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Embassy economist talks of Swiss role

AT a recent meeting of the Swiss Mercantile Society at Swiss House, held jointly with the Nouvelle Société Helvétique, Dr J. Kellenberger, in charge of economic affairs at the Swiss Embassy, gave a talk on Switzerland and the EEC.

Before taking up his appointment in London, Dr Kellenberger had been attached for five years to the Swiss Mission to the European Community in Brussels, where he served for four years as secretary of the joint committee of the Free Trade Agreements.

He was, therefore, eminently qualified to deal with the subject in all its aspects. This he did in a lucid and highly interesting

manner, as can be gleaned from the following summary of the salient points of his address.

More than half of the Swiss foreign trade is being done with the EEC and the three most important trading partners of Switzerland are all Member States. Seen from the Community standpoint, Switzerland was in 1982, after the USA, its second most important customer and, after the USA and Saudi Arabia, its third largest supplier.

In the light of these very close economic links it is not surprising that about 100 agreements and exchanges of letters have been concluded so far between the European Communities and Switzerland.

They cover a very wide area indeed, ranging from exchanges of letters for trade in specific agricultural products to agreements on scientific cooperation like that concluded with Euratom concerning controlled nuclear plasma physics, through which Switzerland, together with Sweden, is a full participant in the largest research programme ever undertaken in the EEC.

In more than one case Switzerland was the first State to negotiate an agreement with the Community in a particular area.

Examples are the exchange of letters concerning the extension of the European network for the transmission of scientific and technical data (Euronet) to Swiss

territory or the agreement on direct insurance other than life assurance, initialled on June 25 1982 but not yet signed.

The backbone of Swiss-EEC relations, however, remain the two free trade agreements concluded in 1972 with the Community and the Member States of the European Coal and Steel Community.

Their economic importance can hardly be overestimated. In 1982 66.3 per cent of all Swiss imports came from the Community and 48.2 per cent of total exports went to the EEC.

More than 90 per cent of this volume was in free trade, for example subject to no customs duties or charges with equivalent

A long and winding road to the party

THE New Helvetic Society has organised a Christmas party for many years. It used to be held at the Swiss Hotel for Girls in Belsize Grove, but when it was no longer possible to go there, the gathering was held at the Swiss Church Hall. Numbers grew, and a new venue had to be found at the Throgmorton Restaurant in the City.

Two years ago, it was decided to return to the Swiss Church which had in the meantime been altered in as much as one could have tables and chairs in the church itself once the old pews

had been removed and carpet tiles laid down.

It was a gift of the Youth Club Fund of the New Helvetic Society, and so it was quite meaningful that the NSH went back.

Co-operation among societies had in the meantime become more than just a pious hope, and the success of the first joint Christmas gathering two years ago was in no doubt.

The NSH invited the Swiss Mercantile Society and the Unione Ticinese to take part, and this is how it has been since.

Some 80 members and friends

met this time and spent a most enjoyable evening together.

Two NSH council members, Mrs Margrit Lyster and Mrs Lisa Hall, were in charge of the organisation.

They had decorated the tables with pine branches, tangerines and red candles, and the lights of the Christmas tree added to the friendly Christmas atmosphere. The food, provided by the Swiss Centre, was excellent, and it included the traditional *guezli*.

The President of the host society, Mrs Mariann Meier, welcomed the members of the

three societies and their friends. Her message was "to look for good surprises" in the new year.

Mr Walter Burren, President of the SMS, and Mr Joe Broggin, Vice-President of the Unione Ticinese, added their own greetings.

On behalf of members of the Embassy present, Consul-General Julius Keller, wished everyone a merry Christmas and a prosperous new year.

Happy cooperation, happy togetherness and a happy ending to a good year, all said and done.

MM

City club stay with tradition

effect.

The free trade agreements which apply to industrial goods with special provisions for processed agricultural foodstuffs have, on the whole, worked remarkably well throughout a difficult period.

After the final abolition of customs duties on July 1, 1977, other provisions, in particular the prohibition of the introduction of new quantitative restrictions on imports or measures having equivalent effect, assumed increasing importance.

What happens in the event of an enlargement of the Community? Since the Switzerland-EEC free trade agreement was concluded with the EEC as such, independent of its size, its provisions apply to the new Member State from the date of accession to the Community.

In practice, however, the negotiation of a transitional protocol containing some exceptions to the full application of the provisions in the free trade agreement proves to be necessary.

This was the case with Greece, which will only have abolished all customs duties and charges with equivalent effect on Swiss and EEC imports by January 1 1986 five years after accession.

Nonetheless, there is further scope for improvement in the framework for Swiss-EEC trade relations, and Switzerland has submitted various proposals to that effect.

They include a prohibition of

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In the list of Swiss Societies given in the last issue of the Swiss Observer, Mr F.O. Hausemann was named as President of the Swiss Mercantile Society. Since last May the president has been Mr W. Burren. We apologise to both gentlemen for this error.

the application of quantitative export restrictions in Swiss-EEC trade, the renunciation of subsidised export credits, steps aimed at avoiding the emergence of new technological obstacles to trade through close cooperation within the framework of international associations dealing with standardisation, and a system of advance information before the introduction of new technical regulations.

Outside the trade area, too, new possibilities of cooperation are being explored and proposals put forward.

During his visit to Brussels on September 22 1983, for instance, federal councillor Dr K. Furgler proposed the opening of negotiations for a framework agreement on scientific and technical cooperation.

WB

ABOUT 70 members and guests attended the City Swiss Club's Christmas dinner at London's Portman Hotel.

The reception area looked rather crowded and one wondered whether everybody could find a seat in the adjoining dining room, but soon the diners were tucking into traditional "dinde farcie aux marrons" and "Christmas pudding".

The entertainment, provided by the choir of St. Bride's Church, Fleet Street, was traditional too.

Some 10 years ago a former president of the club, Roger Suess, who was present at the function, together with members of his family, introduced the choir to the club at a similar event and they have been entertaining the annual Christmas dinners ever since.

The choir was refounded in its

present form in 1957 and sings at its church every Sunday as well as at many social functions.

Under the direction of its choir-master, Robert Langston, an eminent organist and a lecturer at the Royal Academy of Music, it has toured Europe extensively and has broadcast on radio and television.

The list of distinguished guests included the former head chef of the Dorchester Hotel, Eugene Kaeufeler, the Swiss Embassy, and many members of London's Swiss banking community.

The club's business, conducted by its president, Fernand Koch, was soon disposed of and members sat back to enjoy the glorious voices of the mixed choir and join in the singing.

The repertoire ranged from

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'Thus perish the enemies of the republic'

THE Cercle Genevoise have celebrated the Escalade according to the old traditions. There were not many born and bred Genevese at the soirée buffet, but thanks to Suzy Allan d'Arbigny – an authentic native of Geneva – all the friends of Geneva gathered around her had a taste of the real thing.

The event took place at the headquarters of the Ski Club of Great Britain. It was a joint event with the Unione Ticinese, a happy combination of the two most outward and vanguard cantons of Switzerland and the oldest Swiss societies in Britain.

The traditional celebration followed the meal and Mrs Allan explained the history of the

Escalade.

She told how troops led by the Duke of Savoy, tried to invade Geneva, an independent republic, during the darkest night of December 1602 and how the valiant Genevese repulsed them.

During the invasion a Mrs Royaume threw her pot of soup with all its contents on the head of one of the assailants who climbed on the ramparts under her windows. That story was the origin of the chocolate marmite, filled with crackers and marzipan, which is broken and eaten on Escalade day.

The marmite offered by the Cercle Genevois was the best I ever tasted, and I have eaten quite a few in my time. It was the art work of the retired chef pâtissier of the Dorchester, Mr Luigi Bozzoni.

After the youngest member of the party broke it with his fist and pronounced, "Thus perish the enemies of the republic", the participants sang the two best known Genevese songs, Ce que l'ainö and La Belle Escalade.

The chocolate pot and its contents were then shared among all.

AC

Growing kindness

THE Yorkshire Swiss Club's Christmas party was well attended and a great success, reports Lilian Banmann, adding: "There is growing a friendship of enthusiasm and kindness which we had not expected when we first began to meet".

The Swiss Supper and the games were again organised most efficiently by Mrs Kägi, the committee and other friends.

Salads and cakes were given by members.

Owing to a misunderstanding we did not report the luncheon get-together at the Sundial Restaurant, Bradford, but it was also a happy day and the Consul General and Mrs Glauser joined us to make it a memorable one.

The club's next meeting is a film show in March and there are plans for another boat trip, visits to a coal mine, a table mat factory, and taking to the air – with gliding.

★ ★ ★

DR. H.W. EGLI, of 6a Rodborough Road, London NW11 8RY, will celebrate his 85th birthday on March 17. His many friends send him best wishes and many happy returns of what they hope will be an enjoyable birthday.

City club tradition

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traditional English carols to "White Christmas", which appeared to sound better than Bing Crosby's version.

It also included "Minuit, Chrétiens, c'est l'heure solennelle" and "Stille Nacht, Heilige Nacht".

The candles on the tables and the illuminated Christmas tree provided a festive atmosphere. Altogether, the function was very memorable.

WILLIAM BERNARD SIGERIST

IT is with deep regret that we announce the death of William Bernard Sigerist, of Territet-Montreux. He died on December 11 in his ninety third year.

Bernard Sigerist – a food importer and founder of the St. Gall Canning Company – spent more than 50 years in London as a successful businessman. He was closely connected with the Swiss community, was a member of the Swiss Church, and a number of Swiss organisations.

Bernard was a modest man and would never let us write about him in the Swiss Observer, although he was pleased at the mention of his 90th birthday on September 23 1981.

His wife Bea was still alive then, though an invalid for many years. Bernard had nursed her loyally and lovingly throughout her illness lasting some eight years.

They had retired to the shores of the Léman, in the mid-sixties, where they spent a few happy years together, often remembering their life in London where they had both lived for so long. Bea had been President of the Frauenverein and active in the Swiss community with her husband.

When she died at the end of December 1981, he had to begin a new life. He did it with his characteristic strength of will-

power and his admirable attitude to life.

He was quite a philosopher, and to me the many hours spent at his bedside during the past year are a precious memory of a great spirit that would not give in to mere physical suffering. He was in great pain – his arthrosis having grown worse over the years.

He had to undergo a number of operations, and he spent the whole of 1983 in bed, first in hospital and then at home. But he never had any complaints.

Bernard was full of hope and certain that 1984 would bring him improved health and mobility. It was not to be.

His state of health grew worse, and he died peacefully in the early morning of December 11, a faithful god-daughter of his wife's with him. It is to her that we express our deep sympathy in her loss.

Some of us remember Bernard Sigerist in the costume of an old Swiss mercenary reading the Swiss Pact at First of August celebrations of years gone by.

His tall erect figure and his stentorian voice made an impression year after year. He remained faithful to his homeland, originating from Schaffhausen.

At the outbreak of the war, he was an officer, in charge of the contingent of Swiss returning home to do service in the Swiss Army.

Some of us still remember how he organised the young and older men at Swiss House whence they set out via Waterloo, Southampton and Le Havre to the homeland that had called them up.

Those of us, though, who mourn his passing, will remember him as a very faithful and caring friend and a great person.

Mariann Meier

SOPHIE WYSS

IT is with deep regret that we announce the death of Madame Sophie Wyss, at the age of 86. She was a distinguished lieder singer who delighted the Swiss community with her recitals on many occasions.

She was brought up in La Neuveville on the shores of Lake Bienné. As she told the audience in a talk to the Helvetic Society in 1965, she knew she would be a singer even as a very little girl. She studied at the Conservatoires in Geneva and Basle, and her debut was as Eurydice in Gluck's *Orphée* in Geneva.

She married an Englishman, Captain Arnold Gyde, and made her life in England. She worked for the BBC almost from the beginning of her career here and began specializing in songs of a new type (Honegger, Taillefer, Tomasi, Villa-Lobos etc). Her beautiful, clear voice and admir-

able diction in any language were a pleasure to listen to.

As a broadcaster (often at the proms) she was heard regularly from the 'twenties to the 'sixties. She introduced many works, specially by French and also Swiss composers – her treatment of French (and Swiss) folksongs was a great delight.

She also gave first performances of English songs, Rawsthorne, Leigh, Hadley, Lennox Berkeley and Benjamin Britten, with whom she had a special musical relationship.

Sophie Wyss took part in many festivals such as Edinburgh, and had a successful tour in Australia in 1948. She also gave concerts all over Europe.

Her contribution to English musical life was outstanding, and we shall also miss her as a kind and charming personality.

MM