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NEWS FROM THE COLONY

THE 4th JUNE MEETING AT MANCHESTER

The Swiss Club in Manchester arranged a most interesting evening at the Grand Hotel, Aytoun Street, Manchester, on Thursday, 4th June. It was a dual function which was well attended by members and friends and started punctually at 7.30 p.m., after we had the opportunity of exchanging a few words at the excellent bar and making the acquaintance of our main speaker, Mr. R. Alfred Bosshardt.

Our Vice-President, Dr. H. R. Bolliger and our Consul, Mr. R. Born, being in the chair, the proceedings were soon opened in a lovely and very comfortable room. The first part of the evening was devoted to a frank discussion of a Questionnaire dealing with a possible revision of the Federal Constitution and we could not have chosen a better man than Dr. Bolliger to explain to us some of its main passages. He quite rightly told us that any questionnaire could to a certain degree influence our opinion by the way it is drafted and presented, perhaps even hiding some of the problems confronting us. On the other hand, he felt that it was a matter of political maturity and unbiased reasoning which would dictate our personal approach to the many questions submitted in the questionnaire and the audience was quite aware of the importance of this problem. It was also of great satisfaction for us to know that the Authorities at Home both felt it advisable and were looking forward to know the opinion of the many Swiss abroad. The writer regrets that on an issue as important as the "Ueberfremdungs-Initiative", where we could well still be involved, no opportunity was given to us Swiss abroad to make ourselves heard.

Our Consul then gave us some useful additional information and those who wished it received a copy of the "Federal Constitution" which begins with the words: ". . . In the name of Almighty God . . ." — What a fitting and inspiring introduction to a document which lays down the very foundation of a proud and free people! May I just remind the reader that another great document, the "Bundesbrief" of the 1st August, 1291, also invokes God and it is the undying credit of our forefathers to have laid their destinies in His hands. Even today, almost 700 years later, we must sincerely hope that young and old alike shall not shrink from their responsibilities, that they will honour the past and follow in their footsteps.

Both Dr. Bolliger and our Consul

were warmly thanked for their clear exposés, after which our Chairman invited Monsieur R. Alfred Bosshardt to address us. Miss Anne Marie Burnett, Secretary to Mr. Born, volunteered to take shorthand notes, and thanks to this stroke of luck we are in a position to give you a comprehensive picture of what a Missionary could expect in Red China. It is a story of human courage and suffering only made acceptable and bearable by the bright shine of a hope which can only be derived from a limitless and trusting faith in Divine Providence. It also makes the listener aware of the power of prayer, for, as is quoted in the Bible "faith can move mountains".

Mr. Bosshardt began his talk by saying how pleased he was to be with us, especially so as his father had been an ardent member of the Swiss Club and used to attend the monthly meetings which then already took place in the Grand Hotel. Mr. Bosshardt felt it as an honour to have been invited to speak, and the following is the outline of his adventure.

He first went to China in 1922 as a member of the China Inland Mission, now known as the Overseas Missionary Fellowship. He was sent to a Chinese Province the size of England. There were no proper roads, and he and his wife had to travel for 29 days in a sedan chair (mountain chair). It was only in 1927 that a motor road was built in China, but to get to the road cars had to be carried over the mountains!

At one time there were 1,300 missionaries in China. The missions were international and interdenominational.

In 1927, a Communist-influenced political party came into power only to be outlawed by Chiang Kai-shek. The party therefore set out on the Long March to escape from non-communist country, and that was when Mr. Bosshardt's troubles began. They were attacked one day by what they thought were bandits, but what were in fact Leninists and Marxists. Mr. Bosshardt was dragged before a judge and accused of being a spy! He was told that by right he should be executed, but that the judge would be lenient. The judge demanded 100,000 Chinese Dollars instead! Of course, it was impossible to obtain the money, but the judge insisted that Mr. Bosshardt should write to his Consulate for the money. Later on, Mr. Bosshardt's good friend Mr. Hayman, his wife and children, were also taken prisoner, and more money demanded.

Mr. Bosshardt continually impressed upon us the strength he and his wife got from their deep faith in God. He spoke of his wife's Bible, of how the soldiers tried to take it from her and how it fell open at a particular psalm which encouraged them not to

be afraid but to trust in God.

It was decided that the women and children could go free, but that the men must go on the Long March with the Communists.

Mr. Bosshardt and Mr. Hayman had a very hard time. On three occasions they had to travel all day and all night, and they were never given enough food. The soldiers wanted to settle somewhere and eventually did so. Mr. Bosshardt and Mr. Hayman immediately thought of escape. They managed to escape one cold night when their guard had left the room to get warm. Most of the people they met were kind, but they were finally betrayed, recaptured and from then on were treated very cruelly, just like other Chinese prisoners. They had only straw and bricks on which to sleep. They were not allowed to move or speak without permission.

Then the judge decided to let the People judge Mr. Bosshardt. All the prisoners who had thus passed in front of the judge had been condemned to death by the crowds, yet Mr. Bosshardt still "believed", feeling sure that God was with them both. Sure enough, the crowds did not clamour for their death. The judge simply claimed a ransom and said that the two men would have long terms of imprisonment.

The two friends spent Christmas day in chains, not allowed to move or speak. Again Mr. Bosshardt found strength in his God. He thought of Christ's suffering and this comforted him. He could not speak to Mr. Hayman, but to encourage him, he pulled pieces of straw from his "bed" to shape the letters of the word "Emmanuel", hoping that it would bring his friend comfort.

It was then the year 1935 and the two friends had spent six months in prison, the ransom money still not having arrived. The ransom was now 850,000 Chinese Dollars and the judge had set a time limit for the 9th May. At Mr. Bosshardt's church in Manchester, the congregation prayed for him and a short while later 6,000 dollars were offered from Mr. Bosshardt's mission. This was not enough, however, as the Communists wanted 10,000 in silver. The money eventually arrived. Mr. Hayman was ill and had to be carried, but there was at last a hope of being released. Then the Communists decided that the money was only enough for one to be set free, so that Mr. Hayman went free and Mr. Bosshardt stayed on. It was at these moments of crisis that Mr. Bosshardt felt the presence of God most, and although he desperately wanted to be free, he did not feel alone.

The Long March continued across

China. Mr. Bosshardt fell ill and was allowed to ride on horse-back. On many occasions he was told that he was going to be set free, but it never happened. At last the conditions of his release were read to him. He was neither allowed to accept or reject them. He was put in an unguarded house and obliged upon his honour not to leave it before sunrise the next day. This was the first time in 18 months he had been left without a guard. It was Easter Day when he was released. A young Christian boy helped him get away to Kuming. The authorities there denounced him as a Russian spy, but fortunately the General had heard of Mr. Bosshardt and released him. He was very ill with beriberi and not fit to travel but his wife managed to get a seat on an aeroplane and she flew to Kuming. One can imagine their joy at seeing each other again.

It is indeed a remarkable story, a deep human experience, and we were most grateful to Mr. Bosshardt for having given us this inside view of such a frightful adventure. After so many years, we felt relieved that he, his wife and his unfortunate friends were able to reach a safe port. Our applause was sincere and we hope that we shall see him again at some future occasion.

(E. Berner)

(Mr. Bosshardt has consigned his amazing adventures in a book called, if my memory is correct, "Missionary in China", which had a great success in the late 1930's. It is currently being re-edited. Ed.).

THE YORKSHIRE LANDSGEMEINDE

On June 22nd the Swiss of Yorkshire took part in their 22nd Landsgemeinde. The Swiss of Manchester and Liverpool usually turn up in force at the event, but, apparently as a result of faulty communications, very few of them made the journey to Hebden Bridge, a sedate town wedged in a deep valley on the road from Manchester to Bradford and surrounded by the lofty hills of the Yorkshire moors, offering the most beautiful sceneries and open spaces of the North.

The 22nd Landsgemeinde can really be considered as a highlight in the history of Anglo-Swiss relations. Every year for the past 21 years, on a Sunday that almost invariably turned out to be sunny, the inhabitants of Hebden Bridge had seen the Swiss burghers of the North gather for their traditional hike up Castle Craggs and their Landsgemeinde at Hebden Hay. This regularity and fidelity towards their town touched the indwellers of the town who decided last year to form a Hebden Bridge Swiss Society as a kind of gesture of reciprocity. The regular visits to Hebden Bridge by the Swiss of the North had awakened an interest and liking for Switzerland and this out-of-the-way part of England and thus it came about that, for the first time, a "Swiss Week" was organised in Heb-

den Bridge under the auspices of the Hebden Swiss Society.

The instigator of the movement was Mr. David Fletcher, a young biology teacher, who had lived all his life in Hebden Bridge and had not otherwise been connected with Switzerland. He has since become a firm Swissophile as "the good grain had been sown". His two young daughters are called Trudi and Heidi and his wife, who has recently opened a fashion shop, plans to sell Swiss articles. I must mention David Fletcher for his hospitality and the exciting ride he gave me across the moors, and in relation to his deep involvement with the development of his town and of his valley. This area of Yorkshire, traditionally a textile region, has been hard struck by the recess of the industry. The Calder Valley is strewn with relics of a declining textile industry—bleak and sooty abandoned mills which in bygone days gave full employment to the area. Now that the volume of the industry has dwindled and that the narrowness of the valley prevents new factories from being built in the area, many of the people of Hebden Bridge have had to move to other parts of the country in search of employment. Hebden Bridge thus threatened to become a moribund town. This, at least, was a feeling shared by

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