

# Regional news : UK

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## Britain Wins 3rd OSA Delegate

The United Kingdom has been granted an extra delegate on the Council of the Swiss Abroad (OSA). At present the Swiss community in the UK is represented on the OSA Council by Bernard Simon (for the north of Britain) and Giuseppe Brogginini (for the south of Britain) – one representative for each of the two consular districts in Britain. But under the new proposals Britain will gain a third delegate – a direct result of the growing size of the Swiss community in Britain. The Federation of Swiss Societies in the United Kingdom (FOSSUK) has yet to decide whether, as in the past, delegates will retain responsibility for a geographical area. But FOS-SUK will shortly be circulating all societies with further information about the proposals. In addition, FOS-SUK will be seeking nominations for delegates and deputies. Meanwhile, below, we carry a report on the deliberations of the OSA's annual congress which this year was held in St Gallen.

Over four hundred people, including nineteen from the United Kingdom, attended the official opening of the 70th congress of the Organisation of Swiss Abroad (OSA) in St Gallen's Hochschule. Professor Hofer, the outgoing president of the OSA, opened the congress by introducing his successor, Jean-Jacques Cevey. He stressed the importance of the theme chosen for the congress (*Die Schweiz und die Auslandschweizer vor der europaischen Herausforderung*), in view of the important decisions to be made by the Swiss on their relations with the rest of



The British in St Gallen: above, Mariann Meier (New Helvetic Society), Margrit Lyster (Swiss Welfare Office), Rosemarie Breitenstein (New Helvetic Society) and Nelly Scott Niederberger (Swiss Club Tyne and Wear); below, en route for Appenzell, led by Albert Mehr (second from left, back).



Europe in referenda held in September and December. Professor Hofer urged all Swiss abroad to inform themselves well on these matters and to take part in the postal voting now available to all Swiss abroad.

Other speakers at the congress included Professor Riklin of St Gallen, who lectured on Switzerland and Europe throughout the ages, pointing out that even in the 8th century the St Gallen monk Notker had attempted to exchange ideas with the rest of Europe. Professor Riklin suggested that Switzerland had much to offer Europe – but that the Swiss are a nation who like to rise early but wake up late. He strongly supported Swiss membership of the European Economic Area

(EEA) and warned against the dangers of Switzerland going it alone in isolation, assuring the congress that joining the EEA meant neither joining the European Community nor abandoning neutrality. He was convinced that *faire l'Europe, c'est faire le paix*.

Dr Bruno Spinner (EDA, Bern) stressed that joining the EEA would not necessarily have an adverse affect on Swiss agriculture and that customs controls between Switzerland and other countries would not be lifted. Swiss students, however, would benefit from the free movement of people and not be discriminated against by other European states. Three young members of the Swiss abroad also stressed the benefits which would arise from

The editor, the chairman of the editorial committee of the Regional News-UK and all committee members wish readers  
**A MERRY CHRISTMAS**  
and  
**A HAPPY NEW YEAR**

joining the EEA.

In a plenary session a panel discussed the merits of free movement, the implications for social security payments and other matters, with questions being put on such diverse topics as the status of Swiss Air should Switzerland join the EEA and how the EEA would affect the control of terrorism. Dr Rudolf Wyder (OSA, Bern) made a passionate plea to congress that the voluntary AHV should not be phased out. A majority of those assembled accepted a resolution prepared by the OSA's secretariat to keep the voluntary AHV. The Organisation of Swiss Abroad also supported Swiss membership of the EEA.

Meanwhile, outside the congress hall, Radio DRS's *Echo der Zeit* was also seeking the views of the Swiss abroad about the EEA and Nelly Scott-Niederberger (Swiss Club Tyne and Wear) was one of four Swiss abroad from different countries who was interviewed for the programme.

The official dinner, followed by entertainment, provided ample opportunity for the Swiss abroad to renew old friendships and to participate in the singing and dancing. A visit was also organised to Appenzell and Stein, and members from Britain were fortunate to receive a running commentary from Albert Mehr, a genuine Appenzeller and former consul in London, who had travelled to St Gallen from his present posting in Bangladesh.

Next year's congress will take place in Montreaux and it is hoped that many more Swiss from the United Kingdom will join us then. [UD]

## Swiss Clubs & Societies

### Aberdeen

Tel 0224 318316  
Mrs M Grieve

### Anglo-Swiss Society

Tel 0227 721 855  
Mrs F Cobb

### August 1st Cttee

Tel: 0622 39361  
Chris Dyke

### Bournemouth

William Tell Group  
Tel 0202 731720  
Mrs Trudy Bryant

### Bristol

Tel 0454 775042  
Mrs Trudy Soper

### Bucks/Herts

Tel 0494 763030  
S Singh

### Cercle Genevois

Tel 0923 221704  
Mrs Suzy Alla

### City (London)

Tel 071 975 6000  
Dr R Duttweiler

### Commission of the Swiss Abroad

– North of Britain  
Tel 061 926 8153  
Berni Simon

– South of Britain  
Tel 081 741 4224  
Giuseppe Broggin

### Consistoire

Tel 081 346 8094  
Mrs E Crack

### Dunfermline

Tel: 0383 723540  
Dr Usula Ditchburn

### Edinburgh

Tel 031 331 3366  
Mrs Trudy Bott

### FOSSUK

Tel 071 727 4113  
Mr Jeffrey Long

### Frauenverein

Tel 081 422 3545  
Mrs B Laskowski

### Guernsey

Tel 0481 48188  
Mrs Ferbranche-Ammann

### La Causerie

Tel 081 673 4955  
Annette Yucottier

### Liverpool

Tel 051 427 1816  
Mrs M Moor

### Manchester

Tel 053 833291  
Derek Meakin

### Midlands

Tel 021 631 4050  
Erich Westacott

### New Helvetic Society

Tel 071 727 4113  
Rosemarie Breitenstein

### Northern Ireland

Tel 0232 648239  
Hans Egli

### Southern (Farnborough)

Tel 0252 615149  
Marcel Gret

### South West (Taunton)

Tel 0823 74237  
Katra Haskell

### Surrey

Tel 081 647 9630  
Heidi Miller

### Torbay

Tel 0803 842355  
Max Singer

### Tyne and Wear

Tel 091 536 1047  
Nelly Scott-Niederberger

### West of Scotland

Tel 041 956 5127  
Mrs M-T Cramer

### Yorkshire

Tel 0274 569121  
Janina Clough

### Union Ticinese

Tel 081 741 4224  
Giuseppe Broggin

### Swiss Benevolent Fund Scotland

Tel 041 644 1645  
Mrs Trudy Drysdale

### Swiss Benevolent Society

Tel 071 387 2173

### Swiss Church

Tel 081 340 9740  
Rev. P von Orelli

– Mothers' Group

Tel 081 340 9740  
Johanna von Orelli

### Swiss Economic Council

is now defunct

### Swiss Mercantile Society

Tel 071 636 2892  
Mr R Kaenzig

### Swiss National Tourist Office

Tel 071 734 1921

### Swiss Relief Society

– Manchester  
Tel 0260 272407  
Mr P Senn

### Swiss Rifle Association

Tel 081 850 4117  
Urs Schaerer

For Information,  
Advice or Help  
contact the  
**SWISS WELFARE  
OFFICE**

for young people,  
**31 Conway Street,  
London W1P 5HL**

**Telephone:  
071-387 3608**

*Underground Stations:  
Great Portland Street,  
Warren Street*

**JOHN F. KENNEDY  
INTERNATIONAL  
SCHOOL**

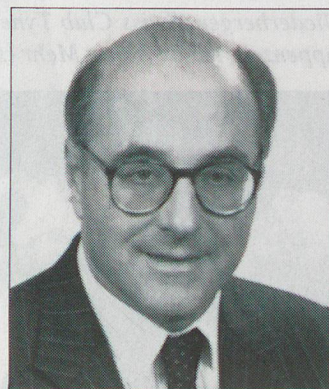
3792 Saanen — Gstaad,  
Switzerland

**EMPLOYMENT  
OPPORTUNITIES**

Small, international, English-language boarding school would like to hear from Swiss nationals or persons with working permission for Switzerland, interested in full-time employment from September 1993. Qualified elementary school teachers for English-speaking children 6 to 14, or persons interested in serving as Housemother or household Assistant or cook should write to:

**William Lovell, Director  
or telephone:  
(030) 4.13.72**

## A Christmas and New Year Message from the Swiss Ambassador



*Ambassador Muhelm*

It is a pleasure for my wife and for me to take this opportunity to send our best wishes to the Swiss community in Britain. We hope that each and every one of you and your families will have a happy Christmas and a prosperous New Year.

Our world is going through difficult times. The collapse of communism and the end of the cold war did open up exciting new opportunities for international cooperation. But regrettably, at the same time, a number of bloody conflicts arose. Again we are having to witness in Europe cruel behaviour and huge floods of refugees, which require urgent and massive humanitarian action. Switzerland is bearing a fair share of the burden, but still more can be done, notably in the field of peace-keeping.

The Swiss people, as you

know, are called upon to take important decisions regarding our future position in western Europe's integration process. Whatever the outcome of the referendum of 6 December on the EEA treaty, the consequences of our choice will be far-reaching and much determination, initiative and innovation, even courage, will be required of us.

As an important community of Swiss abroad, you in Britain can do a lot to help our country solve its problems and determine the future course of its policies. Do not hesitate to take advantage of the opportunities given to you and, in particular, to use the right to vote by post which you now have.

All good wishes again,

Franz E. Muheim

## Regional News-UK

The editor welcomes reader's views, comments and reports. Letters and articles for the March issue should be forwarded to Dr David Ditchburn, Department of History, University of Aberdeen, King's College, Old Aberdeen AB9 2UB (Tel. 0224 272999; Fax 0224 4870-48) by 31 January 1993.

## Around and About

### New Helvetic Society

*Saints and Sinners* was the intriguing title of an address given by John Sankey at the Swiss embassy in London on 23 September. Mr Sankey was a member of the British diplomatic service for thirty years, serving in many parts of the world. From 1985 to 1990 he was the permanent UK representative to the United Nations and other international organisations in Geneva. Since his retirement, Mr Sankey has been secretary general of the Society of London Art Dealers. The subtitle of his talk to the NHS was *Some Interesting and Unusual British Visitors to Switzerland from John Knox to Oscar Wilde*. The talk was richly illustrated with slides and the speaker was able to give a fascinating account of important visitors to Switzerland and Geneva in particular. These included royal and aristocratic personages, authors and clerics, artists and warriors, some of whom are remembered by street names in Geneva.

In October members of the society were entertained by a showing of Xavier Koller's film *Journey of Hope (Reise der Hoffnung)*. The film, based on a real-life incident, concerns a Turkish couple who decide to escape their hand-to-mouth existence by emigrating to Switzerland. Xavier Koller is one of Switzerland's most remarkable and internationally renowned film directors and *Journey of Hope* won an Oscar in 1991 for the best foreign film.

■ Mariann Meier



The cathedral of St Pierre in Geneva – a city which has been home to many British exiles.

### Tyne and Wear

Attempts by the Swiss Club Tyne and Wear to change its name to Swiss Club North of England have been vetoed by the Federation of Swiss Societies in the United Kingdom (Fossuk), on the grounds that the new name was prejudicial to the interests of the Manchester and Yorkshire Swiss Clubs. Nevertheless, the vibrant Tyne and Wear club continues to organise a varied social programme and to attract new members, many signing up as a result of reports on club events carried in local newspapers. Club president, Nelly

Scott-Niederberger, is convinced that publicity in local newspapers is a technique which other clubs should also try. 'I cannot stress it loud enough,' she commented. 'Please advertise in your local newspapers as there are lots of Swiss and non-Swiss out there who probably don't know that there is a local Swiss club.' In September members of the Tyne and Wear club spent a weekend at the Heatherlea Hotel in the walking country of Allendale, and a Christmas dinner was held in December at the Three Tuns Hotel in Durham.

### Unione Ticinese

In September the Unione Ticinese organised a Sunday trip to Rockingham Castle, situated two miles north of Corby in Northamptonshire. Heavy rain dictated that picnics had to be consumed in cars, but later, when the sun came out, members were able to admire the splendid views

of different counties, as well as the beautiful gardens and the castle itself, which was originally built by William the Conqueror. In November a memorial mass was held in Italian at St Mary's Church, East Finchley, for deceased members of the society.

■ Valeria Ossola

### How It All Started...

*What are the origins of your Swiss society? Below, Vreni Rudkin, of the Southern Area Swiss Club (Farnborough, Hampshire), describes the chance encounters which led to the formation of her Swiss club in 1978.*

*It all started on the coach to London, many years ago, Elsa was travelling from Camberley in Surrey to London and observed a young woman knitting 'in the funny Swiss way' across the aisle from her. She plucked up courage and asked her why she knitted in this foreign way. Anne, of course, was Swiss and so was Elsa, and a friendship was struck up.*

*A few years later Elsa attended pottery classes at the local Further Education Centre. The evening secretary in the Community Centre was told by the pottery teacher that there was a very similar 'strange accent' lurking in her pottery class – and should this not be investigated? Vreni went to the pottery room and met Elsa. Vreni, the secretary, Elsa, the potter, and Anne, the knitter, met for coffee and a chat and shortly afterwards founded the Southern Area Swiss Club. That was on 10 November 1978. Elsa, Anne and Vreni are still there, knitting, writing and creating and, of course, making friends, chatting and drinking coffee. They have met once a month ever since and the club has grown into a very friendly, supportive group.*

## Switzerlands of the World

### Erection of Stone Sculpture at Federal Parliament

There are roughly one hundred and sixty districts, regions, areas of scenic beauty, mountain ranges and valleys throughout the world which bear the name 'Switzerland'. This designation is usually attributed to the similarity with the Swiss landscape and can sometimes be traced back to early Swiss emigrants.

For this reason the Swiss National Tourist Office (SNTO) approached the city of Bern with the suggestion of making these numerous 'Switzerlands' visible to a wider section of the public and to tourists. A competition for a sculpture made of stone was announced in collaboration with the federal city of Bern and a private sponsor and a location was allocated for the project between the western part of the houses of

parliament and the *Bernerhof* square, directly in front of the *Marzilibahn* railway. A jury finally decided on the proposal submitted by Bern artist George Steinmann, entitled *Das Gleichgewicht der Dinge* ('The Balance of Things').

Five groups of rocks, each comprising between five and twenty stones, emerge from a rectangular expanse of white gravel. Each group represents one of the five continents. At first glance their positions seem to be purely coincidental. The impression of harmony which emanates from both the gravel and the stones can, however, be interpreted as follows. The mass of rectangular area, as well as the distance of the stones both to each other and the outer edge, are governed by the rules of the golden section. In addition the one hundred and sixty existing

'Switzerlands' are shown geographically on a plaque.

Constraints on time, geographical difficulties and financial limitations made it impossible to collect stones from all one hundred and sixty spots world-wide that lay claim to a links with Switzerland and so the sculpture has been limited to stones representing just fifty of these places.

The British contribution is from Hardcastle Crag, Hebden Bridge, in West Yorkshire, a rocky outcrop in the steep valley beside Hebden Water. Once known locally as 'Little Switzerland', this wooded valley has a distinctive Alpine atmosphere with deep rocky ravines, tumbling streams, open moor and shady woods.

For more than forty years there have been long-standing ties between Hardcastle Crag and the Swiss community in the United Kingdom, who chose the spot for the revival of the old *Landsgemeinde* tradition.

The presentation of the Yorkshire stone was made by the National Trust to the people of Switzerland on 6 June, in the presence of representatives of the National Trust and local communities. The official unveiling of the sculpture in Bern took place on 22 September and can now be seen by visitors to Switzerland's federal capital.

■ Heidi Reisz

## Letters

### Swiss Artists Abroad

Sir,

I would be most interested to hear from any of your readers who are painters, sculptors, potters, jewellers or designers in order to compile a comprehensive catalogue of professional Swiss artists living in the United Kingdom.

Initially I would simply ask anyone who is interested to send me their name and address, together with a CV and short description of their work. Later on it is hoped to extend the catalogue of Swiss artists working abroad to other countries and ultimately to stage an exhibition of works by Swiss artists abroad within Switzerland.

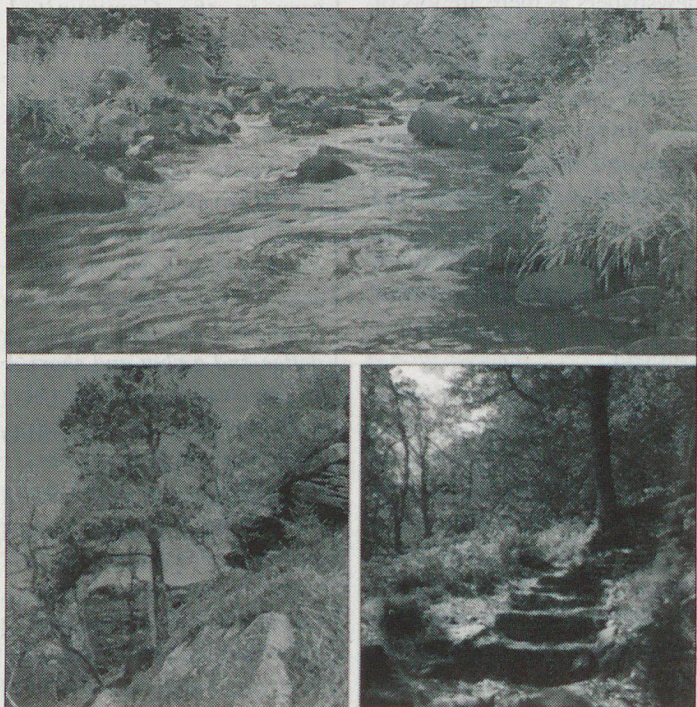
Dr Ursula Ditchburn,  
The Little Gallery,  
20 High Street,  
Pittenweem, Fife.

### John Stahelin

Sir,

It may be of interest to some of your readers to learn of the death of my brother, John Arnold Stahelin. Editorial notices of the deaths of our father, Arnold Stahelin, and our mother, Kate, were published in the *Swiss Observer* in 1966 and 1974. Neither my brother nor myself have been active in Swiss affairs, but my brother was a regular visitor to Switzerland, maintaining a close family relationship which started in Zurich when our father was a young man.

There may be a few who will recall the family. My reason for drawing attention to my brother's death is that his life and achievements, although not recognized in any formal way, may serve as an encouragement to other second generation Swiss. He worked with ICI and was



Hebden Bridge in Yorkshire – a small part of which has been transported to Bern.

## Letters *continued*

closely involved with church of England affairs in the diocese of Durham and with the affairs of St John's College, Durham University. His work across wide field was acknowledged in a memorial service held at Durham Cathedral. My brother is survived by his wife, Elizabeth.

Yours faithfully,  
C A Stahelin,  
59 Storthes Hall Lane,  
Kirkburton,  
Huddersfield HD8 0PT.

## Wraight's Reply

Sir,  
It was kind of Till Geiger to review my history of the City Swiss Club in the March issue of the *Regional News-UK*. I am glad that he recognized the difficulties of writing a book of this kind, where there are few records to go on and I readily admit that the work has deficiencies.

Mr Geiger complains, however, that there are few biographical sketches of the first members of the club and that little emerges about the background and living conditions of the Swiss community in London. I can assure him that it was not for the want of spending very many hours in libraries searching for the smallest scraps of information on those subjects. As the book shows, I did in fact identify every early member of the club whose name we know, except two. Biographical sketches, however short they had to be for lack of further information, take up some twenty-five pages of the text.

I am sorry that my brief analysis of, or references to Anglo-Swiss relations, on thirty-three different pages, 'rarely amount to more than clichés'. I suppose that I must put this down to my diplomatic training. My years as

British ambassador to the Swiss confederation, and then writing *The Swiss and the British*, were obviously not enough to give me the insight into those relations that Mr Geiger has.

Mr Geiger finds 'surprising' my 'disinclination to study the political affiliations of the club's members'. In fact, my experience has been that few Swiss, in Britain at least, like to make known their political affiliations. The reports in *The Times* and the *Swiss Observer* certainly did not give this information. However, I should have thought that anyone reading my book would have deduced from a number of references in the text, and from the fact that most of the members were bankers and businessmen and City people, that they were largely conservative in their views.

Mr Geiger believes it 'sad' that I did not place my study within the wider context of the social environment of Victorian London. Perhaps he has missed the descriptions I gave, *inter alia*, on pages 5 and 6, 18, and 145 and 146? As a matter of fact, I did originally include more on this subject but later decided to delete it since it seemed so well known.

Your reviewer says that I was 'obsessed' with giving endless descriptions of banquets. The banquets do play a prominent role in the history. This is because, first, they were the only events to be reported in *The Times* (almost my only sources for the first fifty years) and they were usually the main events reported about the club in the *Swiss Observer* during the latter part of its history. Second, the banquets were from the outset the central event in the club's life (confirming Addison's dictum

that 'all celebrated clubs were founded upon eating and drinking'). Third, I found some preliminary 'market research' among members that interest in past banquets and their menus and prices was quite strong.

Mr Geiger found my treatment of inter-war and post-war developments 'deficient in detail'. If this is so it is because I judged that the war years, with their often quite dramatic events, were more interesting to the average reader. But there were references to the developments in which he finds me deficient on many pages.

I must apologise for the other shortcomings which your reviewer says he finds 'persist throughout the volume'. And I am sorry if, in my work, I have failed 'to analyse the underlying developments more rigorously' (although I am not quite sure what that means). Personally, I think it is a pity that Mr Geiger did not give in his review at least a brief summary of the book's contents and of the main interesting events that it depicts in the club's history.

Since Mr Geiger clearly could have written the book so much better than I, perhaps we should have invited him to take on the task? I could then have saved myself two years of work and much often frustratingly unproductive research and have spent the time instead for my own interest and profit.

Yours sincerely,  
Sir John Wraight,  
London.

■ Till Geiger is a lecturer in economic and social history at The Queen's University, Belfast. He stands by his review and does not wish to comment on Sir John's letter. The editor would, however, be pleased to receive other com-

ments from readers on Sir John Wraight's book, *The Swiss in London: A History of the City Swiss Club, 1856-1991* (Bodmin, 1991; ISBN 0 9517706 0 8). The book may be ordered from the City Swiss Club, c/o Monika Swallows, Credit Suisse, 24 Bishopgate, London EC2N 4BQ.

## The Postal Vote for Swiss Abroad

*To be able to vote in referenda and other matters Swiss nationals in Britain must register for a postal vote. Information leaflets and registration forms in French, German and Italian are now available. The information leaflets give full details about the right to vote and the steps to be taken. Completed registration forms must be sent to the consulate of your area:*

*The Swiss Embassy  
16-18 Montagu Place  
London W1H 2BQ*

*(for the southern consular district)*

*The Consulate General of Switzerland  
Sunley Tower  
Piccadilly Plaza  
Manchester M1 4BJ*

*(for the northern consular district)*

## Eating Out? Swiss Centre, London

In the first in what is hoped will be an occasional series of articles on Swiss restaurants and hotels in Britain, we look at the Swiss Centre Restaurants, situated in the heart of London's West End, in Leicester Square.

In November 1967 The Swiss Centre restaurants opened for business. There have been many ups and downs in the following years – the biggest 'down' occurring in February 1991, when the restaurants closed their doors. But, as readers will know from recent advertisements in these pages, the Swiss Centre restaurants are once again open for business and at present very much on an 'up'. The catering management of the restaurants was taken over by Mövenpick a year ago and Mövenpick has turned the basement area of the Swiss Centre into a 'Marché' restaurant.

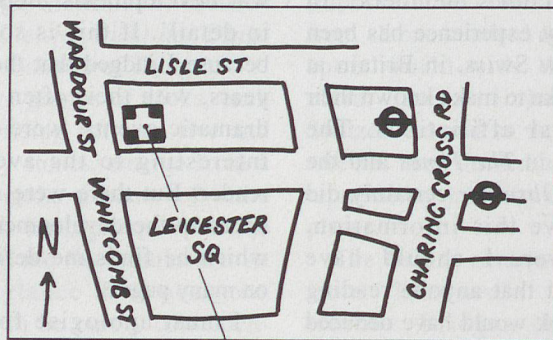
A Marché restaurant, for those who have not yet sampled one – and they are dotted around Switzerland and Germany as well as in London

– is something a little bit different. For a start, there is no kitchen in a Marché restaurant. But there *is* plenty to eat in a Marché restaurant, the difference with other restaurants being that it is all cooked in front of your eyes. The restaurant has no overnight storage

and head for the stall which you want, making your own menu up as you move from stall to stall. You can choose as little as you want – or as much as you are tempted by. There are many Swiss specialities on offer, including Raclette and Fondue. The system is flexible

of different Swiss regions. The restaurant, which stays open until midnight, is a convenient place for a full dinner, a snack or just to meet friends and enjoy a drink. Above the basement level restaurant, at street level, there is also a Swiss Bistro Restaurant, which is open from breakfast. The Bistro has take-away facilities and offers a large selection of sandwiches made with a variety of breads.

Inevitably, perhaps, comparisons have been made between the new Mövenpick establishment and the old Swiss Centre restaurants. The new Mövenpick establishment caters for a slightly different clientele from that which made use of the top-class entertaining which was possible in the old *Chesa*. But, in other respects, the new restaurant compares very favourably with the old establishment and it has already – and deservedly – proved highly popular with a large number of people. Although it is a self-service establishment, table reservations can be made for six and more people.

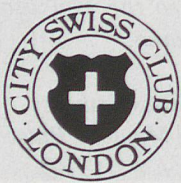


facilities, so food is delivered fresh every day and only prepared and cooked the minute you order it. Indeed, the central service area resembles a small, colourful market, with different stalls serving meat, fish, pasta, vegetables, salads and sweets. You just pick up a tray

and also efficient; and there are plenty of staff around, many of them Swiss, to assist.

When you leave the central service area, you pay, much as in a supermarket, and then head for the seating. The seating is divided into five different areas, decorated in the style

### City Swiss Club



Founded in 1856

After the success of previous years, the Committee invites all Swiss and friends of Switzerland to the

### 128th Banquet and Ball

organised for the Swiss community.

The Banquet and Ball will include an especially attractive and striking programme and will be held at **Claridge's**, W1, on Saturday, 20th March 1993 at 7.00 for 7.45pm. Tickets are £50.00 per person. To avoid disappointment, early application is advised by sending the coupon below to:

Monika Sallows c/o **Credit Suisse**, 24 Bishopsgate, London EC2N 4BQ

Please send me .....tickets. I enclose my cheque for £.....Name:.....

Address:.....Tel:.....

## Youth Exchange Programme

Spending unforgettable holidays in a foreign country, getting to know a new language and a different culture, making friends for life – all this and more is possible with the youth exchange programme for young Swiss abroad. The idea is to provide a six-week holiday with a Swiss family here in exchange for a holiday with a Swiss family in Switzerland. And if you like you can take a week's trial apprenticeship in Switzerland or arrange for future studies.

The programme is open to young people, aged 15-25, whose mother or father is a Swiss citizen. It runs from 1 July 1993 – 14 August 1993. The cost is Sfr.400.-- per participant, without travel,



Barbara Anderhub and Andrea Farlow – former Youth Exchange participants.

but including introductory camp, trial apprenticeship or training course, evaluation day and problem solving. Further information and application forms are available from Margrit Lyster, Swiss Welfare Office, 31 Conway Street, London W1P 5HL (Tel 071-387 3608). Application forms for this summer's exchanges must be returned by the end of March, 1993.

## Compatriots Recalled: Ernest Bader

On 8 February 1982 *The Times* carried an obituary which began as follows: 'Mr Ernest Bader, founder of the Scott Bader Commonwealth, a remarkable experiment in industrial democracy and worker-ownership, died peacefully at his home in Wollaston Hall, Northamptonshire, on 5 February. He was 91½.'

Ernest Bader was born in Switzerland and came to this country in 1912, having worked in the silk business in Zurich. Three years later he married Dora Scott. He built up a plastics manufacturing company and in 1920 founded Scott Bader & Co to develop the growing market for celluloid. He continued to be in the forefront in applying new materials from polyester resins and polymer emulsions to glass reinforced plastic in the lacquer and surface coating industry.

In 1944 he became a Quaker and at the end of World War II he founded the Scott Bader Fellowship in pursuit of his ideas for a Christian social structure in industry. He was an ardent pacifist and humanitarian and worked with unceasing energy to promote his ideals worldwide to the very end of his life.

As a successful industrialist, he made a large fortune and then he gave it all away. In 1951 he and his family gave up 90% of their shares to the employees, thus creating the common ownership company. After the passing of the Industrial Common Ownership Act of 1976, his company received certificate no. 1 under the act. The Scott Bader Commonwealth was managed by a 'community council' under the presidency of Bader, followed in 1971, by his son

Godric. Employees were put on the board as directors.

Unlike many later attempts to develop common ownership under employees' control, the Scott Bader experiment was highly successful. The company has often been quoted as an example of what can be achieved in a radical restructuring of industry.

No doubt some of Bader's ideas have had their critics. And some of his concepts proved impracticable. But the success of the Scott Bader Commonwealth had its roots in the decisive character of its founder who was described by his biographer, Susanna Hoe, as a 'dictatorial democrat'.

In a wider field, Ernest Bader advanced his ideas by founding the Society for Democratic Integration in Industry and later the Society for Training Rural Industries and Village Enterprise. He was an ardent supporter of Gandhi's industrial trusteeship principles. He was a holder of the Queen's Award to Industry for Technological Innovation. In 1971 he established the Ernest Bader Common Ownership Lectures and in 1980 the University of Birmingham conferred an honorary degree on him.

Sadly, his wife Dora was no longer there to share this honour, having died in 1979. Her death left a huge void in his life, but true to his character he carried on with courage and determination. He believed in equality and dignity of men. 'The wealth of all the earth,' he wrote, 'is a common heritage to all humanity... We must have hearts and brains big enough to embrace all humanity and not merely think of the interests of our particular nation of personal well-being.' [MM]

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## Book Review

A S Champ, *The Swiss Bank Job: Helvetia delenda est?*. Introduction by Roy Hattersley. (Windsor: Eureka, 1991; pp. xvi + 176. £14.95).

The dust jacket of this book suggests that *The Swiss Bank Job* is a political thriller combining fact and fiction. Based on the fact of Switzerland's poor human rights record, it shows how vulnerable modern societies are to fictitious terrorist blackmail. The author – heralded as a new talent in international thriller writing – believes that his revelations are sufficiently earth-riveting to warrant his own anonymity.

Dust jackets tend, for the most part, to be hype. This is particularly true in this case. The factual evidence, presented by the author on 32 pages in the second part of the book, does not support the claim that Switzerland's human rights record is any worse than that of other western democracies. The reprinted judgement of the European Court of Human Rights in the Huber case takes up another 30 pages at the end of the book. Having read the

judgement, I am bound to say that the author's claim that Swiss magistrates detain people without formal charge and/or trial for extended periods appears to be unsubstantiated. Even though the court decided that Ms Huber's rights under the European Convention of Human Rights had been violated, the legal dispute at issue in this case concerned the matter of whether an investigating magistrate could, in the same case, act as a public prosecutor. At first sight the procedures of the Swiss criminal code may seem unduly harsh, but Swiss judicial practices and appeals procedures do, I believe, stand up, for the most part, to close scrutiny. This is not to suggest that Switzerland's human rights record is perfect. It is, however, surprising that in support of his view the author does not mention the major scandals of the 1980s: the listening devices in the Aarau jail or the fact that the Swiss government kept secret files on a large part of the Swiss population. This makes me wonder whether the author did

his/her homework.

The first 106 pages are moderately entertaining, though the pleasure is spoiled by the author's condescending tone towards readers. Throughout, the story is recited from hindsight. As a result, this reader was less than captivated by the great master-plan for the obliteration of the Swiss confederation. The hero of the story is determined to avenge his arrest and detention without charge at the hands of the Swiss authorities. With the help of the mafia the hero creates the illusion of a terrorist movement – *Romandie libre* – which fights for the independence of the French-speaking regions of Switzerland. The plot rests on an intense terrorist campaign which convinces the Swiss government of the existence of a real threat to the Swiss state and financial system.

There are tensions between the various cultures within Switzerland which have, very rarely, led to terrorist activity – most notably in the Jura. But the story is incredible and it is not helped by the author's

by Till Geiger

apparent ignorance that Romantsch speakers form a fourth cultural group within Switzerland. The constant references to Romands as Romantsch is annoying and makes me wonder whether the author is qualified to write about the justified grievances of the French cultural minority in Switzerland. It all amounts to a neat, if slightly tedious and not very political novel, without any great thrills.

The most intriguing aspect to the book is how the publishers or the author persuaded Roy Hattersley to write a remarkable introduction. Hattersley is as great pain to dismiss the author's evidence as incredible, only to recommend the book as an allegory. Maybe, but even on those terms, this is a book to be missed.

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