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NEWS FROM THE COLONY



MR. ROBERT J. KELLER
An active life

Mr. Robert J. Keller has recently been unanimously elected as Hon. President of the Advisory Council of the "Swiss Observer". By creating this new title for him, the Council not only wanted to honour the man who had, during so many years, so ably guided it through difficult periods. It also wanted to keep his name firmly linked to the Colony's publication, whose interests he has always held at heart. Even if he is no longer the active Chairman who presides over the Council's meetings, it is comforting for his successor to know that, if the need arises, he can still approach him for his wise guidance.

Officially Mr. Robert J. Keller lives now, after 43 years of active work in the City of London, in semi-retirement on the shores of Lake Léman. But, of course, those who know him, realise that this is a formula, behind which Mr. Keller is still very active, travelling forward and backward between his new abode of Pully and Nyon, where a firm of investment advisors have been shrewd enough to secure his knowledge and experience. He also keeps a flat in Wentworth and comes over to the United Kingdom from time to time to see his daughter Anna as well as some of his many old friends.

The latter ones are innumerable. No wonder since Mr. Keller has played a very active part in the life of our Colony: as Committee member and Vice-President of the City Swiss Club, as promoter and Vice-President of the Swiss Economic Council, as supporter of the formation of the Institute for Swiss Trade Promotion, as Treasurer of the Eglise Suisse de Londres Bi-Centenary Appeal Fund—to name only some of the offices he has held as well as some of the many services he has rendered to the Colony as a whole.

Robert J. Keller hails from Weinfelden in the Thurgau and his early in-

clinations led him to gain banking experience as well as knowledge of languages in Dietikon, Geneva, Milan, Herisau, Zürich. In May 1927 he came to London and joined a Merchant Bank which soon appointed him Secretary. Another private bank then gave him an executive position: a bank with American and British interests. From 1941 to '43 he was in the USA on behalf of British interests to liquidate and recuperate assets particularly connected with Scottish whisky distilleries. October 1943 saw him back again in the United Kingdom. Thereafter he has acted as Managing Director to Whisky Companies in Northern Ireland and Scotland. Frequent business trips led him, between 1946 and 1953, to the USA and to Canada, but he retired from the whisky business when an American Company took over the Scottish interests.

In Spring 1954 he opened a Representative Office for the Crédit Suisse in the City and a new stage in his career began. In 1956 he became a Fellow of the Institute of Bankers. He also represented Continental Banks in London in the Committee of the Overseas Bankers Club and is the Founder Captain of its Golf Society, golf being his main hobby.

Personally I have had two encounters with Robert J. Keller in Switzerland, apart from our numerous London meetings. The first was in Sils in the Engadine, where he spent a holiday in the hotel "Alpenrose", whereas I was in the "Edelweiss". A telephone call from London for "Mr. Keller from London" brought both of us from the dinner table—but, of course, it was meant for him. Another time we met in a hotel in Meyriez, outside Murten, where I spent a night and where, after dinner, we got together. It was also there that I met Mr. Keller's wife whom he so tragically lost some years ago.

The Swiss Observer's Hon. President has led a very active life. It is, no doubt, the sincere wish of all those who know him that he should continue to do so for many years to come. As his successor in the Chair and, I am sure, speaking on behalf of all the members of the Advisory Council, I would like to thank him for all the services he has rendered our publication.

Gottfried Keller

SWISS CATHOLICS IN LONDON

The Annual General Meeting to cover 1969 was held on Sunday, 12th April 1970, at the Clubhouse of the Westminster Youth Club, 48 Gt. Peter Street, S.W.1.

After opening prayers, the Chairman Mr. Oscar Grob, K.S.G., extended a warm welcome to all present. He thanked Mr. J. R. Gächter, Secretary of Swiss Embassy, for having honoured us with his presence representing

the Ambassador and Madame René Keller.

We mourn the loss of Mr. Jean Jacques Boos, K.S.G., who died on the 18th May 1969 in Hove, our much loved and highly esteemed co-Founder and former Chairman. The funeral service was held on 22nd May 1969 at St. Ann's Church followed by the interment at St. Pancras Cemetery, East Finchley.

We are truly indebted to our former Chairman and it is safe to say thanks to his initiative and energy we have the Swiss Catholic Mission in London.

He will always be remembered by all of us as great champion of our cause and we shall treasure his memory very highly indeed.

In recognition of his services to the Church in particular for Swiss Catholics in this country His Holiness Pope John XXIII appointed him a Knight of the Order of St. Gregory the Great.

Further we learned with deep regret of the death on 28th April 1969 of the Rev. Father A. Lanfranchi, our beloved Chaplain from 1942 to 31st December 1959. The funeral service was held on 1st May 1969 in Poschiavo. A Memorial Mass was celebrated by our Chaplain at St. Ann's Church on 4th May 1969.

Prayers were said for the repose of their souls and for all the members who have died since our last AGM.

The Chairman stated in his report that the year 1969 can be recorded again as one of steady progress in the activities of the Swiss Catholic Community, in which both permanent and temporary residents in the Swiss Colony took an active part.

We thank the former Editor of "The Swiss Observer", Mrs. Mariann Meier and Mr. Pierre-Michel Beguin, the present Editor and the publishers for accepting our appeals and reports on our social activities during the year.

The Chaplain, the Rev. Father Paul Bossard said the following in his report:

The more important the vernacular becomes in the Life and the Liturgy of the Church, the more evident is the need for immigrants to have a centre which offers them the service of their Church in their own language until they are integrated into the parish life of the new country. Therefore your Chaplain sees himself simply as a servant to the thousands of Swiss people, especially the youth who live in or come to the United Kingdom and who wish to accept the service of the Church through him. His task is to be available and not to enforce his presence on anybody; to conduct the Divine Service, organise a Social Service and inform people of the facilities offered by himself and also by nearly 300 Catholic parishes in London alone.