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SWISS BAZAAR 1968

Westminster Hall, 26th October

To obtain a true picture of this year's Bazaar in aid of the Swiss Church in London, I tried to find out what people really thought.

Most comments were ventured without my having to ask. One visitor who had specially travelled up to London from quite a distance to visit the Bazaar, enthusiastically exclaimed: "Do you know, coming up to the Bazaar even if you had to drive through the worst storm possible would still be worth while. My Swiss palate has never been disappointed!" He held up a packet under my nose and shouted triumphantly: "Do you know what this is?" It was marked 7/-. I could smell real Emmentaler Cheese. "There is only one more thing I should like to see here: real Swiss honey!" Somehow he felt that this was too much to ask. "From which Canton are you?" I asked without batting an eyelid. "From the Grisons", he replied. "In that case go across to that Stall: there they not only sell real Swiss honey, but honey from the various Cantons, even from your Grisons!" Somewhat incredulously and yet hopefully he went off in the direction I had indicated — and he was not disappointed.

An *au pair* girl carried a pile of second-hand books under her arm, as well as some Christmas cards as *her* moderate spoils. "What do you think is the most beautiful thing about this Bazaar?" I asked her. Her eyes lit up and she replied without hesitation: "The fact that among the things set out for sale we recognise so many objects which we have produced by our own hands: it is really *our* Bazaar!"

From the expression on that astute business man's face I could see at once that even at a bazaar his business instincts prevail. "I have already done all my Christmas shopping. Here are three rag dolls, Swiss chocolate, French scent, this flowering pot-plant, Swiss specialities for smokers, a whole family of toy owls and, for my relations in Switzerland, five *Züpfen*." "But these *Züpfen* will be as hard as stone by the time they reach Switzerland", I interjected. "Ah, no fear," he replied with a twinkle, "the *Züpfen* are not yet made; I have just ordered them and paid in advance, they will be baked and dispatched in Switzerland by former members of the Swiss Church. So they will be fresh and crisp and arrive at the right time and I no longer have to worry about anything".

A housewife with a large shopping bag went past me. "Do you know what we shall have for lunch tomorrow? Dried beans, chicken and tartlets — all from the Bazaar. These cakes and pastries are from the stall over there. If I may give you some good advice: Get what you need before it is too late. These are not just average quality cakes — much Swiss care has been stirred into them!"

An elderly gentleman who was quite oblivious to his surroundings stood in front of a second-hand stall turning the handle of an old coffee-mill, his thoughts back in the past. My greeting brought him back from his reveries. "I have already made my traditional purchase. Every other year I buy a tie at the Swiss Bazaar. See, how well this one matches my suit!"

On the way to the Restaurant I met a newly married couple. They had found all sorts of things for their new flat: two colourful waste paper baskets, saucepans, several plastic goods, a flower vase and two door mats. Heavily laden they steered towards the exit.

The Restaurant did a roaring trade. As a hungry visitor contentedly observed: "Once again Swiss sausage,

sauerkraut and potato salad!" Later on I saw numerous guests enjoying a chat over cups of tea or a glass of cider and some cakes. At one corner of my table sat a completely ragged figure of a man, bearded and dirty. One of the poorest of this city who had somehow found his way in from the street and, lost in apathy was now enjoying the comfort of a chair. I pushed a piece of cake over to him. With one bite he devoured it without saying a word. But perhaps he thought as so many did at the Bazaar: How lovely!

After the last remaining visitors had dispersed in the direction of the exit I found the cashiers in one corner of the Hall still at work. "The result is excellent!" was the unanimous shout from behind the table, "at least £1,650 net profit!" How lovely! U.S.

THE JUG OF WATER AND THE LOST PENCIL

Annual Banquet and Ball of the City Swiss Club

In conjunction with the Swiss Economic Council

5d. on petrol and cigarettes, 4/- on whisky, purchase tax up, import controls, credit curbs: this third package of drastic restrictions within a year is what the news placards announced to the rush-hour public on the evening of Friday, 22nd November. The spirit of disappointment and general weariness that we all felt on receiving the news, was left *outside* the Dorchester Hotel. Of course, there were a few caustic remarks — "have a double brandy and cigar — it will be the last one if this regime goes on" — but there was certainly no atmosphere of despondency at the City Swiss Club Dinner and Dance. The ante-room and later the ballroom were full of smiling men and women (282), all set on enjoying themselves. Some had been attending this social event year after year; for them, the occasion was precious, linking many happy memories of the past with the present. Nostalgia, too, was felt, for many dear faces were missing. Pleasure only was felt by others who had enjoyed themselves last year and possibly the year before and were anxious to repeat a worth-while experience. And there were some newcomers, Swiss and British, young and old, whose very first occasion this was, and they reacted in different ways — "jolly nice evening", "great fun", "very friendly", "never expected anything as grand as this what with excellencies and a red-coated toastmaster" — I agree with them, there is something to be said for a certain formality which is still adhered to, though some of the erstwhile courtesy may at times be sadly lacking. Things have changed, no doubt, as the Swiss Ambassador remarked in his witty after-dinner address. When he had attended this event the first time in the early 'fifties, he had been a mere *membre de passage*, whilst now he had the privilege of attending as Honorary President. He had moved up from a minor diplomatic position to that of Head of Mission. He said he now had fewer illusions and less hair, though his love for London and his attachment to his many friends here had not been impaired through absence and advancing years. At that time, men were in full dress suits (and short evening dresses for women had not yet been introduced), but, and Monsieur Keller considered this an advantage, there were far more young people now than in those days. Personally, I don't altogether share this impression, and I'd be inclined to say that on the whole, people *look* younger, the dresses are more youthful, hairstyles more flattering, and the dances have more swing, though, sadly again, they have lost some of the graceful charm (not even a tango all evening).