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THE NEW PRESIDENT OF THE SWISS BENEVOLENT SOCIETY

It is a tradition in the "Swiss Observer" to give a write-up whenever there is a change at the helm of a Swiss society. This is usually accompanied by a photograph. As was reported in the last issue of the S.O., Mr. F. G. Sommer has relinquished his presidency of the Swiss Benevolent Society after many years of devoted service. He handed over at the A.G.M. to one of the Vice-Presidents, Mr. X. M. Speckert, one of the younger personalities who have already made a name for themselves in the Swiss community in this country. Unfortunately, there is no photograph available of Mr. Speckert, and in his modesty he is not prepared to have a new photo taken.

Mr. Speckert was born in Zurich in 1919. Both his father and grandfather were doctors of medicine. He was educated at the "Freie Gymnasium" and studied jurisprudence at the University of Zurich where he graduated as Doctor of Law in 1946. He spent the war years in Switzerland, partly at university, partly as officer in the Swiss Army (horse artillery). After a short period as practising lawyer in Zurich, he came to London where he was for some time connected with Messrs. Thomson McLintock & Co., Chartered Accountants. He then spent two years in New York and returned to London in 1950. He joined the Banking concern of Messrs. J. Henry Schroeder & Co., on special assignment. In 1954 he established himself as consultant on Swiss law in the Temple. Apart from his legal work, he is a keen farmer, and on their estate adjoining Windsor Great Park, he and his wife breed Hereford pedigree cattle. The Speckerts have two children, a daughter of 16 and a son of 11.

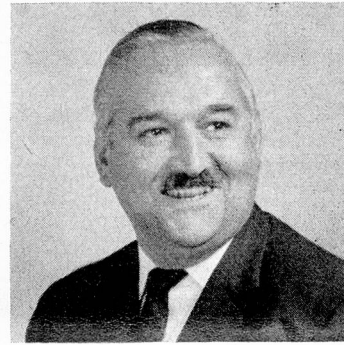
Mr. Speckert took an interest in the affairs of the Swiss community very early on. He joined the City Swiss Club in 1947, later became Librarian, then Honorary Treasurer, Vice-President and finally, in April 1959, President, an office he held for two years with great distinction.

He was introduced to the Swiss Benevolent Society by the late Colonel Anton Bon, at that time President of the S.B.S. He was elected to the General Committee in 1956 and a Vice-President in 1958. For several years he has been on the Executive Committee of the Swiss Economic Council, and in the same capacity he has served in the Anglo-Swiss Society. He is a member of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique, of the Swiss Mercantile Society and of the Swiss Rifle Association.

Last year, the Assembly of Presidents of Swiss Societies in Great Britain appointed him Honorary Liaison Officer in connection with the proposed Swiss Cultural Centre in London, a task which he has performed with energy and devotion. No doubt, he will apply the same zest and dedication to his new office as President of the Swiss Benevolent Society, and we wish him good health, strength and joy in this undertaking at a time when the Swiss organisations in general and the Swiss Benevolent Society in particular are faced with more and more difficulties.

PERSONAL

On going to press, we have just been informed of the death of Mr. E. Cottet, of 95a Belsize Lane, N.W.3. An obituary will be published in the next issue.



EDGAR BONVIN
President City Swiss Club

As will be seen in another part of the paper, Mr. Edgar Bonvin, on the occasion of the Annual General Meeting of the City Swiss Club, which took place on Tuesday, 20th April, at the Dorchester Hotel, has been elected president, in succession to Mr. M. A. Keller, who after two years in office has relinquished his post.

The newly elected president — the first Valaisan ever to occupy this post — was born in London in 1916, of Swiss parents who originated from Lens (Valais). He received his schooling at the Institut Français, South Kensington, St. Joseph's College, Beula Hill, S.E.19, and Maria Hilf College, Schwyz (Switzerland). After his schooling he was trained for the hotel profession at the Carlton and Dorchester Hotels in London.

During the last war, Mr. Bonvin served with the British Forces; at the conclusion of hostilities, he took over the Montana Hotel, 67 Gloucester Road, S.W.7, from his late father who was also a member of the City Swiss Club.

Mr. Bonvin is Vice-Chairman of the Committee of Swiss Catholics in London, a Rotarian and a member of various professional world organisations. He joined the City Swiss Club in 1950. He is married to a charming Swiss lady from Lucerne, who has presented him with two children (a boy — who is at present at school in Switzerland — and a girl). A brother of his was unfortunately killed in the last war. Mr. Bonvin still has his mother in Switzerland, and a cousin of his is a member of the Swiss Federal Council (Head of the Federal Finance and Customs Department).

The new president has widely travelled in the United States of America, South Africa and Europe. He has a large circle of friends in the London Swiss Colony, and he has every qualification to fill the post which his predecessor has held with such distinction. We wish him a happy and successful year of office.

*ST.,
Press Reporter C.S.C.*

OTTO VONARX †

We announce with deep regret the death of Mr. Otto Vonarx of 108 Cambridge Street, Victoria, London S.W.1. Until he fell ill after Christmas, he had been in the service of the Ritz Hotel in Piccadilly for forty-five years, and since 1939 he had held the position of hall porter. Mr. Vonarx died on 24th April at the age of 77, and he is mourned by his wife and family to whom we extend our deep sympathy in their bereavement.