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NEWS FROM THE COLONY

EVENTS IN THE COLONY BETWEEN APRIL AND DECEMBER 1941

We have left off the story of the life of the Swiss of Great Britain, as told in the "Swiss Observer" 30 years ago, in our second issue of April. Here we propose to relate the main Swiss events of war-time Britain from mid-April 1941 onward.

April-July

There was a definite slackening of activities in the later half of 1941. Much of the Swiss Observer was devoted to Swiss news and the reproduction of articles on Switzerland gleaned from the British Press. Mr. Fred Stauffer had an expert gift of espying anything written on Switzerland in the British Press, most of which was forthwith reprinted in the Colony paper.

Owing to a total absence of advertisement during that period, the Swiss Observer had to survive entirely on income from subscriptions. As it remained the main source of Swiss news at the time, it enjoyed tremendous support from its readership, and this helped it to weather the storm. Mr. Stauffer printed regular letters of appreciation from readers saying how glad they were that their vital source of information from the Motherland was still being published, and expressing their attachment to this well established institution. Despite the attachment of the Swiss Colony, financial hardship forced the Swiss Observer to appear only once a month as from May 1941.

The main events gleaned from its pages in April and May are an Appeal by the President of the Swiss Confederation to the prosperous Swiss living abroad to make a free contribution to help finance Swiss National Defence, inviting them to make enquiries at their Legation.

Two delegates from the International Red Cross, Miss Lucie Odier and Dr. M. Junod, came to Great Britain to visit prisoner-of-war camps. They had performed a similar journey in Germany, visiting British prisoners of war. The S.O., quoting the "Evening Standard", says that neither of the two officials revealed a word of their impressions so as to safeguard their strict neutrality. The Federal Council made an exception to severe export regulations for gifts sent to Swiss Abroad. The AGM of the City Swiss Club was held on 19th April at Brown's Hotel, where the Society had taken refuge after the bombing of Pagani's. The Swiss Benevolent Society had held its

own AGM three weeks beforehand, under the chairmanship of Mr. Anton Bon, at its war-time Relief Centre in Hatfield.

Swiss residents had to abide by the Aliens Restoration Order. At Salisbury, a Ticinese was summoned for being out of doors after 10.30 p.m. and was inflicted a fine of £2. Another compatriot appeared before a magistrates court at Whitechurch and was fined £11 for taking his family out on a car ride one Sunday afternoon. The Swiss-German Parish was driven away from St. Anne's Church in Gresham Street by enemy bombing and found refuge in a small hall belonging to the West London Mission. Dr. J. A. Schedler, former Swiss Consul in Manchester and a Director of the Clayton Aniline Factory, died on 22nd May. An obituary reproduced from the "Manchester Guardian" was published in a later issue.

On Saturday, June 7th, 250 members and guests of the City Swiss Club gathered for a luncheon at the Dorchester Hotel. The Swiss Minister, M. W. Thurnheer, was their guest of honour and made a speech describing a recent journey to Switzerland, via Spain. In Manchester, it was decided to carry on with an arranged film show on 21st May, 1941, despite the recent death of Mr. J. Arnold Schedler. The Club's Honorary Secretary, Mr. A. Spagnapani, reported on the obituary delivered on this occasion by the President, Mr. A. Kuebler.

The Nouvelle Société Helvétique held its 25th Anniversary Meeting on June 21st, with Mr. A. Suter in the chair. A fortnight later, 50 Swiss took part in an outing conducted by Mr. A. Schorno to the main Restaurant of the Zoological Gardens of Regents Park. The Swiss of Liverpool were struggling to keep alive their monthly meetings. A meeting took place in July in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Davidson. Other meetings were held in the home of Mrs. Macquarie. The Liverpool Consulate had to move temporarily to Prestatyn.

July-October

Two full issues of the S.O., those of August and September, were entirely devoted to the Swiss National Day Celebration of 1st August, marking the 650th Anniversary of the Confederation. There were dense pages on the Festivities in the "Waldstaette" Cantons on General Guisan's speech to the nation, on the history of Switzerland and on the speech made on the Rütli by Mr. Ernst Wetter, President of the Swiss Confederation. The event was festively celebrated in London at the Central Hall.

A death was reported during that time: that of Mr. Louis Duchene, General Manager of the Ritz Hotel, who died at the age of 49. Two journalists in London, Mr. G. Keller and Dr. H. Egli, were both violently attacked by the Nazi Press for their reports on the Blitz. Both were accused of "not being neutral". The same issue of the S.O. contains a letter addressed to Minister Walter Thurnheer by General Louis Guisan, thanking him for his good wishes of the Swiss Colony sent on the occasion of the 650th Anniversary of the Confederation and asking him to convey his message of goodwill to compatriots in Britain.

On 16th August, 30 members of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique accompanied by Mr. and Mrs. Walter Thurnheer, to "Sunshine Home" in East Grinstead, a clinic for blind children partly managed by a member of the London Group, Miss G. Zingg. Dr. E. M. Bircher, of the Embassy, spoke to the Swiss Mercantile Society Meeting of 13th September and proclaimed the necessity of a "World Community" in a highly avant-garde speech. The SMS continued to have regular and well-attended meetings during the summer of 1941 on the second Saturday of every month.

In October, readers were warned by the Editor (for the third time) not to post copies of the S.O. to Switzerland, as this went against the censorship rules instituted by the Postmaster General.

October-December

The City Swiss Club held its October Luncheon at the Dorchester Hotel, with Mr. Louis Chapuis presiding. The speaker on that occasion was Mr. Lawrence Howard, Cinema and Literary personality. He spoke on Henry Dunant. Among other Personal News on the October 24th issue, readers were told that Mr. Charles Bertschi, former director of the Hotel Splendide in Piccadilly, had bought the Berkely Arms Hotel in Cranford. Christmas Greetings were announced in the S.O. at a cost of five shillings.

On 21st November, the Editor printed a note referring to a previous article which had been reprinted from "The Sphere", according to which the Sulzer Works in Winterthur, the Brown Boveri works in Baden and the Oerlikon Corporation in Zurich were working "exclusively for Germany". The London representatives of the three firms had protested to the S.O. to the effect that this statement was wrong.

The Schweizerbund Sick Society and the Société de Secours Mutuels voted to merge together, with effect the

following year. The SSS had been founded in 1879 and the Secours Mutuels Society in 1703. The Swiss Mercantile Society saw on its November Monthly Meeting a film lent by the Legation on the Swiss National Exhibition and four films supplied by the Ministry of Information presented by Mr. G. Keller. The City Swiss Club, with 48 members and six guests present, held its November Meeting at Brown's Hotel and heard a political exposé by Dr. H. Egli.

The Christmas Greeting tradition was started in the December 1941 issue of the S.O., both as a result of postal difficulties and an appeal for war-time support. Forty-six families sent greetings, nine of them had sent greetings in the 1971 Christmas issue.

The City Swiss Club heard one of its members, Mr. M. Preiswerk, relate his experience during a 20,000 mile journey through America, during its December Meeting. The SMS unanimously elected Mr. J. Fleur de Lys to membership and saw six films produced by an Englishman, Mr. T. S. Lotas, on Switzerland.

The Swiss Observer 1941 Volume closes on the news of the unveiling of a Memorial to the late pilot-officer Roy A. Marchand by the Rev. A. Praderwand, and the announcement that Mr. V. M. Albrecht, an RAF pilot officer, had been missing on active service since 21st November, 1941.

(PMB)

HOLIDAY IN SWITZERLAND

All Swiss parents wishing to send their children to holiday camps organised by the Pro Juventute Foundation this summer are asked to contact Mrs. B. Kaluza, 14 Amberley Court, Christchurch Park, Sutton, Surrey (Tel. 01-643 5941), before 25th March. The "Ferienaktion" 1972 for young Swiss abroad offers a series of holiday camps and holidays in Swiss families for children from 7 to 16 from July to September. All details on expenses and conditions will be supplied by Mrs. Kaluza.

WELFARE OFFICE

for

SWISS GIRLS IN GREAT BRITAIN

(For Information, Advice or Help)

31 Conway Street, London, W.1

(Nearest Underground Station:
Warren Street)

Telephone: 01-387 3608

RECEPTION HOURS

Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday

2 p.m. to 5 p.m. or by appointment

MADELEINE SERRA-TOSIO



On 18th December, 1971, a veteran member of the Swiss Club of Manchester died in Bergamo, Italy. She was Mrs. Madeleine Serra-Tosio who was married to the grandson of Vincenzo Vela of Ligornetto, Ticino, the well-known Swiss sculptor. She leaves her daughter, Laurer Berner, four sons, 14 grandchildren, 13 great-grandchildren and the step-daughter Ena Pozzy of Poschiavo, behind her.

Born in Quimper, France, on 8th November, 1881, her ancestors hailing from Switzerland, had at that time, created a very flourishing Swiss Colony in Finistere, France. One of her many relations is Mr. Enrico Tosio, for many years Swiss Consul in London and now Consul-General in Karachi.

The many signs of sincere esteem and warm affection received from the Swiss in Bergamo and her many friends were of great comfort to the near ones she had so suddenly left, and her name will be well remembered.

THE SWISS FORUM IN THE SWISS PRESS

The London correspondent of the "Tages Anzeiger" has sent his editorial chiefs a detailed piece on the failure of the Swiss Forum. It was published in the weekly foreign edition of the "Tages Anzeiger" of 21st December. Certain circles directly involved with the setting-up of the Swiss Forum during its frustrating years were displeased with the story because it emphasised the faulty forecasts that had been made in its connection, and mentions the findings of a market-research report undertaken by Movenpick and a team of Swiss businessmen interested in the project, at the cost of between three and four thousand pounds. The report forecasted that the rent and running cost of the Forum premises would be of the order of £5,000, whereas the real figure that finally emerged turned out to be over £15,000.

The article was well researched. Mr. Samuel Plattner had done his homework and interviewed Mr. Th. Von Speyer, of the Swiss Bank Corporation. Dr. Hans Egli, Mr. O. Gontersweiler of Swiss Fairs Ltd, and many other personalities during his quest of information. His article rather sensationistically describes the whole Forum episode as a "debacle". This accent on the errors of appreciations committed over the Forum, was not to please all those who had believed in it and done their best to make it take off. Some feared that the story, which after all was read by the Tages Anzeiger's readership of 220,000, would have disagreeable repercussions.

As far as we know, there were none. The Forum, an episode of Swiss

life in London which has caused much toil, effort and frustration, is definitely over and part of history.

Mr. Samuel Plattner will allow me to quote some of the figures he has obtained during his painstaking research: The money pledged by the Forum by the Swiss societies amounted to the equivalent of 103,000 francs. The funds sent in by the Swiss resident colony in the U.K. as a result of a personal appeal by Mr. René Keller, our former Ambassador, totted up to the equivalent of 115,000 francs. This is the money currently being refunded by the Swiss Embassy. For the anecdote, the Appeal was addressed to 8,000 persons and it took Mr. Keller three full days to sign all the letters. They will probably be remembered by him as his "three wasted days".

(PMB)

FORTHCOMING CULTURAL EVENTS

31st January to 5th February, University of Lancaster; 14th to 19th February, University of Edinburgh; 28th February to 4th March, University of Dundee. *Exhibition* of Swiss learned and scientific books and periodicals.

Until 26th February, Swiss Centre, Leicester Square, *Exhibition*: "Basle—City of Arts".

Until 5th February, Gimpel Fils, 50 South Molton Street, W.1., drawings for relational paintings by Fritz Glarner.

13th January to 5th February, University Theatre, Newcastle-upon-Tyne. Play Strindberg by Friedrich Dürrenmatt (British premiere).

Thursday, 3rd February, The Polish Hearth, 55 Princes Gate, S.W.7, 7.30 p.m., *Peter-Lukas Graf* (flute) and *Jörg-Ewald Dähler* (harpsichord) in a programme of works by Handel, Rameau, Mozart, etc.

Monday, 7th February, St. John's, Smith Square, Westminster, 1 p.m. The flautist *Peter-Lukas Graf* plays two Mozart Flute Quartets with the Italian String Trio.

Monday, 7th February, Purcell Room, 8 p.m. *Peter-Lukas Graf* (flute), *Heinz Holliger* (oboe) and *Jörg-Ewald Dähler* (harpsichord) with Thomas Igloi (cello continuo), play works by Telemann, W. Fr. Bach, J. S. Bach and P. E. Bach.

Wednesday, 9th February, Purcell Room, 7.30 p.m. *Sequenzen on St. John, Chapter 1*, by *Heinz Holliger* is one of the works played by the harpist Vera Badings.