroad all over the world have gained greater status and acknowledgment at home and abroad. We are sad at his passing and shall never forget him.

AFS.

ARNOLD MEIER-RAGG †

One of the hardest jobs the Editor of the "Swiss Observer" has to do is to write obituaries. The closer a friend the deceased was, the harder it is to put an appreciation on paper. Arnold Meier-Ragg was not only a well-known personality in Switzerland but, by reason of his many activities in the interest of the commercial employees, also in a number of organisations in other countries. To the Swiss abroad he was a great friend and always sponsored their interests and wishes. As one of the key figures in the Swiss Mercantile Society in Switzerland, he was very closely connected with the London Section of which he was an Honorary Member. He was a subscriber of the "Swiss Observer" and always showed a keen interest in everything concerned with the Swiss community in Great Britain.

But above all, Arnold Meier-Ragg was a true and loyal friend to many of us who knew him personally and intimately.

The news of his sudden death during a meeting of the Zurich Cantonal Council on 7th December came as a great shock. We knew he was working hard, too hard, and he was always ready to take on yet another task when he felt he could render a service. On the retirement from Parliament of National Councillor Philipp Schmid-Ruedin in 1943, Arnold Meier-Ragg became his successor, and already in the short time he made a name for himself as a parliamentarian. He was a man of few words, but what he had to say was well-considered, precisely formulated and carried conviction based on vast knowledge and wisdom, and always tempered with understanding and humanity.

He was conscientiousness personified, and his devotion to anything he undertook was proverbial.

Arnold Meier-Ragg was born in Zurich on 4th August 1906. He had his commercial training in the raw cotton trade and joined the Schweizerischer Kaufmännischer Verein at the age of 21. In 1944, he became the society's Central Secretary for education. Twelve years later he was appointed General Secretary. He was President of the Federation of Swiss Employees' Organisations. As Treasurer he was a member of the Council of the International Federation of Commercial, Clerical and Technical Employees. He also belonged to the Swiss Consultative Council of EFTA. Many were the offices he carried. It is a truism that the busier the person the more he can fit in. If ever it was applicable it was when speaking of Arnold Meier.

Four years ago, tragedy came to the Meier-Ragg family when their son died at the tender age of 16. If it was possible, the sad loss drew the devoted couple and their young daughter even closer together. It is when thinking of his wife and daughter that our hearts are heaviest, and our deepest sympathy goes out to Mrs. Elsy Meier-Ragg and Dorli whom the Swiss Mercantile Society had the pleasure of entertaining only fourteen months ago when they — with Mr. Meier — were amongst the delegation from Switzerland attending the seventy-fifth anniversary celebrations of the S.M.S.

At the funeral on 10th December, the Federal Council was represented by Bundesrat Spuehler, and Parliament officially by two National Councillors and two Councillors of States, and many M.P.s and representatives of the Cantonal Parliament and Government were amongst the huge congregation at the Fraumünster Church. The London section of the SKV was represented by its President Mr. André Jaccard. One of the main speakers was the Central President of the SKV, Mr. Heinz Buechi, who paid eloquent tribute to the many qualities and fruitful activities of the departed friend and colleague.

On one of the many appreciations of Arnold Meier-Ragg, which appeared in the Press, was one by a colleague of his, National Councillor Dr. R. Tschäppät, a Member of Honour of the S.K.V. He said that it was typical of the man that he would forever help others in their problems but would never burden anybody else with his own worries. He carried other peoples burdens but never considered them as such, for he was carrying his brothers.

Arnold Meier took his responsibilities so seriously that he finally collapsed under them. He leaves a precious legacy which he would want us to carry on.

Mariann.