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Heinrich
Pestalozzi

A "SWISS HALL" AT THE BRITISH PESTALOZZI CHILDREN'S VILLAGE

In 1959, a "Swiss Fortnight" took place in London and a few other towns in the British Isles. It was a magnificent undertaking to put Switzerland on show, and one of the efforts made was to raise money for a "Swiss Hall" at the British Pestalozzi Children's Village at Sedlescombe in Sussex: £10,000 was collected. Many were concerned in this splendid achievement, not least the Swiss Ambassador at the time and his wife, Madame Martha Daeniker. It was befitting, therefore, that the official opening of the Hall should be performed by Monsieur Daeniker who came to England especially for the ceremony.

It was a beautiful spring day on Saturday, 5th March, and the Sussex countryside was at its best. The grounds of the Children's Village extend for quite a distance, and much building is going on as four new houses are planned. Apart from the old and stately Manor House, there are several other buildings, notably the International House, perhaps the least attractive of all, a friendly wooden bungalow to house the Tibetan children, and now, at the highest point of the Village grounds, the new "Swiss Hall". It is a pleasant building constructed of red cedar wood. The centre tract forms the lofty meeting hall to seat 200, and it has a large stage at the far end. It is flanked on either side by cloakrooms, a kitchen and refreshment room, a store room and a reception hall. The whole floor area is 4,600 sq. ft.

It has taken a long time to complete, but the result is very pleasing. The accumulated interest and further gifts have helped to increase the original sum to cover the cost. At the moment, the Hall will be used for tutorial classes as well as for large gatherings, but once the planned educational centre is ready, "Swiss Hall" will be the communal and cultural centre of the Village.

In the absence of the Trust's President, the Right Hon. The Lord Sainsbury, the chair was taken by the Chairman of the Council, The Rev. W. W. Simpson, M.A. He welcomed the guests, especially the Swiss Ambassador and Madame de Fischer, and, of course, Monsieur Daeniker. His Worship the Mayor of Battle and the Mayoress were present, also the founders of the British Pestalozzi Children's Village Trust, Mrs. Mary Buchanan and Dr. H. J. Alexander. Amongst the few Swiss visitors were the President of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the United Kingdom, Dr. H. W. Egli, and the Editor of the "Swiss Observer". The Warden of the Pestalozzi Village at Trogen was unfortunately unable to attend owing to an accident.

The Chairman expressed gratitude for the Swiss gift and referred to the imaginative lead Monsieur and Madame Daeniker had given to the charity effort made in 1959. He much regretted Madame Daeniker's absence. The first children of the British Village were just going out into the world, and the fact that the opening of the "Swiss Hall" coincided with this, meant a decisive new chapter in the history of the Village.

The Warden of the Village, Mr. F. Spencer Chapman, D.S.O., T.D., M.A., talked about the life of the Village and said that no new building had been opened since the Duchess of Leeds inaugurated the Tibetan House on United Nations Day in 1962.

Next, Monsieur Daeniker performed the official opening by raising the Swiss flag which had been draped over the wooden plaque above the entrance, and, back on the stage, he addressed the gathering of visitors, house parents, teachers and the attentive children of the Village.

"Ladies and Gentlemen,

"It was with great pleasure that I accepted your kind invitation to come to Sedlescombe and open in person the "Swiss Hall" in the Pestalozzi Children's Village, though I regret that my wife is not with me, for she worked so hard to help collect the funds which made it possible for this building to be erected. She has always been most eager that the initiative to which she had given active support should take concrete shape, and I feel sure that she is with you all in thought today.

"The inauguration of this Hall reminds us of the memorable "Swiss Fortnight" in Britain, in 1959, when we did our best to put Switzerland on show in London and in various other cities in this island; it was a manifestation of the many happy links, economic and cultural, which exist between our two countries. Many in this audience will remember the Swiss flags fluttering gaily in the streets and from numerous buildings of your great metropolis, the exhibitions, the concerts, the cow-bells and Alphorns in the shop windows, and all sorts of other features.

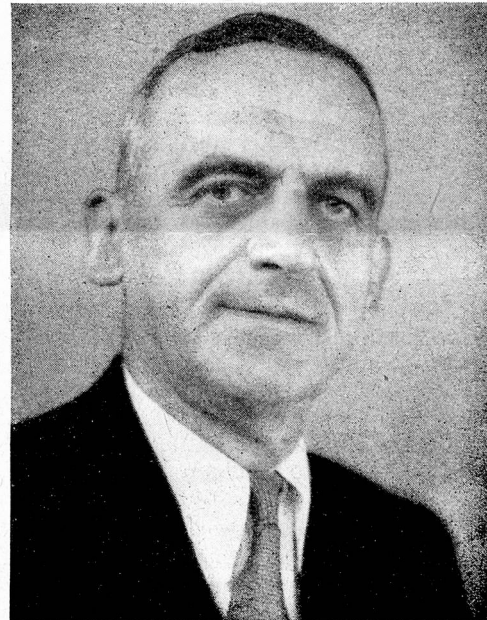
"At that time, the organizers were particularly anxious that the net proceeds of the Anglo-Swiss Ball at the Dorchester Hotel, attended by nearly 1,000 people, and of the Swiss-Scottish Show, which attracted a far larger audience, even, at the Albert Hall, should be spent on a lasting token of Swiss-British friendship. What better choice could have been made than to devote them, under a special designation, to the British Pestalozzi Children's Village Trust? Considerable funds had already been collected for that same purpose from among friends of Britain in Switzerland, and they were greatly increased by voluntary contributions during the "Swiss Fortnight"; the Ball Committee's appeal had, as usual, received an admirable response from British friends of Switzerland.

"There have always been close and happy bonds between the Swiss and British Pestalozzi Children's Villages. They have the same objects and follow similar lines of activity. As Mr. W. R. Corti, the founder of the whole movement, once wrote: "There could not be a more benign soil for the branching-out of the idea for which it stands than in Britain; for there live the people who have travelled farthest on the road towards a society of ordered freedom, ruled by tolerance." The British houses at Trogen — "Thames" (of which I am a Patron) and "Stepping Stones" — are both pillars of the whole village. In the words of Dr. Corti: "Through the British children, the house-parents and teachers, the stream of the immensely rich British culture flows to the children of other nations." The support given right from the start by the British Children's Village Association has been of essential importance for the rapid growth of the Swiss village.

"But we never intended that the Swiss house to be built at Sedlescombe should be a home for Swiss children; we wished it to be, like what is known as "Canada House" in Trogen, a centre for important functions and receptions, and we wanted the name "Swiss Hall" to remind the inhabitants of Sedlescombe and its visitors that it had been made possible by the initiative taken and the collections made during the "Swiss Fortnight" in Britain. I am so glad that at long last, with the further help of generous contributions, this "Swiss Hall" has become a reality and an adornment of the whole village.

"Who, then, was this man Pestalozzi, after whom this great movement is called? The name is more than a symbol: it is a real guiding star. Hailing, like him, from

Zurich, may I say a few words about him, since no other compatriot of ours has ever surpassed him in world-wide renown. There could hardly be a more striking contrast than that between his way of life and the greatness of his fame, for his achievement was only fully recognized and appreciated long after his death, as was the profound impact on society of his personal example. A man for whom benevolence and the love of mankind were a real passion, he never faltered in his faith in the divine spark in every human being, but his very goodness was the cause of many failures and disappointing experiences. Living as he did amidst the misery brought upon Switzerland by the Napoleonic Wars and the invasion by French armies, his one and persistent concern was the education of poor children, a very revolutionary idea at that time. When, in 1798, he took charge of a number of wholly neglected children, mostly war orphans, in Stans, a small village in the mountains, he set an example which to this day lives in the memory of our people. However, the institutions which he founded were never a lasting success, and like another great Swiss humanitarian, Henri Dunant, the founder of the Red Cross, he experienced years of the direst poverty.



Monsieur
Armin
Daeniker

"But his teachings and pedagogic methods were to conquer the world; they raised the status of the educator and made education into a real science by initiating teachers' training colleges, and they laid the foundation of what we know today as universal elementary education. His emphasis on the harmony of the child's head, heart and hand was then new to the world; instead of following the old method of making the child learn incomprehensible things by rote, he insisted on its thinking for itself, linking it at the one end with the home upbringing — in mother's living-room — and at the other with vocational training. In these days of the mass media what would a Pestalozzi have to say about the educative value of television and so on?

"Even in his lifetime, in spite of the very modest conditions under which he put his teachings into practice, Pestalozzi's growing fame brought to his schools many educators and disciples from all over the Continent, from England and from America: he writes that at one time

he had twenty-four English students staying with him at Yverdon, and many boys' schools, as for instance Cheam, were later founded under the influence of his teachings.

"Thus when, in 1944, Walter Robert Corti launched his appeal to our people for the creation of a village for suffering children, his suggestion was very much in line with Pestalozzi's teachings and example. It was meant as a tribute that Swiss people, having been spared the horrors of the world conflagration, could pay to the victims of the war-stricken nations of Europe, and also as a hopeful new link to bring them together in good comradeship and mutual understanding, an experiment "in European living", in a supranational community which still affirms the existence of national heritages, differences and peculiarities. It was Mr. Attlee who caused the following words to be inserted in the UNESCO Charter: "Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed", to which Dr. Corti adds that such an education has to start with the child, at an age when national, political and social prejudices are not yet ineradicably set.

"How greatly these villages are enriched since they have also included non-European children — the Tibetan and Korean refugees — and have thus fulfilled, beyond the purely educative plan, important tasks in development aid.


"I am glad to find that in Sedlescombe the name of Pestalozzi is as much venerated as his spirit is upheld — the name of Pestalozzi who, by the example of his life, demonstrated the perennial truth that it is possible to put an ideal into practice however great the obstacles if one is willing to pay the price in personal sacrifice."

It fell to André, a Russian boy and one of the first inmates of the British Village to thank Monsieur Daeniker. He was followed by a Polish girl in national costume, who presented flowers to Madame de Fischer. One of the Tibetan children, a charming little girl in native attire, then handed the Swiss Ambassador and Monsieur Daeniker a copy each of the story of the Battle of Hastings. This brought the official part to a close, and tea was served.

May it be a happy omen that the opening of the "Swiss Hall" practically coincides with the twentieth anniversary of the Village at Trogen, founded in the post-war years in the Canton of Appenzell.

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RECENT DEATHS IN SWITZERLAND

The following deaths have been reported from Switzerland:

Dr. Karl Bretscher (80), Berne, abroad for many years; from 1919 with the firm of Hasler A.G., Berne, where he became manager and was concerned with new discoveries in electrical communication techniques; awarded honorary doctorate by Berne University in 1951.

Dr. Theodor Biner (81), Zermatt, medical practitioner and Commune President.

Dr. Heinrich A. Spengler (71), Berne, former Vice-President of the Swiss Red Cross; became *Armeeapotheker* in 1946 with rank of Colonel.

Rudolf C. Horner (59), Basle, Deputy Manager of Sandoz A.G.

Charles Thévenaz (80), Lausanne, architect; designer of "Collège Classique Cantonal" and several buildings of the "Comptoir Suisse".

Hermann Amrhein (62), Engelberg; monastery forester; *Statthalter* of the Commune and for twelve years in the Obwalden Government.

Jakob Hugentobler (81), Frauenfeld, from 1925 to 1957 curator of Arenenberg Castle; awarded the cross of the French Legion of Honour for his writings on the Napoleonic family and their connection with Arenenberg.

Dr. Fritz Wiedmer (44), Spiez, *Forstmeister* of the Bernese Oberland.

Fritz Mueller (103), Ipsach/Bienne, farmer; oldest inhabitant of the Canton of Berne; for many years Commune Councillor.

Frau Hortense Kunz-Conrad (93), Berne, widow of the former Bernese *Regierungsrat* Gottfried Kunz; she did much work for prisoners and the wounded who came to Switzerland in the first world war.

Conrad Egger (66), Herisau, for forty years in charge of a building firm; Commune Councillor and for fourteen years in the Appenzell Government; Lieutenant-Colonel in the Army.

Dr. Gustav Meyer (69), Basle, Librarian at the University Library; brother of the late dialect writer Traugott Meyer.

Vittore Bianchi (91), Lignoretto, for forty-four years overseer of the estate and later museum of Vincenzo Vela whom he had known personally.

Prof. Georges Sauser (81), Geneva, lawyer, Professor at the Universities of Geneva, Lausanne, Neuchâtel and Istanbul; responsible for introducing the Swiss Civil Code in the new Turkey after the first world war.

Hilty von Allmen (31), Lauterbrunnen, well-known ski-instructor and mountain guide; killed in an avalanche in the Saluver Valley near St. Moritz; made one of the fastest traverses of the Eiger North face in 1961 (with U. Huerlemann); in spring 1963, he was the first to climb the North face of the Matterhorn in winter; member of the Aero Club and actively engaged in gliding.

Wilhelm Schmid (66), Burgdorf, *Musikdirektor*.

Walter Lang (69), Baden, well-known Swiss composer and pianist; from 1922-1941 teacher at the Zurich Conservatoire; member of the Lang-Trio; for six years pianist and conductor with Radio Lugano; leader of training classes in Basle, Berne and Zurich.

[A.T.S.]