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# NEWS FROM THE COLONY

## HANS EGLI RETIRES

Readers of the "Swiss Observer" have been made aware of the recent transfer of the presidency of the London Group of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique from Dr. H. W. Egli to Mrs. Mariann Meier. This move is now followed by the official retirement of the former President from the position held with distinction for many years as Correspondent of the "Neue Zürcher Zeitung", one of the foremost European newspapers.

It appears to us fitting, at this juncture, that tribute should be paid to the man who, for so long, has served the Swiss Colony and his employers with unfaltering zeal and devotion. To many of us old NSH hands, the name of Hans Egli is intimately identified with this fine old cultural Society whose destinies, from the troubled post-war years to 1956, and again from 1962, he has guided with skill and in his own inimitable manner. Only those who have undertaken similar work can fully appreciate the painstaking endeavour and unfailing good humour called for from those shouldering this type of community work. Hans Egli has not only performed valiantly himself, but he has been known to infuse his enthusiasm into a number of collaborators who, over a number of years, assisted him in the management of the NSH.

It would be grossly remiss not to mention the contribution Dr. Egli has made to the life and future of the Swiss Colony by his campaign from the early 'fifties for the co-ordination and mobilisation of the forces propagating the establishment of a Swiss Centre and Forum of Switzerland. Odds against such an achievement seemed exceedingly high, disappointments and even hopelessness followed, only to be overcome by the unceasing work and devotion of a comparatively small number of persistent campaigners such as Hans Egli.

He had always been active in the Swiss community, was, and still is, a member of many societies. He was one of the founders of the Anglo-Swiss Society, and it was he who, with the late Raoul de Cintra and the late Walter Meier brought the Presidents' Assembly into being, the co-ordinating body which today is the Federation of Swiss Societies in the U.K.

Dr. Egli came to the United Kingdom in 1919 as a student of the London School of Economics (a famous scholastic establishment then untroubled by student agitation). After obtaining his doctorate in jurisprudence at Zurich University and a short spell as *Bezirksgerichts-Schreiber*, he returned to London in 1924 where he acted as correspondent of various Swiss News-

papers, such as "Bund", "National-Zeitung", "Agence Télégraphique", "Neue Zürcher Zeitung", until the outbreak of the war. At one time he was also Editor of the "Swiss Observer". In 1939 he assumed the highly responsible and onerous job of Chief Correspondent of the "Neue Zürcher Zeitung". Many were the well-documented and fearless articles emanating from his pen, to the deep satisfaction of his Editor and the anger and annoyance of certain "brown" powers. Since the 'fifties his burden has been shared by two colleagues thus enabling Hans Egli to concentrate upon economic and financial matters for which training has so admirably fitted him.

Now this young man of seventy, happily married to a lady of great gifts, proposes to take things easy! Destiny has granted him good health and the gifts of non-emotionalism. *Stadt-Zürcher* he may be, but more in tradition of the highly cultivated and serene figures of the "Zürcher Novellen". His mind is open to anything that is beautiful in literature and music. May he enjoy these precious gifts of leisurely contemplation for many years to come!

(WR)

## A New President for the Nouvelle Société Helvétique London Group

The London Group of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique, the first off-shoot abroad of this patriotic organisation in Switzerland, does not like to change its President too frequently for the good reason that its self-chosen task of providing monthly lectures, discussions and film-shows of specific Swiss interest for its members and the Colony at large requires continuing personal contacts in Switzerland and here with potential lecturers and with organisations in a position to help in this task. Thus the recently announced change at the helm of the N.S.H. was quite an event worthy of some more extensive notice.

The out-going President, Dr. H. W. Egli, has twice held the position for eight or nine years starting in 1947. His first successor in the fifties, Mr. Willy Renz, was happy to find another successor of great promise after a few years in the person of Mr. M. Homberger, whose presidency, however, was cut short by his early return to Switzerland for reasons of health. As there was no other suitable candidate willing to shoulder the task, Dr. Egli resumed it once more "ad interim" pending the emergence of a younger president in the making.

This eventuality has taken longer to materialise than expected, but the present solution has been worth waiting

for. Having been relieved at her insistent wish of the editorship of the "Swiss Observer" in August last, which she held with so much devotion and distinction for eight years, Mrs. Mariann Meier consented to taking on the presidency of the N.S.H. at the repeated request of Dr. Egli and fellow-members of the society's Council to which she herself had belonged for many years as one of its most active and imaginative members. The rare combination of her intellectual powers with a vigorous personality and a great sense of devotion to the home-land and our own community offer the best guarantees for a most successful span of development of the N.S.H. and its work under her presidency.

Although Mrs. Mariann Meier needs no introduction to our readers this may be a suitable opportunity to remind ourselves of her extraordinarily rich and varied life and work—most of it in our midst. The daughter of the old Liestal family Gysin, Mariann was born in the first days of the First World War, 1914, to the sound of the guns at Mühlhausen. She was educated at the Mädchengymnasium in Basle and Moravian Finishing School near Neuchâtel and spent several years learning languages in England, Italy and the University of Basle. But her education for the practical tasks of life was not neglected either, for which she attended the Domestic Science College in Basle, nor that of the finer arts and of sports. She studied piano and singing with Walter Sterk and his private choir, which training enabled her these last few years to participate with distinction in various musical events in London and elsewhere.

At a banquet of the City Swiss Club in London in 1932, Mariann Gysin met Walter Meier whom she married three years later, fully sharing his interests in the Colony as well as in his work with a well-known merchant-firm of the City. While raising a family of four in an exemplary fashion, Mrs. Walter Meier found time to take an active part in the life of a variety of Swiss societies and the Colony at large mainly in company with her husband who was President of the Swiss Mercantile Society for eleven years, which she joined in 1944. At the end of the war they joined the Nouvelle Société Helvétique, which soon after was happy to elect her to the Council. Both were also members of the Schweizerbund and as founder members, of the Anglo-Swiss Society. No less important was the time and effort Mrs. Meier devoted from the war-years onward to the work of the Swiss Benevolent Society, the Swiss Hostel for Girls, the Welfare Office for Swiss Girls in Great Britain, which she presided from 1958 to 1962, the

Swiss Church (member of the Con-sistoire since 1965 and President of the German-speaking Council since 1967). Despite the much lamented early death of her husband in 1961 Mrs. Meier intensified her work for the Colony and Switzerland when she was appointed editor of the "Swiss Observer" which exacting position she filled with distinction from May 1962 to August 1969, having previously proved her writing talent as author of "The Young Traveller in Switzerland" which was published subsequently in several foreign languages as well as in three English editions. Mrs Meier was soon after elected as Delegate of our Colony to the Commission of the Swiss Abroad in Berne—its only woman-member until last year. 1967 the Commission appointed her member of a study-committee on information. 1968 she spoke in Basle on behalf of all Swiss abroad on the occasion of the Golden Jubilee of the N.S.H. and since April 1968 she is a member of the Committee of the annual "Bundes-feierspende, a particularly flattering appointment of trust. A member of the Solidarity Fund of the Swiss Abroad since its inception, Mrs. Meier succeeded her husband 1962 as Delegate for the U.K. and since 1968 is member of its administrative council. Her retirement from the editorship of the "Swiss Observer" in August 1969 was to become the N.S.H.'s great opportunity to persuade Mrs. Meier to take on its presidency.

(E)

### CHRISTMAS PARTY FOR THE CHILDREN OF THE COLNOY

Whoever pretends that the Colony only consists of aging Swiss or ex-Swiss may change his mind when he goes to the Christmas Fête organised for the children of the Colony at St. Mary's Hall, in the Y.M.C.A. Headquarters of Gt. Russell Street.

A good hundred lively children were filling the rows of St. Mary's Hall. The party began with a lesson read out by Pasteur Nicod, this being followed by a prayer, which the children endured bravely, but not without a lot of fidgeting and gaping with eager eyes in every direction.

Then Mr. Arnold Brun spun the tale of the fourth Magi, the one who came too late at the cradle of Bethlehem. A very inspiring story, beautifully illustrated by a running projection of colour-slides, which received the full attention of the young audience.

A conjurer made his boisterous appearance and immediately displayed a remarkable gift for getting the children to participate in his show. In fact, he took more time tattling with them and playing the clown than in performing his tricks. But that was what the children enjoyed and, by the time the

few adults in the hall were starting to stretch themselves, he asked the children whether they wanted another trick. He was answered with an over-riding and resounding cry of "yes"! He ended his performance with something which children always love to see: drawing familiar and funny pictures very quickly on a board.

Tea-time had rung, and the young crowd went to enjoy their cakes, biscuits, orangeade, jelly and other goodies. Then Monsieur Godet appeared, disguised as Father Christmas. He told the story of the descent of Santa Claus, got a gleeful clap from those little hands, and sent the children rushing to their presents.

A very enjoyable fête, as much fun for the adults present as for the kids!

(PMB)

### ON HER MAJESTY'S SECRET SERVICE

Having participated to the James Bond happening atop the Swiss Centre (see Christmas number) and knowing that the film would show familiar Swiss sceneries, I gave in to the temptation of going to see "On Her Majesty's Secret Service".

Never have I heard such differing judgements expressed on a film: I heard some say the film was utter trash, and others who thought it terrific. The reasons advanced for hating the film were its silly plot, its namby-pamby main actor (as you know, Sean Connery has retired from the rôle of Bond and has been replaced by a less virile but quite endearing character called George Lazenby), its absolute irrationalism and a general weariness of the James Bond menu. Reasons for loving the film were its beautiful alpine setting, some tremendous technical stunts and the humour (of a caricatural nature) involved in meeting again with James Bond memorabilia.

Therefore, I suspect that those who take life with seriousness, who tend to judge the quality of films on the value or morality of their theme will dislike the film: its defects will loom awfully large. Those less serious and more careless people who agree, like me, that nonsense can be good fun, will probably enjoy it.

From the "touristic" point of view, I was not deceived. In this respect, the film was almost as good as the SNTU shorts shown at the monthly meetings of Swiss societies in London. One recognizes Murren, Lauterbrunnen, Berne and the Schilhorn teleferic, whose summit-station happens to be the hideout of the diabolical Blofeld (this, for Swiss viewers means a hard strain on realism). We get a good view of the Oberland as James Bond climbs to Blofeld's abode in a helicopter.

On the technical side, I will

remember a few swift, percussive and neat punchups, a terrific ski-chase (Bond's pursuers tearing down vertiginous slopes and firing away with their machine-guns at the same time!), a few moments of delightful macabre humour, a shattering car-race on an ice-rink and a closeup of an avalanche.

You most probably won't fall for my vulgar pleasures, but go and see the film all the same, for the sake of the Oberland!

(PMB)

### CHINESE EXPERIENCES

On the "Sunday Times" review of 4th January, we read the amazing story of a Manchester resident of Swiss origin, Alfred Bosshardt. His parents were Swiss, but he was born and brought up in Manchester. At the age of 23, receiving the missionary call, he left for China, where he was one of the 1,300 missionaries of the China Inland Mission. During his ministry in that forbidding land, he and his missionary wife were attacked and robbed by bandits many a time, but one day in 1934, it was no usual bandit who stopped and plundered them: Alfred Bosshardt and his wife had unknowingly fallen, in the course of a missionary tour, on the path of the communist army of General Ho Lung. This peasant army, constantly harassed by Nationalist forces, had trekked interminably across the arid wastes of central China. This march received far less publicity than the celebrated "long march" on which Mao Tse Tung lead his beleaguered forces some 6,000 miles from the Kiangsi to Yenan, in the Shensi. In the same way, the communist army of General Ho Lung zigzagged for endless months between the provinces of Hunan and the Yenan. Alfred Bosshardt and his wife spent 560 days, trudging some 2,500 miles, suffering incredible physical hardships. Following an attempted escape, they spent a year in Communist gaols in undescrivable circumstances. Mr. Bosshardt is now 73 years old, lives in a Manchester suburb, and continues to be active as a church worker.

### SWISS HOLIDAYS FOR SWISS CHILDREN IN THE UNITED KINGDOM

The Foundation "Pro Juventute" in Zurich is again organising a holiday for children of 7-15 years, of Swiss parentage who live in the United Kingdom, provided always that there is a sufficient number of participants.

As usual, these holidays will start at the best and most attractive time to enjoy Switzerland, i.e. towards the end of July, and are scheduled to last six weeks according to arrangements made by "Pro Juventute".