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THE last meeting of the New Helvetic Society in London was once again held in the spacious lecture hall of the Swiss Embassy.

The president, Mrs Anne Allen, was in the chair. She introduced the speakers who were all to comment on the work and social side of this year's Assembly of Swiss Abroad in Basle from May 11 to 13.

Mr G. Broggini, as delegate to the Commission of Swiss Abroad and member of that body's executive committee, talked about the work done at the ASK's meeting, referring to matters like the citizenship campaign, old-age pension, dual taxation agreements and other matters of concern to Swiss abroad.

He announced that the next Assembly would take place at the end of August 1985 at either Interlaken or Gstaad.

Mrs Margrit Lyster and Mrs Lisa Hall then gave their impressions generally of the Assembly. They agreed that, while it could be called a success, the fact that it was held at the same time as and within the Swiss Industries Fair (MUBA) made it less intimate than it usually is in a smaller place.

Mrs Hall also talked about the Friends of the Organisation of Swiss Abroad, an excellent institution based in Switzerland, and she appealed to the audience to recruit their families and friends here and inside Switzerland to become members.

Next came Mrs Mariann Meier who said that the reduced number of Swiss taking part – only some 250 – included about 15 from Great Britain, most of them NSH members. She mentioned the meetings of the Commission on Information and the Solidarity Fund Council and AGM she had attended in her own right.

A new president of the fund had been elected, Dr H. Halbheer, a former director of the Secretariat of Swiss Abroad in Berne, and a banker.

She referred to the symposium she attended on "New Vistas for World Development through Technological Progress"

## Basle – presented by the New Helvetic Society

organised by the MUBA.

Mrs Meier then gave a résumé of the opening speech by the president of the Organisation of Swiss Abroad, Prof Dr Walther Hofer, an excellent presentation of the importance played by the Swiss abroad in Swiss Foreign Trade, the subject of the Assembly's theme.

Mrs Meier mentioned the ecumenical service held on Sunday at the St Clara Catholic Church and the closing ceremony at which music of the 15th and 16th centuries was played, both impressive events, and the dinner dance which backed local flavour.

Mariann Meier looked back over the 22 years she had been representing the Swiss of southern Great Britain on the Commission and of her farewell after the last meeting in Basle. She mentioned the successes achieved by the ASK and ended by quoting from Hermann Hesse's "Stufen".

The president then showed some slides of Basle, a running commentary being given on tape. The audience certainly appreciated the show, which gave a good impression of the rich cultural heritage and economic importance of the old Humanist town on the Rhine.

"Basler Leckerli" and coffee were served afterwards, allowing members and friends a little social get-together. It certainly was a very successful evening, again held in conjunction with the Swiss

Mercantile Society and the Unione Ticinese.

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### Solidarity Evening

THE New Helvetic Society in London is organising a Solidarity Evening at the Swiss Embassy Lecture Hall, 18 Montagu Place, London W1, on Thursday, October 4 at 7pm.

The Solidarity Fund for Swiss Abroad in Berne has prepared a colour video show explaining in an easy way what the fund stands for and its beneficial activities for Swiss living outside their homeland.

The show was presented in German at last year's Assembly in Zurich, and an English translation is now available. All the societies in the London area have been invited.

Mrs Mariann Meier, a member of the Solidarity Fund Council, will give a short résumé of the history of this outstanding institution of self-help for compatriots in need.

### Celebration

ON August 1 the Taunton Swiss Group met in the home of Katra and Tony Haskell to celebrate National Day.

It was a delightful evening with

delicious Swiss food, wine, good company, and traditional Swiss songs were revived and sung with enthusiasm by all.

We are an informal, but extremely united group of Swiss who meet monthly in Taunton for coffee and a chat – on special occasions in the homes of our members.

If you live in our neighbourhood, do contact us. We would like to hear from you!

Contact: Ruth Cole, 34 Dillons Road, Creech St. Michael, Taunton, Somerset. Tel: 443021.

### New Federation president

AT its last AGM in June, the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK elected a new president in succession to Mr Bernard Simon who retired after 10 strenuous years. He is the former vice-president, Mr Ernst Peter Tangemann.

This is an office for which he is eminently suited, for he is deeply concerned with the well-being of the Swiss community in which he has taken an active part ever since he came to London in 1967.

Ernst Tangemann was born in Zurich in 1924 where he finished



Mr Ernst Tangemann

his schooling with the diploma of the "Kantonale Handelsschule". He began working for the Union Bank of Switzerland in Geneva where he spent 16 years.

After a brief spell in his home town he worked with UBS in Basle from 1964 to 1967.

It was in November 1967, when the Union Bank of Switzerland opened its first branch abroad in London, that Ernst Tangemann arrived. For five years he was at the head of the Foreign Exchange and Money Market Department and became manager of the London branch in 1972.

He had been to this country once before back in 1948 when he did language studies in London. That is where he met his Finnish (Swedish-speaking) wife Stina. They were married in Helsinki in 1951.

With his taxing professional life which also involved travelling abroad, he has but little time for his hobbies which include reading and photography. He likes to spend time in his garden and plays the occasional round of golf with his wife.

It is all the more remarkable that he has found time for activities in the Swiss community. Ever since 1971, he has been honorary treasurer of the Anglo-Swiss Society.

In 1974-76 he was president of the City Swiss Club. Two years

later, he was elected to the Consistoire of the Swiss Church (1977) and made vice-president almost immediately due to Mr George Gyssler's departure for the USA.

At the time without a president, Mr Tangemann steered the affairs of the church through a difficult period. Now he ably assists the president, Mrs Edith Crack, in her difficult task. He is at present greatly involved in the church hall alterations.

It is a truism that it is the really busy people who have most time available for whatever is asked of them. In spite of his career obligations, Ernst Tangemann is always ready to assist in every way where help is needed.

Ably and gracefully partnered by his wife Stina, often as generous hosts in their lovely home, he has made an appreciable impact in the life of the London Swiss community.

His many friends wish him the best of health, success and satisfaction in his new office at the head of the Federation. To Stina they say "Thank you" for continuing to be such a brick!

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## Dali display

THE Montreux Congress Centre is currently staging an exhibition of the world's largest private collection of works by Salvador Dali.

The 200 works span 60 years in the career of one of the most prolific and controversial artists of our time.

Gouaches, oils, drawings, pen and ink sketches and water colours, collected by John Peter Moore, Dali's secretary for 25 years, are windows opening onto the entire universe of the great Catalan painter.

This collection is an impressive resumé of Dali's artistic odyssey. From the childhood drawings hastily sketched in school text books to the monumental works

of his maturity – every period of his life is represented.

Here we discover Dali the impressionist of the pre-twenties, Dali the cubist of the immediate post-war years, Dali inspired by surrealism in which he was so thoroughly steeped that it became a way of life.

## East Anglia call

ARE any Swiss living in the East Anglia area interested in meeting occasionally? If so, please contact:

Mrs Hanni Beedel, 17 Estuary Drive, Felixstowe, Suffolk IP11 9TL. Tel: Felixstowe 286384, or Mrs Susanna Bristol, Hill Farm House, Lamberts Lane, Rushmere St. Andrew, Ipswich. Tel: Ipswich 78320.

## Mrs Anna Sommer

IT is with deep regret that we announce the death of Mrs Anna Sommer, of Caterham, Surrey, in her 91st year.

She died in March, but we have only just learned of her passing.

Anna Sommer was born in 1893, one of nine children of a minister in the Reformed Church in Berne. She came to Britain a few weeks after the Armistice in 1918 to get married to her childhood sweetheart, Frederick Godfrey Sommer. She was a devoted wife and mother to their son and daughter who considered them model parents.

She shared her husband's many interests in the Swiss community where he played a prominent part. He was president of the Swiss Benevolent Society for many years after holding the same office in the Foyer Suisse and the Swiss Male Choir.

He was a trustee of the Swiss Mercantile Society, vice-president of the Swiss Hostel for Girls and of the Consistoire of the Swiss

Church.

It was here that he did particularly valuable work, being one of the founders of the German-speaking Swiss parish and, during the war, he resolutely took charge of the Sunday services when there was no minister.

And it is in the church that Mrs Sommer did a great deal of work too. For many years, she was the president of the Ladies' Group (first called "Naehverein" and then "Frauenverein"), and she was actively engaged in organising the biennial church bazaar.

After her husband, who had held an important post with A. Wander & Co, retired, they moved to Caterham in Surrey.

When he died in June 1977 it became increasingly difficult for Mrs Sommer to come to London. But she continued to be active in the local United Reformed Church and a Ladies Luncheon Club. Having lived in Caterham for 26 years, she had many friends.

Most years since her husband's death she still enjoyed her holidays in Switzerland, and it was only due to an unexpected operation three years ago that she had to cancel a journey to Canada to visit her daughter, grand- and great-grandchildren.

On the day she died she had been out with some friends from Switzerland, and then, later, she suddenly found it difficult to breathe and died within 20 minutes, peacefully and without pain.

For this we are grateful, much as we are sad at losing her. She was a good friend to many, and her gentle, yet determined ways were much appreciated by all who knew her. She never complained and carried whatever fate brought with admirable courage.

We shall remember her with gratitude and affection and express our deep sympathy to her daughter and her son and their families in their bereavement.

Her son's address is: Mr O. Sommer, Meadow Brook, Carby Road, Greatford, Stamford, Lincs. PE9 4PR.

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## Federation looks back on 35 years

ON the 35th anniversary of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK it is natural that one thinks back to its beginnings.

After the war, Swiss societies and groups, especially in London, were getting more and more concerned about working together in the interests of all compatriots in Britain, but particularly about many young Swiss students and au pair girls who flocked into the capital.

Presidents of all Swiss societies and organisations in London were invited to a preliminary meeting on June 21 1948 to discuss the formation of a body which would coordinate activities in the Swiss community.

At that time, the following societies were still in existence: Swiss Club (Schweizerbund), Union Helvetia, Ruetli Ladies' Club, Swiss Male Choir, Committee of the Fête Suisse, Swiss YMCA, Confrérie Vaudoise, Swiss Orchestral Society, Swiss Gymnastic Society, Société de Secours Mutuels, Swiss Accordion Club.

Invitations were sent out by Dr H.W. Egli (Nouvelle Société Helvétique), Mr Walter Meier (Swiss Merchantile Society) and Mr Raoul de Cintra (City Swiss Club).

It was decided to form a drafting committee, consisting of the three above-mentioned presidents, plus Mr Carlo Berti, president of the Unione Ticinese, and the Rev C. Reverdin of the Eglise Suisse in London.

The idea of forming some kind of umbrella organisation had the support of the Ambassador from the beginning, at that time Monsieur de Torrenté. The formation of a Swiss Social Centre was one of the aims, envisaging in particular youth facilities.

Mr Alfred Stauffer, long-time editor of the *Swiss Observer*, agreed to keep a diary of community events to facilitate cooperation and to avoid overlapping of events.

The second meeting was held on October 20 1948, when it was decided to form a kind of "presidents' council" to "safeguard the interests of Swiss in this country".

The first proper meeting was held at the Embassy on February 4 1949, with Dr Egli in the chair. Eight societies from the Midlands and the North had also been invited.

It was decided to call the new organisation "Assembly of Presidents of Swiss Societies in the UK". The meeting was told of the creation of the Anglo-Swiss Society, on whose com-

mittee the two Swiss who had been invited to serve were Dr Egli and Mr Meier.

The presidents were also informed that the SMS was studying the matter of the new voluntary scheme of Swiss Old Age Insurance (AHV/AVS) for Swiss Abroad.

At the meeting on May 31 1949, contacts with the Organisation of Swiss Abroad in Berne were reported, and matters such as military exemption tax, votes for Swiss abroad, Swiss withholding tax, currency allocation to Swiss residents abroad, the AHV and some of its injustices regarding residents abroad, as well as the Swiss Social Centre were discussed.

At that time, three or four meetings a year were held, usually at Swiss House, home of the SMS College. The president, vice-president and honorary vice-president were in office for one year only and moved up automatically from the office of honorary secretary to vice-president, and from vice-president to president.

It was around that time that societies invited the Federation president to social functions rather than presidents of all major societies.

A special action committee for the study of the Swiss Social Centre was set up in 1949, also under Dr Egli.

In June 1951, a declaration was issued by the Assembly regarding facilities in Switzerland for compatriots returning home for good – savings transfer, insurance, employment. This was passed on to the Swiss government via the Organisation of Swiss Abroad. The broadcaster Theo Haller made it public on the Swiss radio.

Subjects dealt with by the Federation in the 'fifties were the Swiss Welfare Office and the well-being of Swiss girls – a special leaflet was issued in Switzerland, double taxation, Solidarity Fund, holidays in Switzerland for Swiss children from Britain, an appeal to Swiss families in London for hospitality for Swiss girls in need, supporting the French

Hospital in London, which also looked after Swiss patients, raising over £400 through the *Swiss Observer* for the victims of the Lynmouth flood disaster, and giving financial support to the Swiss Avalanche Assistance Fund, organising concerts and the new draft proposals regarding the acquisition and loss of Swiss citizenship. These matters were dealt with actively, not just by accepting reports.

One of the main concerns was the rejuvenation of the Swiss community and cooperation among the various Swiss organisations in the UK. To this end a "Guide to the Swiss Colony in Great Britain and Eire" was published by the NSH, a 60-page booklet, giving information, addresses and carrying advertisements.

The Assembly supported this invaluable publication, sold at one shilling, and again the second edition in October 1951.

In 1954, Dr Egli convened a Swiss Youth Centre Committee. The Swiss Hostel for Girls was opened in 1956, thanks to the Sandoz Legacy to the Swiss Benevolent Society. Sadly, the Hostel had to be closed in 1980.

On October 5 1965, the name of the Presidents' Assembly was changed to that of the "Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK", the Federation being properly constituted on that day. Dr Egli was elected president, an office he held with great distinction until 1974, when Mr Bernard Simon took over.

From 1965 onward only the Committee met frequently, the Federation being called together at its annual meeting once a year, held at the Swiss Embassy by courtesy of the Swiss Ambassador. There was one exception to this in 1969, when the AGM was held in Manchester.

One of the tasks of the Federation was to elect the members to the Commission of Swiss Abroad (ASK). The societies' annual donations to the Federation enabled them to pay delegates' expenses to some degree from 1966 onwards. As from 1972 delegates became members of the Committee ipso



facto.

The main concern of the Federation in the 'sixties was the Swiss Cultural Forum and Colony Room at the Swiss Centre which was opened in 1967. Dr Egli was the chief advocate, and his special committee did excellent work.

But in spite of his dedication to the project, assisted throughout equally devotedly by Mr Peter Christen (Swiss Economic Council) and Mr Albert Kunz (Swiss National Tourist Office), the project had finally to be dropped for lack of finance.

In August 1974, the Federation signed an agreement with the Confederation and the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad with regard to the "Review", the quarterly publication to all Swiss abroad (free of charge), being incorporated in the *Swiss Observer* in this country.

In 1979/80, the Federation became the proprietor of the *Swiss Observer* when the previous publisher and son of the founder, Mr Oscar Boehringer, handed it over.

When difficulties arose between the editor/printer and Berne and the two publications were separated, it was the Federation Committee and more particularly the president, Mr B. Simon, who dealt with the difficult and delicate negotiations in order to put matters right and to reach an agreement with Berne so that the "Review" could again be incorporated in the *Swiss Observer* four times a year.

These plans were submitted to the last AGM of the Federation in June, and one may look forward to useful cooperation in the future.

Of course, quite apart from the "Review" problem, the Federation has all along concerned itself with how best the *Swiss Observer* could be supported and improved.

In 1982, the Federation gave a mandate to the New Helvetic Society to work out a questionnaire sent to all Swiss societies in the UK regarding their structure, membership, finances etc in order to get closer cooperation.

On accepting the report by Mrs M. Meier (London societies) and Mr G. Broggini (others in the UK) at the AGM 1983, the NSH was asked to set up an ad hoc committee on cooperation, which is carrying on its studies.

At the last annual meeting in June 1984, Mr Bernard Simon retired after doing sterling work for 10 years. He was succeeded by the vice-president, Mr E.P. Tangemann. The new vice-president is Mr F. Koch. The honorary treasurer Mr A. Kunz, and the honorary secretary Mr V. Berti were re-elected.

The Federation's development has perhaps not been exactly as the founders had envisaged it. But much valuable work has been done, and it is to be hoped that the societies themselves will increase their support in every way, so that any future problems which may have to be dealt with, can be faced with the same sense of responsibility which distinguished the founders.

**Mariann Meier**

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