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NEWS FROM THE COLONY

SWISS MERCANTILE SOCIETY

Undaunted by the Arctic spell which gripped this country, a fair number of stalwarts turned up at Swiss House for the Monthly Meeting on 10th January. The Chairman, Mr. A. Jaccard, extended a cordial welcome to Monsieur R. Gächter, Secretary of Embassy, who rarely misses these occasions, and commended all present on having braved the elements.

The main attraction of the evening was a talk on "Stamp Production and Designs" by Mr. F. Streit, a member of the Council of the S.M.S. and past President of the London Swiss Philatelic Society.

Having indulged in his favourite hobby for a lifetime, Mr. Streit said that since retiring from banking some ten years ago, he had concentrated on arranging and cataloguing his vast collection, which he had acquired largely by the exchange method. During that period, he had on occasions represented a well known firm of stamp producers in this country, for whom he had travelled widely on the Continent and been instrumental in obtaining contracts for new issues. In that connection he had also come closely into contact with stamp production and designs, and he was bringing a new approach, based on the experience thus gained, to the fascinating study of the subject he was going to introduce to the members.

A new issue of stamps started life long before it reached the printers. Initially a great deal of planning was required when a decision to commemorate some event or other, or merely to raise revenue as was the case in some countries, had been reached. From the drawing board to the actual production, a lengthy and complicated process was involved and disagreement often arose in the choice of designs from specimens submitted by the artists.

The speaker then referred to the importance of Great Britain, where the stamp business was largely in the hands of three London firms, so called "security printers", firms that specialised in stamps and bank notes. Today the stamps of no fewer than 225 countries were printed in Britain earning £2,000,000 in foreign currency and involving the export of over eighteen thousand million stamps.

Many methods of printing stamps had been used in the last hundred years, but nowadays they were mostly produced by the recess or the photogravure processes. The letterpress method was now rather *passé* and less and less use was being made of lithography. Photogravure, by which process incidentally most Swiss stamps were being produced by the well known firm of Courvoisier, also a big exporter to all parts of the world, was by far the cheapest. The cost of printing depended partly on the quantities required and partly on the colours used in design. Adding the cost of paper, perforation and inspection, the total cost of producing and printing an average issue of about 15 million stamps was approx. £8,000. In the first year, even a medium-sized British Colony would reckon to sell about £100,000 worth of stamps, of which as much as a third might be taken by stamp dealers, who bought mainly from Crown Agents in London. Thereafter sales to the trade and to philatelists tended to fall off and the revenue depended mainly on purchases of stamps for postal use.

As an example, the Gibraltar Government had in six years made a net profit of well over £400,000 from its

current issue of stamps, the cost of the various printings having been about £10,000. Stamps were in fact one of Governments best money spinners. This was true in all parts of the world and nowhere more than in the British Commonwealth. The Colonial Office, however, exercised considerable restraint over its efforts not to kill the goose that laid the golden egg of overproduction. Ghana had to be considered an exception. That country had had as many new stamps in its few years of independence as the Gold Coast had in eighty years.

Small countries like Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Monaco and San Marino depended as much on philatelists as on letter writers for their postal revenue, and in Liechtenstein a major part of the administration's budget came from that source. It could of course be overplayed. If a country produced too many stamps too often, even the voracious appetites of collectors would become satiated and sales would tend to fall off sharply. But equally as a source of revenue it could be underplayed. There had been people in this country who thought that in that respect the United Kingdom, by its refusal to issue pictorial stamps and more commemorative stamps, had been the most negligent of all. The present Postmaster General who might or might not be a stamp collector, had changed that policy. In 1966 24 commemoratives totalling 700 millions had been issued, and the speaker said that he understood that in 1968 no fewer than 28 commemoratives were to be printed.

Following his talk, Mr. Streit proceeded with his display of stamps of Switzerland, Great Britain, Germany, Spain and "Europa" issues, mostly thematically arranged and accompanied by enlarged designs of the respective stamps, including those submitted but not accepted. The sheets exhibited included coats of arms, fauna and flora, and many other attractive themes, and Mr. Streit elucidated any special points arising from his display, which all present greatly admired. Whilst the show was of especial interest to philatelists, non-collectors derived equal pleasure from what they had seen as was evinced by the enthusiastic way all present endorsed the Chairman's vote of thanks.

W.B.

RECEPTION AT THE SWISS EMBASSY

Monsieur l'Ambassadeur de Suisse and Madame Olivier Long gave a Reception at their residence in Upper Brook Street on 16th January, when members of the Swiss Colony were invited who, by virtue of their trade or profession and above all by voluntary work contribute to the welfare of the Swiss community at large and to the strengthening of the image of Switzerland in general.

NEUCHATELOIS

Comme les années précédentes, le dîner pour célébrer la République Neuchâteloise aura lieu le 1er mars, au Montana Hotel, 67 Gloucester Road, S.W.7, à 18h30 pour 19h. Les Neuchâtelois qui désirent participer à ce dîner, sont priés de s'adresser à Mr. R. VERMOT, Swiss Bank Corporation, 99 Gresham Street, London E.C.2 (tel. 606 4000).

A BIG THANK YOU

The Appeal which appeared in the "Swiss Observer" before Christmas brought, as usual, a most generous and welcome response. Gifts in kind and donations poured in from individual donors and from Swiss firms and organisations. So, early in December, the usually quiet premises at 31 Conway Street were transformed into a beehive of activity. The annual "packing operation" was on. For four days, a team of about six people was busy all day long making up the parcels of food, clothing, household linen, etc. The *Frauenverein** and the *Réunion de Couture**, our faithful helpers, had again given many hours to making beautiful garments and sorting and preparing the clothing which had been donated to our Society.

Finally, over a hundred parcels went out, benefitting some 126 people. Thanks to a number of volunteers, virtually all the parcels in the Greater London area could be delivered personally. These visits were much appreciated by the recipients, many of whom live alone and get few visitors.

The Committee would like to extend their thanks to the "Swiss Observer" and to everyone who, in one way or another, helped to give a lot of joy and happiness by supporting this action.

SBS.

* Any lady, whatever her age, creed or language, who would like to meet once a month for a happy get-together (tea and working party), is invited to join. The "*Frauenverein*" meet every first Tuesday of the month and the "*Réunion de Couture*" every second Tuesday of the month, both from 1.30 p.m. at the *Eglise Suisse*, 79 Endell Street, W.C.2 (near Tottenham Court Road Station). Mrs. R. Senn and Mrs. F. Burri, the two ladies in charge, will be very happy to welcome any newcomer.

A MIRACLE

At the end of November, a young Swiss girl, Miss Heidi Schrag (21), an *au pair* girl in Finchley, was savagely attacked and robbed and taken to Whittington Hospital, Highgate, where a brain operation for a double fracture of the skull was performed. After weeks of anxiety, the miracle happened, and the young lady not only lived but was left without impediment. She was able to return to Switzerland with her parents who had been taken care of by the Rev. and Mrs. M. Dietler of the Swiss Church.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

We wish to thank the following subscribers for sending donations in addition to their subscriptions and/or for taking out or renewing gift subscriptions for friends or old-age pensioners:

Mrs. C. Kensett, Mrs. S. E. Lewis, Miss C. Rougemont, Miss E. Spengler, Mrs. H. A. Wright, Monsieur Armin Daeniker (Berne), Monsieur F. Muheim, and Messrs. L. F. Ackermann, G. R. Bernhardt, B. P. Halder, J. Mueller, R. Pfenninger (Meilen/Zurich), J. A. F. Regamey, G. A. Ronus, R. A. Strahl, C. Voegeli (Winterthur), R. Voegtli, P. J. Walker, F. W. Walther.

We are most grateful for their kind and welcome support.

COMMITTEE OF SWISS CATHOLICS IN LONDON

"The WORD was made flesh, HE lived among us, And we saw HIS glory. (John 1,14).

Christmas, the day on which we Christians recall the incarnation of God through our Lord Jesus Christ, really means that God has become thoroughly human and reveals himself to us as human being, be it as a baby, who depends entirely on his loving parents or as our brother who is in need of our help. Not heaven is the place where we meet God, but our everyday, often so crooked, rugged and still lovely world with its human community.

So our Christmas Celebrations began with a very worldly **Christmas Draw** on 13th of December, with financial accounts running up to about £290 for tickets sold and donations received, thanks to the generosity and support of all our friends. The list of all prize winners has been distributed to the various selling centres, and all prize winners have been individually informed.

The **Christmas Eve Celebration** on 24th December began in Church with a solemn High Mass, thanks to the slowly recovering choir, which at one time had been so famous at St. Ann's. Holy Communion, which was very well attended and really means community with the God-made-man and our fellowmen, was followed by a happy social meeting in the beautifully decorated Westminster Ball Room, 30 Strutton Ground, S.W.1. The Christmas tree, the Cradle, the bells of the *Hofkirche* Lucerne and St. Paul's, the hymns and the reading of the Gospel in the different Swiss languages, together with the smell of burning fir branches created a genuine Swiss *Weihnachtsstimmung*. And then the tables, heavily loaded with excellent cold meat, tangerines, tea and sweets, made the more than 150 Swiss boys and girls, for at least a time, forget that nasty feeling of being away from home on Christmas Day. They all enjoyed the evening and, I think, Christ enjoyed it too.

Our special Christmas and New Year Service was held at St. Ann's Church, Abbey Orchard Street, S.W.1, at 4 p.m. on 31st December, followed by the traditional Christmas tea party for Children at the same Westminster Ball Room. Though he usually has plenty of appointments at that time, Father Christmas did not miss the opportunity of suddenly appearing among the children nearly out of the blue, with a mountain of nicely wrapped parcels and not a single child had he forgotten (he even remembered and recognised some parents he had visited when they were children). Everywhere one saw happy children unpacking their gifts and showing their even happier parents their toys, Swiss chocolates and cakes.

Madame Olivier Long, wife of the Swiss Ambassador, honoured us with her presence, and the Cardinal and Bishop of Westminster were represented by the Very Rev. Canon Francis Bartlett.

Though the famous "flu" and some unforeseen mishap with the electric wiring system prevented the performance of the *Balletto Ticinese* and its music, the sparkling eyes of the children were music enough to delight everybody.

Paul Bossard, Chaplain.

IMPORTANT CORRECTION

Under "Forthcoming Events" in the last issue of the "Swiss Observer", the Annual Dinner of the London Swiss Philatelic Society was announced for Friday, 1st March. We have been informed that the date will have to be changed to **Friday, 15th March, 6.30 for 7 p.m.**