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The first Swiss Secretary of State remembers

WHEN Dr Albert Weitnauer left London in 1976 after five years as Ambassador to the Court of St. James's, he returned to Switzerland as Secretary-General of the Federal Political Department. Four years later, he left as Secretary of State of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, its new name after the reorganisation of the Federal Administration.

After his premature retirement, Dr Weitnauer wrote his account of 40 years in the service of the State. The book, called "Rechenschaft," was published by Artemis a few months ago.

It is autobiographical, and Dr Weitnauer talks at length about his childhood – he was born in Brazil – and his youth.

He went to school and university in Basle, and he has always considered it a piece of luck and a privilege to have been born a Swiss and a Basler. He declined the academic career obviously mapped out for him and decided in favour of a lifetime in the service of his country.

The book tells of his activities

as an official in Swiss wartime economy, as head of section of the Federal Commercial Department, as delegate of the Federal Council and astute negotiator, as Ambassador in London and, finally, as Secretary of State.

Dr Weitnauer gives the reader much more than just biographical details. He talks about Switzerland and the Swiss with perspicacity, about people he met in many countries and friends of all nationalities.

With great shrewdness he

highlights characteristics and describes partners in his important task as federal negotiator. He gives great credit to the many personalities who were his masters and colleagues.

He talks about his experiences and the art of negotiating and makes very pertinent comments on power. In addition, he explains his zest for learning and expresses his love of the arts, his personal interests and his devotion to his friends.

Albert Weitnauer began his

book in London in 1974, a fact he considers important inasmuch as the seclusion of the great metropolis, unmistakably marked by its history, helped him to try and find a way through the multitude of memories back to the essentials.

It is a fascinating work, beautifully conceived and brilliantly written, in many ways critical, but with the overriding message that life is well worth living and that finally it is what we make of it.

Mariann Meier



A recent picture of Walter Burren, a pillar of the Swiss Mercantile Society, and a member of the London section for 54 years. He retired this autumn.

Dancing and dining

THE annual dinner and dance of the City Swiss Club was held at the Portman Hotel, London on November 13.

They also held their Christmas dinner, with accompanying carol singing, on December 4, and the club's traditional Christmas gathering will be held on Thursday, December 17.

RECORD numbers attended Manchester Swiss Club's annual dinner dance held at the Excelsior Hotel, Manchester Airport on November 7.

Guest of honour was Mr Hans Buchmann, Counsellor at the Swiss Embassy in London. The customary toast to Switzerland was proposed this year by an English member of the club, Mr Maurice Barber.

MR Josef Doswald, press

secretary at the Swiss Embassy, gave a talk on Switzerland's federal voting system to the London group of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique on November 19.

He covered the latest developments concerning political rights as well as proportional representation, a subject of which he has made a special study.

The meeting was also attended by members of the Swiss Mercantile Society.

THE London-based Cercle Genevois is celebrating the Escalade in traditional style with a fondue and marmite party at the Swiss Church in Endell Street on Friday, December 11.

Tickets, at £5.50 a head, can be obtained from Mrs S. Allan of 64 Woodland Drive, Watford, tel: Watford 21704.

Golden wedding

PAUL and Edith Lerch-Heath of 30 Southleigh Drive, Leeds celebrate their golden wedding on December 19.

Paul Lerch of Brittnau, Aargau married Edith Heath of Hull in 1931 at Seuzach, Zurich. They met while he was travelling the world as a guarantee engineer.

After their marriage they lived in Zurich where their son and daughter were born. In 1937 they moved to Leeds where Mr Lerch worked for Sulzer Bros (UK) Ltd, becoming chef monteure until he retired in 1967.

Mr Lerch is 81 and Mrs Lerch is 71.

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