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NEWS FROM THE COLONY

SWISS MERCANTILE SOCIETY

The March Meeting of the Swiss Mercantile Society enjoyed a fair attendance. The Meeting was told of the finalisation of the arrangements for acquiring the freehold of Swiss House, where vast transformation work will eventually be started to modernise the school. The attendance observed a minutes' silence in memory of Mr. Philipp Schmid-Ruedin, Honorary President of the S.M.S. and an Honorary Member of the London Group in 1935. The President also mentioned the death of Mr. Hans Nachbur, a former member of the Society.

Three films lent by the SNTU followed. The first, entitled "Artists of Southern Switzerland" was a revelation to many. It told of the contribution to art and architecture of men who left a remote valley in the Tessin for the wide world. Names mentioned were Pietro Solari, who designed part of the Kremlin, Domenico Brezini, who was commissioned by Peter the Great to design St. Petersburg, Francesco Borromini, who built the Oratorio in Rome and the Palace which bears his name (if I understood correctly the rippling soundtrack) and Caporato Moderno, who completed St. Peter's Cathedral. The lives of many other artists with eminent contributions to Baroque Art were evoked.

The second film, produced by Swissair, told of the adventures of an American lady compelled by her children to spend a holiday in a Swiss resort. A most amusing and well-handled theme. The third was entitled "From the Dolomites to the Bernina".

The meeting was as usual concluded with a friendly drink in the Staff Room.

A NEW YEAR BEGINS FOR THE SWISS OF MANCHESTER

As in the past, also this year, many members of our Club and their friends made a special point of meeting on Thursday, 27th January, 1972 at the Cottons Hotel in Knutsford, almost a southern enclave of the City, for our *Raclette-Party*.

Again it proved to be a success and much satisfaction must have been gained by the able organisers of this most enjoyable affair. Our President, Dr. Hans Rudi Bolliger, welcomed about 120 participants to this function and greeted also Mr. Rolf Born, our Consul, and Madame whose presence was a pleasant and unexpected surprise. Also a remarkable number of members of the Swiss Club, Liverpool, joined us. He brought to our attention that the General Meeting would take

place on 17th February and that he hoped for a large number of members to attend this important yearly function. Mr. Weber from the Swissair reminded us of the 50th Assembly of the Swiss abroad in Berne and how on this special occasion his company would be able to apply reduced air fares.

Soon everybody took their seats in smaller or larger groups, according to the size of tables or their mutual sympathies, and the never-ending pilgrimage to the raclette-machines was on its way. Not sufficient praise can be given to the able operators of these machines, everyone of them a real professional, serving us with great skill and generosity of this exquisite Swiss speciality. All was suitably complemented with the excellent Swiss wine "Fechy" by now well known to everybody, a wine freely on sale at the Hotel. The evenings "Stimmung" was rendered even more friendly by an entertaining Swiss folk music, recorded by our President—music which later on was the base for friendly family dances, the boy finding his girl and the girl her many boy friends. The ones who did not dance or wanted a short rest between one and another exercise did not find it difficult to engage in a friendly chat with the neighbour and, in the times we live, there was no lack of topics.

Getting nearer to the morning hour everyone had eventually to take leave, happy to have been given the opportunity of a few hours in the midst of a friendly and congenial crowd and hoping to meet again soon.

A few weeks later it was the turn of our General Meetings, which were convened for Thursday, 17th February, 1972 at the Grand Hotel, Aytoun Street, Manchester, where eventually a

fair number of members and friends assembled and by tacit understanding it was for the *Swiss Relief Society, Manchester*, to make a start. The proceedings were opened by its President, Mr. Ermanno Berner, punctually at 18.00 hours. He welcomed our Consul, Mr. Rolf Born and Madame and the other members present, giving a short commentary of the activities of our Society, our aims and the favourable development of our finances (a prerequisite if one day we should be faced with unexpected expenses). He concluded by extending sincere thanks to the Swiss Club, Manchester, for the hospitality given to us also on this occasion; to Messrs Clayton Aniline Co. Ltd., and Messrs. H. Wuest and Dr. H. R. Bolliger in particular for printing the report, and another member of the Committee for providing the notices. All this helped considerably towards the funds of the Society. He extended thanks also to his Committee for their loyal and unfatigable work and this with a special reference to the Honorary Secretary, Mr. Laurence Themans, in whose hands so much of the day to day work lies.

The Committee was re-elected "en bloc" for the 1972 exercise, the consulting members and the Ladies Assisting Committee re-confirmed and new auditors nominated.

Mr. L. Themans explained to us some financial aspects, such as minimum subscriptions for the year which remain unchanged and the re-investment of some low-yield stock into more favourable securities. This was accepted and authorisation given to proceed accordingly, concluding this year's business—a meeting, which by tradition, is now looked at as a friendly, good humoured but efficient affair.

We then moved towards a bar

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specially set out for us and more members and friends joining in a well-earned drink. Tables were waiting for us and we could partake in a varied and excellent cold buffet provided cheaply by the *Swiss Club, Manchester*. This was a well-arranged "intermezzo" before starting the Annual General Meeting and gave us the opportunity of a chat and exchange of ideas and impressions, in a certain way a pre-lobby activity sometimes very useful in solving problems and difficulties which may loom ahead. We had all the time to indulge in all this but punctually at 20.15 we were called to order.

The minutes of the last meeting having been accepted, the President, Dr. Hans Rudi Bolliger, welcomed the members and friends present and thanked the Committee for their work during 1971. In particular he mentioned Mr. Born whose co-operation has always been appreciated by the Club. He referred also to the work of Mr. B. Simon, who for many years supported the Club with his ideas and his spare time. In view of this, the President proposed Mr. Simon's nomination as an Honorary Member of the Club; this proposal was seconded by Mr. E. Berner, and accepted and applauded by those present.

It was with deep regret that the President had to mention the death of three members of the Club during the last year. They were: Mr. E. P. Banderet, who for over 20 years was a respected and much loved member of our Club, always ready to help us with "Rat und Tat" and who with his wife and children fitted so well into our many social activities; Mr. E. Kuebler, since 1910 a member of our Club, covered until his return to Switzerland almost all the offices a club can offer, right up to the Presidency of the Federation. For many years he was also the President of our Relief Society but best remembered by the writer, having introduced him to the Club in 1937, and having started our yearly Xmas Parties—so well liked by young and old. Mrs. M. Serra was a veteran member who had just celebrated her 90 years in the midst of her large family.

After that the Annual Report was presented and accepted and the Inventory and its whereabouts discussed and confirmed.

Also this year, Mr. K. Messmer, took over the chair for the election and this he did very ably and with great tact and resulted in the re-election of Dr. H. R. Bolliger as our President, Mr. D. A. Senn as Vice-President and President-elect and Mr. M. Themans as Hon. Treasurer. The President then informed us of the resignation of Mr. P. Neher as Hon. Secretary and the co-option of the following other Committee Members: Mr. B. Simon, Immediate member and Mr. Ermanno Berner, Public Relations Officer. The latter one thus re-enters the Committee

after five years absence, and having served in it since 1950 and vested the office of Vice-President or President for 13 years. This nomination will allow him to follow more closely the Club's activities and allow him to fulfil more efficiently his duties as a P.R.O.

The Hon. Treasurer, Mrs. Martha Themans, gave a review of the financial position and budget and everybody was quite happy to let things rest in her capable hands.

Under "Any other business" such matters were touched as the 50th Assembly of the Swiss Abroad, Berne, in August 1972 and the President appealed for a better participation of the Swiss in the North, things having perhaps been made easier by a slight reduction in the air fare. On the ASK Meeting of 11th March, 1972, which will be attended by our President, subjects such as the political participation of the Swiss abroad, the Verrechnungssteuer and others will be discussed.

At the end of the Meeting Mr. Simon thanked the members for the Honorary Membership which had been awarded to him earlier on, and the warm applause which followed his words was proof enough of the general good feeling and the high esteem and sympathy he has earned for himself all these years.

Nothing further to be discussed, the President closed the Meeting at 9.35 p.m. which gave us just time enough for another chat and another drink before eventually everybody left for home. This was an evening which truly combined work with pleasure and gave many of us much food for thought and encouragement for further efforts in the furtherance of the Club's interests.

E.B.

LETTER FROM BERNE

The Office of the Delegate for Technical Co-operation in Berne did not appreciate all that was said in our article entitled "The Realities of Overseas Co-operation", which appeared in our 28th January issue. They have asked the Embassy to convey to us the following correction.

We regret that in this article "The Swiss Observer" accepted without verification a Swiss volunteer's views on technical co-operation in Rwanda. Many of the details he supplied do not correspond to the facts and need correction. Here we have selected only the most important:

It is not true that the development project most frequently referred to—the Trafipro Co-operative—is "in a mess". Admittedly, it had to contend with financial difficulties during the years 1966-67. Today, however, Trafipro is an efficient enterprise and plays an extremely valuable part in

Rwanda's development. It controls a good fifth of Rwanda's coffee marketing, and its share in the distribution of consumer goods also amounts to about 20%. Furthermore, the fact that the co-operative's turnover increased by over 20% a year between 1967 and 1970 is no mean tribute to the Swiss management and their Rwandese colleagues. Of course, there is no lack of difficulties and problems, even now. While good progress has been made in the training of the lower and middle cadres, there has as yet been no success in training managers for the top posts, a fact which, in view of Rwanda's backwardness, should surprise no one.

It is not correct that Trafipro is run from Berne by a committee. A committee does exist, but its function is a purely advisory one. The managerial responsibility is borne by the manager in Rwanda.

We agree with the informant that Rwanda is one of the poorest and most backward of the developing countries and that technical co-operation there faces a "challenge". But we draw a different conclusion: that technical co-operation in that country should be seen as a *long-term* task. To throw up the sponge because big results are not visible after two years, as the volunteer in question has evidently done, seems childish. Far-reaching effects can be expected only after five or ten years, or more.

It is in this spirit that Switzerland is continuing her aid to Rwanda and refusing to be deterred by difficulties and occasional set-backs.

For the rest, Rwanda's economic development shows that past efforts, too, have not been in vain; indeed, the real per capita income of the population has risen in the last four to five years by an average of 4% per year. This is admittedly rather modest progress, but it is nonetheless encouraging.

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