

Opening of The Swiss Mercantile Society College

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COMMUNICATION FROM THE SWISS MINISTER.

We have received the following communiqué from Monsieur P. Ruegger, the Swiss Minister :

“ Le Conseil Fédéral s'est occupé à nouveau de la lutte contre la famine menaçant des millions d'individus. Tenant compte du sentiment général de notre population, il a estimé que l'assistance suisse à l'enfance sous-alimentée devait être intensifiée et a libéré à cet effet 10600 tonnes de produits alimentaires représentant une valeur nutritive de 33 milliards de calories. Sur ces produits ainsi libérés, le Conseil Fédéral a prélevé et a donné au Don Suisse une quantité de vivres suffisante pour soustraire pendant six semaines un million d'enfants aux effets de la sous-alimentation. Le chiffre d'un million correspond au nombre d'enfants de la population suisse. Le reste des produits libérés pourra être acquis contre paiement par le Don Suisse, la Croix-Rouge suisse et par d'autres œuvres suisses pour être distribué à l'étranger, là où règne la détresse. Les titres de rationnement ne sont pas demandés pour ces produits. Le Conseil Fédéral ne doute pas que les collectes envisagées, comme par exemple de vivres du genre des colis standard et de coupons de repas, permettront d'élever le nombre des enfants secourus. Les produits libérés par le Conseil Fédéral ne comprennent ni le pain, ni les céréales, vu la contribution que la Suisse a déjà fournie à Londres au cours de la Conférence des Ministres de l'Alimentation et de l'Agriculture. A cette occasion, le Conseil Fédéral a fait une offre ferme d'attendre le premier août, époque de la nouvelle récolte, pour prendre livraison des contingents de céréales panifiables devant normalement revenir à la Confédération.”

PROMOTIONS IN THE SWISS DIPLOMATIC AND CONSULAR SERVICE.

We have great pleasure in informing our readers of some of the recent promotions in the Swiss Diplomatic and Consular Service, concerning the personnel of the Swiss Legation and Consulates in Great Britain.

M. E. de Graffenried promoted to Conseiller de Légation.

M. E. Barbey promoted to Secrétaire de Légation, 1^{ère} classe.

M. V. Umbricht promoted to Secrétaire de Légation, 2^{ème} classe.

M. A. Rappard appointed Attaché.

M. C. Caillat appointed Attaché.

M. R. Mordasini promoted to Vice-Consul, 1^{ère} classe.

M. F. Magnin promoted to Secrétaire, 1^{ère} classe.

Monsieur J. de Rham, who was until recently at the Swiss Legation in London, has been promoted to Counsellor of Legation, and will shortly take up a new post as Consul General in Hamburg.

M. E. A. Pernet, Vice-Consul, has been transferred from the Swiss Consulate in Manchester to the Swiss Consulate in New York.

Mr. J. Huber, formerly Chancellor of the Swiss Legation, Special Division, has been put in charge of the Swiss Consulate in Manchester.

M. Faivre, acting Consul in Liverpool, has been promoted to First Secretary of Chancellery.

We extend our heartiest congratulations to the above mentioned gentlemen.

OPENING OF THE SWISS MERCANTILE SOCIETY COLLEGE.

The Swiss Flag was hoisted over “ Swiss House ” in Fitzroy Square, W.1, on Wednesday, May 1st, 1946, on the occasion of the re-opening of the College of the Swiss Mercantile Society.

This event so ardently looked forward to, for many a long day, is a further mile-stone in the history, so full of recommendable achievements, of this Society.

In the unavoidable absence of Monsieur P. Ruegger, the Swiss Minister, who was detained at Geneva on League of Nations business, Monsieur A. Escher, Chargé d'Affaires, and Monsieur E. de Graffenried, Counsellor of Legation, honoured the College by their presence.

From the Committee and Council, the following members attended the opening ceremony: Messrs. Jenne, Pfaendler, Grob, Streit, Schneider, Krucker, Deutsch, Burren, Chappuis, Meier, Beckmann, Heilingner and Andrea.

The Swiss Press was represented by Messrs. Keller and Stauffer.

Mr. J. Boos, President of the Swiss Mercantile Society, addressed the company, which included about fifty students, as follows:

“ On behalf of the Council and Committee of the S.M.S. I bid you a hearty welcome on this memorable occasion, the re-opening of our Day College.

“ Ever since November 1939, when we had to close our Day College, we, of the Swiss Mercantile Society, have been thinking, scheming and labouring for the day when we could again re-open the School and give our young compatriots, eager to learn and to perfect their English, a chance to come to our College, and above all, to be in London, to mix with the English folk and thus gain experience so much needed, particularly by our young commercial men.

“ Much has happened at ‘ Swiss House ’ since we had to close the School; in the first instance it was used for the registration of the Swiss soldiers being mobilised, then as a centre for repatriation, and lastly as a home for Swiss ‘ bombed out,’ only to be bombed and damaged itself; and for the last five years, ‘ Swiss House ’ has been the centre of Swiss social and patriotic activities.

“ The expense of maintaining ‘ Swiss House ’ during the war, even only the part we now hold, has been heavy and was only possible through the generous help of our donors and friends here and abroad including subsidies from our home country, but the expense was, I feel, fully justified, because it would be impossible to find to-day accommodation as we now have, even at double the rent we now pay, anywhere central and at a reasonable figure.

“ It is not an ideal building but it is the best we can have under the present difficult circumstances.

“ We regret the absence of the Swiss Minister, but I heartily welcome in his place Dr. Escher, Chargé d'Affaires, and Monsieur E. de Graffenried, Counsellor of Legation.

“ To you I offer the Swiss Mercantile Society's grateful thanks for what you have done to assist us during the war and during the last twelve months to enable us to re-open the College. Without your

help and collaboration we could not possibly have succeeded so quickly."

The President then paid a special and hearty welcome to Mr. E. Steiner, Trustee, (Mr. G. E. de Brunner was unfortunately prevented from attending), his colleagues on the Council and Committee, and representatives of the Swiss Press, as well as to the administrative and teaching staff.

Mr. Boos continued by saying:

"Last but not least, a hearty welcome to you, our students. You have been some of the lucky ones to be selected from over three hundred applicants for this our first course. Most of you would have come here before had the war not forced us to close our doors. Let us hope that you are the forerunners of many thousands more to come, and that you will obtain great benefit for your stay here.

"It is to you especially that my address is directed. In our letters and circulars we had advised you that conditions over here are still very much 'austerity and utility,' and that conditions both in the College and in the homes where some of you have been placed are perhaps not as you wish them to be, and certainly not what you have been accustomed to in Switzerland.

"You will, however, bear in mind, that this country has gone through the biggest trial and upheaval that it has ever experienced, and when you walk through some of the London City and suburban streets and see the war damage, the austerity in the shops and homes, and bear in mind that nearly 90% of the whole nation's efforts as recently as twelve months ago were entirely devoted to war, you will and must understand the present conditions.

"We had hoped to have at least some of the repairs done at 'Swiss House' before your arrival, but unfortunately the necessary licence has not yet been received. With the damage all around us, you can, no doubt, imagine what 'Swiss House' looked like during the 'Blitz,' it is a miracle that we stand and that we have been able to present 'Swiss House' to you to-day as it is.

"Equally are we handicapped with the teaching staff. It is not as yet as complete as we had hoped, but we feel sure, that the teachers we have

engaged will do their best in your interest and I rely on your full co-operation.

"In your homes or boarding houses, too, you may lack many amenities that you have had at home, but here, too, you will understand and will show consideration with your hosts.

"On the streets, 'buses and in the tubes I would ask you to behave as Gentlemen, to abstain from talking in 'Schwyzerduetsch' or French. Behave and act as much as Englishmen and you will greatly benefit by it.

"You are, we may say, 'Ambassadors of Goodwill' from Switzerland, by your bearing and good behaviour you will bring credit not only to yourselves but also to our country. You will cement friendship between Switzerland and Great Britain if you adapt yourselves, and show sympathy and understanding with the British people.

"In conclusion it is right and proper, that I should express thanks to the British authorities, who have given permission to us for re-starting our College, to facilitate your entry into this country, and above all, to the Swiss authorities, the B.I.G.A. and the S.K.V. who have recognised and will support our Day College as a Swiss official 'Berufsschule.'"

The address of the President, which contained such wise and "fatherly" advice to our young compatriots, was loudly cheered.

Mr. Boos then called on Monsieur Escher, Chargé d'Affaires, to declare the college as re-opened.

The latter, who assumed the Chair, received a warm ovation from the entire gathering; in a few words, he thanked the President and all his colleagues on the Council and Committee, who had worked so hard and conscientiously for this great day, for their labours.

He expressed the hope, that both teachers and students would feel happy in their new surroundings, and that by hard and diligent work they would repay, in no small way, those who had so generously given their time and energy for their benefit.

Amongst vociferous applause, Monsieur Escher declared the College of the Swiss Mercantile Society as re-opened.

The President, in re-assuming the Chair, expressed on behalf of the members, his pleasure concerning the recent promotion of Monsieur de Graffenried to the rank of Counsellor of Legation. "In Monsieur de Graffenried," he said, "the Swiss Mercantile Society possesses a good and trusted friend, and we rejoice with him on his new appointment, and wish him the best of luck in his future diplomatic career." (Loud applause.)

Monsieur de Graffenried shortly replied and thanked the President and members of the Society for their wishes, which, he said, were greatly appreciated.

Mr. H. Marfut, on behalf of the teaching and administrative staff, then addressed the company; he said:

"The President of the Swiss Mercantile Society and the representative of the Swiss Minister have just opened the first post-war course of the Swiss Mercantile Society College. Now, it rests not only with us, the administrative and teaching staff, but also with the students, to make steady progress. We know that the question now is to revive the excel-

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lent reputation that the College enjoyed. We realise that this day is not only a start, but also the resumption of an approved tradition. The fact that this new life must rise almost from ruins will not be a hindrance to us, on the contrary, the vandalism, which has left its horrible traces in our immediate surroundings, encourages us rather to work more conscientiously and resolutely than ever. We, the teachers and the students, are pleased to be the pioneers in this work. We thank the Swiss Mercantile Society, especially its active President, Mr. Boos, but also the Council and the Education Committee, for having offered us this opportunity. We all fully appreciate the work they have done in order to make the re-opening of the College possible. I personally was very glad to collaborate in the final preparations.

"The students, who have come over here from Switzerland, have been waiting for years to see the frontiers open again. Imbued with a desire to travel, like so many Swiss, they were looking forward to get to know foreign countries, in fact the world. They are happy to find, here in London, Swiss who are somehow the successors of those Swiss officers and soldiers who, during past centuries, were famous on the European battle fields. Similar to those men, you, gentlemen of the S.M.S., are the link between foreign countries and Switzerland; you help to prevent Switzerland from drifting into a fatal isolation and a state of self-complacency. Whenever we go through the history of Switzerland, we are always reminded how important the part of those Swiss was. To a large extent our country owes its particular evolution to those men who then and now spread the Swiss colours abroad.

"Our students will be encouraged by your example, gentlemen, especially by the example of those of you who passed through the College we have re-opened now."

Mr. Marfurt's speech was much applauded.

It is said that a Swiss function without some "lubrication" is not complete, and so as not to disappoint those who attended this celebration, a varied selection of cocktails was offered; how this was managed I have not the slightest idea, considering the

"austerity" in such matters; I hardly dare to think that our friends "stooped" so low as to support the black market; in any case, whenever my dwindling wine cellar needs "re-furnishing," I shall know where to go.

But this was not all, plates and plates of sandwiches, sausage rolls, cakes and pastries appeared, an invitation to those who were after a "cheap" lunch, and to crown it all, a huge cake wonderfully decorated with the inscription "Good Luck" was conspicuously displayed. I understand that this was presented by an old member of the Swiss Mercantile Society, Mr. W. Bachmann, of the Westend Fancy Bakery Co., Ltd., Dawes Road, S.W.6, in remembrance of the time when he was a student at the S.K.V. in Basle. A very generous gesture which was greatly appreciated by all.

The cake was ceremoniously cut by Monsieur Escher, who, as Peace is now supposed to reign once more, used an ordinary knife instead of the usually used sword.

A special tribute should be paid to the following ladies: Mrs. Boos, Mrs. Jenne, Mrs. Meier and Mrs. Pfaendler, who so kindly saw that everyone was well supplied, or shall I call it "lubricated"; the Press was especially well looked after, and if by any chance I have forgotten to mention somebody or something in my report, the blame must be allocated to their too hospitable attention.

In conclusion I would like to associate myself with all those who paid a well deserved tribute to the few, who have worked so hard and unselfishly, so that the College could come again into being.

I have been in close touch with the Swiss Mercantile Society for over thirty years, and it has been my privilege to watch their expansion from close quarters. It has been uphill work all the way, but the results achieved during the many years amply recompense those who have worked, not only in the interest of the Society, but in a much wider sphere, in the interest of our young countrymen. The future is theirs, and I feel sure they will justify the trust which has been put in them.

May the College of the Swiss Mercantile prosper and add new lustre to the Society.

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