

The congress of the Swiss abroad in Berne [conclusion]

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CITY SWISS CLUB

Annual Banquet & Ball

At the

Grosvenor House, Park Lane, W.1.

on FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 26th, 1937.

Not even the most confirmed pessimist will deny, that the last few months have shown a decided improvement, at least in the commercial sphere, in this country. The silver lining, for which we have all gazed heavenwards for many months, yea years, has at last set in, if only faintly.

For the last few years the City Swiss Club has held its Annual Banquet somewhat under a cloud, it was deemed advisable to fall in with the general trend of conditions then prevailing, it was considered to be nothing short of bad taste to indulge in extensive festivities, whilst the general economic conditions were still an uncertain factor, and whilst so many of our compatriots were labouring under untold difficulties.

Admittedly we are not out of the wood as yet, but there is but little doubt, that generally one can look forward, at present, to a more hopeful and more prosperous time, providing that no more "sudden surprises" upset the world's peace.

Our Minister, Monsieur C. R. Paravicini, struck a very optimistic note, in his remarkable speech made on the occasion of the Annual Banquet of the Swiss Mercantile Society, held last month at the Trocadero Restaurant.

Encouraged on all sides, the Committee of the City Swiss Club, has, with full approval of the members of the Club, decided to avert again to their old traditions to make their Annual Banquet one of the outstanding events of the Colony.

On former occasions the City Swiss Club has extended a cordial invitation to distinguished personalities in the public life of this country, and who have, at one time or another, rendered services to our country.

THE CONGRESS OF THE SWISS ABROAD IN BERNE.

Second Part.

The writer regrets the error in the dates which appeared in the first part of this report. The Congress took place on the two days Saturday the 4th, and Sunday the 5th of September, 1937.

Second Day, September the 5th.

The Sunday morning session of the congress was held in the Nationalratsaal of the Bundespalais, where the numerous and influential assembly was again presided over by Dr. Arnold Lätt. He warmly welcomed President Motta and many of the Ministers from home and abroad and expressed his appreciation of the presence of more than 400 representatives of the Swiss Abroad, their friends and the public press. There was again a very full programme to be disposed of and the day's deliberations may be characterised as a public pronouncement by ten or more high authorities of the Swiss Abroad as forming Switzerland's cultural and economic potentialities in the wide world.

Chef-Redacteur E. Schurch developed the theme of the moral and cultural tasks of the Swiss Abroad and emphasised their necessity of using the languages of their host countries for the purpose, while reserving their own patois for more intimate home use. — Dr. G. Wagnière, previous Swiss Minister in Rome, in a magnificent and moving speech, chose the theme "The Swiss Abroad and our national prestige," in which he outlined the difficulties of the many thousands of Swiss who live in the rural districts in foreign countries, away from the possibility of contact with their countrymen, and whose potential value is therefore most likely to be lost in the course of time. He proposed two concrete remedies:— in the first place organised courses for young members of both sexes terminating with a journey to Switzerland, and secondly free literature on the cultural significance of Switzerland instead of, or together with, the abundant tourist propaganda.

A series of short addresses on "Kulturpolitik und Wirtschaftspromaganda" were then delivered by Dr. M. Kunz, Consul in Mannheim, Mr. A.

It is a happy thought, that owing to brighter aspects, the Club has included in their list of guests, apart from various representatives of the sister Societies, the Swiss and English Press, etc., etc., a number of distinguished personalities, such as:

Dr. Walter Stucki, the newly appointed Swiss Minister to the French Republic.

Minister Stucki has, during the last few years been sent by the Swiss Government on many special missions in connection with commercial treaties to various European countries. Previous to the City Swiss Club Banquet he will attend conferences to be held at the Board of Trade, some of his English colleagues might attend the Banquet as guests of the Swiss Minister.

Mr. Frank E. Fehr, C.B.E., Chairman of the Baltic Mercantile and Shipping Exchange.

Sir Malcolm Campbell, who recently has broken the World's water-speed record on the Lake Maggiore.

Mlle. Ella Maillart, the well-known Swiss Explorer and Author, will be the special guest of the Swiss Minister.

Such a representative gathering is bound to add greatly to the success of this function.

The City Swiss Club is anxious that the Banquet should be in the real sense of the word a "Swiss Evening" heralding in a new and more prosperous era, and they extend their invitation not only to their members, but, to all the members of the Swiss Colony in the British Isles, and it is hoped that many members and friends will attend this function which promises to be one of the outstanding events during the social season 1937/1938.

Ziegler, President of the Chamber of Commerce in Brussels, Dr. Mariani, President of the "Pro Ticino" in Milan and engineer Manfred Eggermann of Bucarest. All the speakers further evolved the theme of the necessity of resistance to the loss of Swiss Abroad by assimilation, as well as the difficulty of counteracting this constant tendency in certain countries.

The speaker who followed, Mr. Mario Musso—Zurich of the Bundesfeiercomite, brought before the assembly a proposal which was greeted with tremendous enthusiasm and deep thankfulness. His theme:— "What can Switzerland do for the Swiss Abroad?" was most fittingly concluded by the declaration that the First of August Collection of 1938 shall be applied in its totality to the welfare of the Swiss Abroad, special consideration being given to the "Linderung der geistigen Not." Mr. Musso declared that all arrangements were already in train, that the badges would be prepared during the winter in the mountain valley of Onsernone in the Ticino, and that they would be made from straw.

The President of the Congress, Dr. Arnold Lätt, then took the word and delivered an address which was chiefly directed towards the President of the Confederation and his Ministers. Speaking of the "Tasks of the Future" he implored the Government to grant the movement more pecuniary help, an increased subvention, for the work in hand, especially in view of the fact that private voluntary assistance was also growing. The results of the increased efforts, he said, will be definite and of direct advantage to the State, the spirit of Switzerland and Swiss national economy. The speaker emphasised also the desirability of creating more books on Switzerland and good translations of existing Swiss literature into English; he expressed his warm thanks for the 1938 Bundesfeierpende and referred to the opportunities offered by the Zurich national exhibition in 1939.

When Mr. Motta, the President of the Swiss Confederation, rose to speak the audience instinctively sensed that he would employ his great gift of oratory not only to greet the Swiss from Abroad, but to enlighten them in a frank and open pronouncement regarding the Swiss point of view and Swiss political action in relation to the world position generally. The President spoke in

German, surprising the audience with his fluidity and grace in the use of it. He spoke with deep feeling of the joy of re-union, the growth of the movement, the hopes of the future and the unity of the Swiss Abroad as a precept to the Swiss at home.

He then alluded to the relations between Switzerland and the two warring factions in Spain, explaining the reason for the former's political attitude. This attitude, he maintained, was identically the same as the one assumed vis-à-vis Soviet Russia in 1918 and was, furthermore, in full accord with that of every other nation. Mr. Motta spoke of certain attacks to which this policy had exposed him and greatly regretted that, at a time when the world position was particularly unsafe, this attitude, fully endorsed and directed by the Government, should have been the cause of high party feeling.

The position of Switzerland, he continued, was sound; she enjoyed a high reputation among all the other nations. Every thinking person in the world knew that, if Switzerland disappeared, a great light would have been put out. We should not be directed by anxiety, we had the right to feel strong. The passion of the political parties would again subside and the Swiss Abroad might continue to look upon their homeland without shame.

After this great oration, Dr. Lätt contented himself with admirable tact with one single sentence to close the meeting.

The guests re-assembled later for the official banquet at the Schweizerhof which was graced with many a speech in lighter and more humorous vein in honour of the Swiss Abroad. The afternoon saw us all on the Gurten, each behind a tankard of good Swiss beer, anxious to renew old friendships and to make new ones, happy to listen to the stirring tales from the ends of the earth, proud of the light of patriotism which gleamed in every eye.

Year by year this Congress assumes more important proportions and a more influential character; it is an open parliamentary session to which every Swiss Abroad is invited, and at which he is at liberty to speak for himself or his colony; it is the day of direct contact with our political leaders and those influential compatriotes who feel for us as we feel for them.

NOTE. — The writer has been forced to report on the contributions of the various speakers in the briefest possible outline and he is much afraid that the picture thus presented is sketchy in the extreme. He has, however, done so in the knowledge that the Sept./Oct. issue of the "Echo Suisse" contains the verbatim reports of all speeches at the Congress and he accordingly recommends the reader to acquire a copy.

LA POLITIQUE.

Avant un important scrutin.

C'est donc le 28 novembre que le peuple suisse sera appelé à se prononcer sur l'initiative Fonjallaz, tendant à interdire, sur le territoire de la Confédération, toute activité aux loges maçonniques, aux Odd Fellows, à l'Union, et à toute association secrète du même genre. Trois semaines seulement nous séparent de cet important scrutin; et il ne nous semble pas inutile de lui consacrer encore quelques commentaires, bien que nous ayons traité ce sujet à plus d'une reprise.

La campagne électorale n'a pas en jusqu'ici l'ampleur et l'ardeur accoutumées, lorsqu'un important principe démocratique est en jeu. Du côté des francs-maçons, on a donné une diffusion plus grande à l'organe spécial des loges, l'*Alpina*, de manière à le faire pénétrer dans des cercles jusqu'ici situés hors de son rayon de propagande. Le "Canard libre," petit journal humoristique, combat l'initiative et s'attache à en ridiculiser les protagonistes. Comme le parti radical s'est

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