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COMMENT

FIFTY, YET NOT QUITE!

On 12th June 1964, we said that the "Swiss Observer" was 45 years old, and we hoped to be well on the way to the Golden Jubilee. Consequently, to anyone whose arithmetic is fair, it would seem that the five decades are up this June. The reason why we pass over the special event without pomp and circumstance, is not that we have changed our minds, but simply because we have found that whilst the decisive step to have a Colony paper was indeed taken in 1919, the first number was not published until the autumn of the following year. We have decided that the actual Golden Jubilee celebrations should not be held until 1970. On the other hand, there is no harm in recalling the events which led up to the publication of the "Swiss Observer".

Many were the changes brought about by the first world war. Life had been easy and pleasant for the Swiss living in England during the Victorian and Edwardian eras. There was plenty of work for everyone who cared to settle here, and the relationship between the two countries was one of friendship and mutual respect. During the war, the attitude changed. An ever-influential press became hostile towards aliens. The reputation of the Swiss underwent a change, and many were suspected of being pro-German. This attitude of the press caused alarm in the Colony as well as to the authorities at home. From a report by Dr. A. Laett we learn that "when the tension was at its worst in summer 1916, one of the founders of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique (1914), Professor Georges Bonnard, of Lausanne, gave a lecture in London on the aims and purposes of the new patriotic society which had done splendid work in removing misunderstandings between the Swiss and

linguistic regions. Never had the Swiss point of view been more forcibly expressed than by that former "Auslandsschweizer" from Russia, Carl Spitteler, the poet. He seemed to speak out what every Swiss in England felt, too. And more than 260 present at Prof. Bonnard's lecture decided at once to join the N.S.H. and constitute the London Group. Its main purpose was to strengthen the ties of national brotherhood inside the Swiss Colony, and to re-establish the old Anglo-Swiss friendship, by means of better mutual information of the press in both countries".

On 1st April 1917, Dr. A. Laett took up his work as Secretary of the N.S.H. in London. It was two-way traffic all along. The Colony wanted reliable information about happenings in Switzerland. The N.S.H. at home wanted Dr. Laett to provide the English press with factual information about Switzerland, on her neutrality, the Red Cross in Geneva and many other subjects of vital importance. There is no doubt that the work done and the results achieved were of far-reaching consequence, and the activities of the London Group of the N.S.H. were highly praised and held up as an example to other Colonies.

It was in 1919 that a few influential members of the N.S.H. and the City Swiss Club — in the words of Dr. Laett — "gathered round Mr. Paul F. Boehringer of the Frederick Printing Company and launched the project of a new paper for the whole Swiss Colony in Great Britain". There had been an attempt at running a Colony paper before, Mr. Scheidegger's very small "Gruetli", which, however, had never been successful. Mr. Boehringer could give the necessary financial backing.

Preparations to publish a colony paper took a considerable time. To launch a project of this size needed careful planning, and that is the reason for the longish period between the foundation of the S.O. and the appearance of the first number. When it finally came out, Dr. A. Laett was its first Editor in an honorary capacity to be followed by Dr. A. Lang and Dr. H. W. Egli in turn.

It was in 1929 that Mr. Boehringer proposed a new man who was to edit the S.O. successfully for three decades and more — Alfred Stauffer. When he took it on, the S.O. was a mere child. It was left to Fred Stauffer to guide it through its adolescence.

All during the second world war, the "Swiss Observer" appeared regularly, though it changed from a weekly to a fortnightly paper and, like British dailies and periodicals, reduced its format. It was a struggle to keep going. The difficulties the Editor and Publishers faced were considerable, but thanks to their idealism and tenacity and the support of the Colony the "Swiss Observer" survived.

Soon after the war, the paper's founder, Mr. Paul F. Boehringer, died (6th April 1948). His son Oscar took over the Frederick Printing Company and the publishing of the S.O.. He, like his father before him, has made sacrifices to ensure the paper's success. Early in 1961, the faithful "ST." retired from his editorship after thirty-two years of sterling service. A young Vaudois journalist took over for a short year. Then Fred Stauffer came back for a few months until the present Editor took up her duties.

We may wish to wait with the celebrations; but today, we recall the initiative and the faith of those who took the decisions half a century ago. They were right, although not even those far-sighted men could predict the growing difficulties which an aging community and terrific increases in production cost would bring. Our troubles are not likely to diminish, but like our compatriots in 1919, we have faith, and we trust our readers and supporters that they will always rise to the occasion and not let down Paul Boehringer and his companions, nor all those who have put time and money, effort and love into the "Swiss Observer" and all it stands for.

MM

SWISSAIR STEPS UP CAPACITY TO FAR EAST

From 10th August, Swissair will operate its four Far East flights weekly between Switzerland and Tokyo with Douglas DC-8-62s, replacing Convair Coronados. The airline's DC-8-62 jets seat 155 passengers, compared with the 100-passenger capacity of the Coronados. No changes are made in existing timings or calls en route. Coronado jets will continue to operate the recently introduced Monday service to Singapore via Karachi, Bombay and Colombo.

Among the DC-8-62s used on the Far East route will be Swissair's second DC-8-62F Jet Trader due to be delivered in July. Until the end of October, the aircraft will operate in the standard 155-seat passenger configuration; with the introduction of the winter timetable from 1st November, however, it will fly the Tuesday and Friday services to Tokyo in a mixed passenger/cargo version, carrying up to five pallets of cargo and 80 passengers.

From 14th August Swissair will operate an additional Coronado service from Zurich to Istanbul and Beirut on Thursdays. The airline will then serve Istanbul five times weekly and Beirut daily except Saturday. From the same date, subject to government approval, the Thursday flight to Cairo will extend to Khartoum, so that Swissair will then serve the capital of the Sudan twice weekly.