

Swiss Mercantile Society

Objektyp: **Group**

Zeitschrift: **The Swiss observer : the journal of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK**

Band (Jahr): - **(1968)**

Heft 1540

PDF erstellt am: **24.09.2024**

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NEWS FROM THE COLONY

SWISS MERCANTILE SOCIETY

Annual Banquet and Ball

It is customary that praise is heaped on an organisation by its guest speakers at the annual dinner. If its invitees had a grudge against it, they would hardly agree to make an official speech. When a man of Dr. H. W. Egli's integrity says that the Swiss Mercantile does more for Switzerland than any other society in London and by a long chalk, this is indeed not only great praise, but a statement which must warm the heart of the President Mr. A. Jaccard, of his Council and Committees and of the hard-working secretarial staff headed by one of the Society's Honorary Members, Mr. W. Burren. And when Dr. Egli as President of both the Federation of Swiss Societies in the United Kingdom and the London Group of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique states that the standards aimed at by the Society's College were second to none and that they passed the critical scrutiny of Swiss Youth, both the Principal and Vice-Principal must be pleased.

Dr. Egli made these statements when he replied for the guests at the Annual Dinner and Dance at the Dorchester Hotel on Saturday, 27th January. He reminisced, too, going back over the forty years or so that he has been connected with the Swiss community in London. He described the first dinner he attended in a smog-blackened, funeral room at the St. Pancras Hotel in the 'twenties, and he compared the war-time functions and their austerity with the elegance of the Dorchester Wedgwood-blue Orchid Suite which was the venue that evening. Whilst things had altered, the faces around him had not, and they still showed devotion to an important cause, devotion shared by members and their wives. Not only as an "unwilling doyen of the Colony", but also as a commentator on events by profession, he realised that whilst the cultural activities of his own Society was of value, the work done by the Swiss Mercantile Society was much more important, for it helped the prosperity of the beloved homeland by enabling legions of young people to work for Switzerland's economic progress.

Dr. Egli considered it a sad and personal defeat that so far no cultural centre has materialised at the Swiss Centre in London. The Forum of Switzerland with a separate meeting room for about 100 people was still a possibility, but that so far it had not yet been possible to make adequate financial arrangements. Those who have worked for the realisation of the cultural and social centre, still have confidence in him and his collaborators, and they will never agree that failure could be chalked up as a personal defeat. In fact, the President expressed this very aptly when he said "*We should like Dr. Egli to know that our confidence in him and his Committee has never wavered, and we wish them all the best in their task*".

The Guest of Honour of the evening, the Swiss Consul Monsieur Enrico Tosio, officially represented the Swiss Ambassador who, with Madame Long, regretted greatly that consultations with the Federal Council in Berne and GATT, whose Director-General he had recently become, prevented them from attending the banquet. Monsieur Tosio brought greetings and said that the Ambassador

would have liked to state himself how deeply he had been impressed by his visit to the Swiss Mercantile College in November.

"Everybody knows the important part the S.K.V. or S.M.S. plays in public life in Switzerland. But not all Swiss at home are aware of the important institutions the S.M.S. maintains abroad, at great expense, for the benefit of the young Swiss starting out on a commercial career. The Swiss Mercantile College in London has a reputation second to none, not only in this country and in Switzerland, but in the most far-flung Swiss communities around the globe. The successful student of the S.M.S. College in London appears to roam the world with a "halo" round his head. Should he be looking for employment, he only has to show his diploma from the S.M.C., London, to be received with open arms. Now, such high recognition is certainly not due to the individual himself, but primarily to the establishment that helped to give him the necessary training.

"And it is today that we pay tribute to this establishment, to the Education Committee of the Swiss Mercantile College and to its Trustees, to Mr. Slade, Principal, to Mr. Makin, Vice-President, to the excellent teaching staff of the College, for their untiring and devoted services to the young Swiss who came to Britain, not only to improve their rudimentary knowledge of the English language, but, perhaps more important still, to acquire an insight into those sterling qualities which make this country one of the foremost champions of civic liberties and the rule of law."

In the first part of his speech, Monsieur Tosio said that for the past five years, he and his wife had had the pleasure of sitting comfortably "below the salt" at the annual dinners of the S.M.S. And they had enjoyed the "*gay atmosphere which has always surrounded the excellent address from the President's chair. We have admired Monsieur Jaccard's ability, eloquence and warmth in welcoming, complimenting and praising his guests and the numerous society members in such an imposing way as to make each of us feel more important than his neighbour. Again this evening, Monsieur Jaccard has made it abundantly clear that we are all very welcome, very nice to know, and that we all have considerable merits in our various fields of activity.*"

As one who has attended every annual "do" right back to 1935 and has sat "above and below the salt" and on several occasions supported a President as his wife, I fully support these words. The welcome Mr. Jaccard knows just how to convey warms one's heart, and the 1968 welcoming speech was no exception. It would be so easy just to mention the Guest of Honour and elegantly lump the rest together — some other Presidents do this — but not Mr. Jaccard. He singled them all out individually, after thanking Monsieur and Madame Tosio for their ready help and advice, Vice-Consul and Madame Ch. Abegglen, Dr. and Mrs. H. W. Egli, the Vice-President of "The Times" Football Club and Mrs. Charles Westcott whose hospitality at Ravensbourne was greatly appre-

ciated, the Editor of the "Swiss Observer", Monsieur le Pasteur and Madame Nicod, Father P. Bossard, three Honorary Members (the Secretary and two former Presidents Messrs. R. Chappuis and O. Grob, K.S.G., and their wives), the latest veteran of 50 years' membership Mr. F. Streit, and a recent octogenarian Mr. H. H. Baumann, the above-mentioned heads of the teaching and secretarial staffs and their wives, even the two young assistants at the Secretariat Miss Vogel and Miss Frauenfelder, and finally, a group of college students and his colleagues on Council and Committees. The President not only regretted the absence of the Ambassador and Madame Long, but also of the Rev. U. Stefan (prevented by influenza), Mr. J. J. Boos, K.S.G. (who had sent greetings) and Mr. L. W. Krucker, Trustee and Honorary Member. The latter had been expected but been unable to attend at the last minute. It had not prevented him, however, from generously donating some lovely leathersgoods which were offered in a free raffle, and which delighted the winners. Having expressed a few nice sentiments regarding the individual guests, Mr. Jaccard still had eloquent words about the ladies: *"It has been said by a wag, no doubt, that but for their women-folk, men would not amount to much. They bully us most of the time and often use means to attain their ends, which may transcend the masculine code, but we must accept that whatever they attempt, is done mostly for our own good, and many of us have to recognise, grudgingly perhaps, that what we are, we owe in a generous measure to our 'better halves'".*

The high quality of the speeches set the right social temperature for the second part of the evening, which was given over to dancing. There cannot have been many, if any at all, who were not sorry when the last waltz was over and the two National Anthems brought the event to a close, however not before the promise of continued friendship and attachment of the S.M.S. was confirmed in "Auld Lang Syne" and the affection and respect for the President and his devoted wife expressed in "For they are jolly good fellows".

MM

WELFARE WORK AT THE PORTS

London Group of the N.S.H.

On Thursday, 22nd February, Mrs. M. H. Ellis, M.B.E., will give a talk to the London Group of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique. Mrs. Ellis is the President of the Welfare Office for Swiss Girls and has great experience with young Swiss girls who come to this country often ill prepared. Her particular interest has been concerned with welfare work at the ports, and it is on this subject that she will address the N.S.H.

The talk will be of great interest to a large number of people, and all Swiss and their friends are welcome to this Open Meeting at the Swiss Hostel for Girls at 9/11 Belsize Grove, Hampstead, N.W.3 (7.45 p.m.).

NEUCHATELOIS

Comme les années précédentes, le dîner pour célébrer la République Neuchâteloise aura lieu le 1er mars, au Montana Hotel, 67 Gloucester Road, S.W.7, à 18h30 pour 19h. Les Neuchâtelois qui désirent participer à ce dîner, sont priés de s'adresser à Mr. R. VERMOT, Swiss Bank Corporation, 99 Gresham Street, London E.C.2 (tel. 606 4000).

NOUVELLE SOCIÉTÉ HELVÉTIQUE

Annual Film Show

The latest Open Meeting of the Society took place at the Swiss Hostel for Girls on 18th January, when selections from Swiss newsreels of 1967 were shown by courtesy of the Secretariat of the Swiss Abroad in Berne. After the 45-minute newsreels, two new films were presented by courtesy of the Swiss National Tourist Office: "Valais — Hot Summers and Fast Pistes", a 20-minute film in superb colour on climbing and summer ski-ing, and the amusing colour film "Do you like Snow?" (12 minutes), shot at St. Moritz and showing the many aspects of life and entertainment in a Swiss winter sports resort. The high attendance by members and friends of the N.S.H. proves that this Annual Film Show enjoys an ever-increasing popularity.

J.S.

BIRTHDAYS AND ANNIVERSARIES

We send best wishes to Mr. A. Bleiker, now living in Spain, who will be 71 on 11th February, and to Mr. and Mrs. G. Friberg who will be celebrating their 51st wedding anniversary on 13th February. Many happy returns to them and any other readers who have birthdays within the next fortnight.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

We wish to thank the following subscribers for adding donations to their subscriptions and/or for taking out or renewing gift subscriptions for friends or old-age pensioners:

Mrs. B. A. Bujard, Mrs. R. D. Diviani, Mrs. G. Jenne (Andeer/GR), Mrs. E. M. Lewis, Mrs. L. Meyer, Mrs. I. Milli, Miss E. D. L. Ruettimann, Mrs. E. H. Stroud, and Messrs. H. Andrea, W. F. Baer, E. Baumann, A. Bleiker (Fuengirola/Spain), J. B. Brutsch, C. Fer, W. Forster (St. Gall), F. Gut (Affoltern a/Albis), G. Keller, E. Krapf, L. W. Krucker, M. Paschoud, W. Pellet, P. Savoie, H. W. Schneider, M. Stump (Barcelona), E. A. Tobler, W. A. de Vigier, E. Weber.

We are most grateful for their kind and generous support.

"SWISS OBSERVER" PUBLICATION DATES

The "Swiss Observer" is published every second and fourth Friday of the month. Our next issue will appear on 23rd February. Articles and reports should be to hand not later than Tuesday, 13th February. Short news items only can be accepted after that date.

Our next issue but one will be published on Friday, 8th March. Contributions should reach us by Tuesday, 27th February.

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