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THE ACTIVITIES OF THE SWISS IN LONDON FROM JANUARY TO APRIL 1941, AS READ IN THE "SWISS OBSERVER"

The "Swiss Observer" failed to appear from October 1940 to the end of January 1941 as a bomb had damaged the works of the Frederick Printing Company. But the damage could be repaired for the paper to come out again remarkably soon and Mr. Fred Stauffer, the Editor, apologised to the many readers who had written to him wondering about the sudden stoppage in the delivery of their cherished paper.

"It was impossible to answer all the letters", he wrote, "some of them were only disentangled weeks afterwards in the floating debris". This aerial visitation was a blow to the finances of the paper, but its continued publication was ensured by the spirited action of a patriotic subscriber who paid for the January and February issues.

Owing to the interruption of its publication, it was only in the 25th January issue that readers learnt of the bombing on September 16th of No. 36 Fitzroy Square, the building adjacent to Swiss House. The latter was slightly damaged. The force of the explosion had filled the Board Room of the Swiss Benevolent Society with debris. The roof and the tiles were damaged and dislodged. When the bomb fell next door, there were 27 guests of the Swiss Relief Centre in the building. Miss Beglinger, the Matron, had providentially ordered everybody to be in the basement shelters by 9.30 p.m. instead of the usual 10.30 p.m., having learnt of an alert warning at 8 p.m. Besides a few cases of shock among the ladies, the party was none the worse for their adventure.

The same issue of the "Swiss Observer" reported on the heavy damage wrought on Pagani's Restaurant during a bombing raid on 14th December, 1940. The Editor had reproduced an article from the "Star" heralding the merits of this 60-year-old house of gastronomy.

The City Swiss Club had been holding its monthly meetings at Pagani's for 15 years. It was forced by

this disastrous bombing to find a place of reunion elsewhere. It held its November meeting at the Monaco Restaurant. The Minister, Mr. Walter Thurnheer was present together with 80 faithful members. The following meeting also took place at Monaco's and heard an exposé by Dr. Bircher, Head of the Section for German Affairs at the Swiss Legation. Then Monaco's decided to close down and the City Swiss Club enjoyed the hospitality of Mr. Candrian, who put a room at the Brown's Hotel, Dover Street, at its disposal.

A letter by Mr. J. J. Boos, President of the Swiss Mercantile Society, welcomed the reappearance of the "Swiss Observer". It read: "Welcome to the reappearance of the "Swiss Observer". How true it is that one only really finds how useful and important an object is when one is deprived of it for some time".(!) Mr. Boos presided the Swiss Mercantile Society's AGM which took place on February 8th.

There were 30 people present. He recalled in his report the activities of the Society. Monthly meetings had been held under adverse conditions. Black-outs and travelling restrictions had made the journey to Swiss House particularly difficult for members. Despite this, meetings had been reasonably well attended. It had been impossible to find guest speakers during the year but most of the meetings were animated by informal talks by members.

Mr. J. J. Boos was re-elected Chairman. The Vice-Chairman was Mr. Walter Meier. The Trustees were Mr. G. E. De Brunner, Mr. W. Eichenberger and Mr. E. Steiner. Members of the Council were Messrs. Ch. Chapuis, R. Chappuis, O. Grob, E. Hardmeier, M. Heilinger, G. Jenne, L. W. Krucker, J. J. Pfaundler, A. C. Stahelin and A. Steinman.

The Nouvelle Société Helvétique held its AGM at about the same time. The President, Mr. A. Suter, recorded with satisfaction the encouraging attendance at the year's monthly meetings. Activities had been somewhat reduced by the war, but the Society had nonetheless managed to invite a number of distinguished speakers. Mr.

Suter referred to the paper of the Swiss Abroad, "Echo", which was still making its way to London at irregular intervals. He deplored the lack of news from the Swiss of Great Britain in its columns and expressed the hope that a suitable scheme for the monthly provision of London news to "Echo" could be devised. He suggested that the diplomatic courier could eventually be used with the approval of the Minister.

The bombing of No. 36 Fitzroy Square and the damage sustained by Swiss House made it necessary to look for new quarters for the Swiss Relief Centre as well as for the inmates of the Home for Aged Swiss at 31 Conway Street, W.1. These two branches of the Swiss Benevolent Society set about finding suitable premises. It wasn't easy. But after a few months the Swiss Relief Society managed to rent a spacious house in Hatfield, to which the inmates of the Home for Aged Swiss were evacuated. It was there that the House Committee of this Home held a successful meeting, and "Westfields" was the venue of the AGM of the Swiss Benevolent Society on 29th March, 1941.

The Personal Column of the March 22nd issue brought readers news of the death of Mr. Louis Marchand, brother of René Marchand, of Bromley, Kent, the death of whose RAF-pilot son had been extensively reported in the October issue. Other deaths reported were those of Mr. Fred Othmar Egger in Birmingham and Mrs. Fanny Dürst-Kuhn, "Swiss of yore" whom readers with long memories may still remember.

Mr. Louis Chapuis, President of the City Swiss Club and Mr. Max Piaget of the Cercle Genevois were both making good progress respectively from an accident and an illness. The same issue informed readers that our compatriot Mr. William Allensbach had changed the name of the Hampshire Court Restaurant in Bournemouth to "Swiss Restaurant and Cafe" and that Mr. Max Cerig of Dulas Anglesey had proudly received the visit of his British-born but Swiss son, who had got his commission in the Royal Fusiliers.

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