

# News from the colony

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# NEWS FROM THE COLONY

## THE HEYDAYS OF THE SWISS HOTEL TRADE IN LONDON

Many among the Old Guard of the Swiss Colony in London remember the days of the beginning of this century when the London hotel keeping and catering business was virtually run by compatriots. Today, little remains of this prestigious position. Although many young Swiss newly trained at Swiss hotellery schools work in London to perfect their trade, they no longer hold the monopoly which they used to.

One who well remembers these palmy days and who has held important posts in hotels and restaurants in London is *Mr. Fernand Delaloye*, 87, former Manager of the Trocadero, one of the most select pre-war restaurants and cabarets of London. *Mr. Delaloye* was employed for thirty years at the Trocadero and, in this position, catered for the great of the world, including the Royal Family. The Queen recently sent him a telegram to congratulate him for his diamond wedding. *Mr. Delaloye* hails from a Valais hotel keeping family and his son *Marcel*, who has managed the Cumberland, has remained in the trade, so has his grandson *Peter*. *Mr. Delaloye*, who also managed the Regents Palace Hotel and the Throgmorton Restaurant during his long career, arrived in London in 1906 to learn English—like so many others!

In those days, he recalls, the Swiss were in a predominant position in the hotel and catering business of the capital and other main cities of Britain. This situation was the result of the tremendous impact of *Cesar Ritz*, who took full advantage of the blossoming Victorian and Edwardian tourist era to become the leading promoter of modern hotel industry, *Ritz* not only brought with him in London a great many specialised Swiss, but established the reputation and the standards of Swiss hotel keeping.

Swiss neutrality was also instrumental in establishing our compatriots in the British hotel and catering trade. Their French and Italian "competitors" were called back during the first world war. This was also true of many Swiss, but many of them were allowed to return to their jobs, after a brief spell under the flag. They also enjoyed certain residential facilities as Swiss nationals. Thus the effectives of Swiss hotel and restaurant employees reached their peak between the two world wars. *Mr. Delaloye* estimates that there were up to 15,000 Swiss in this trade in London alone during that period. This is more than the total Swiss and Swiss-British population registered today in the London consular area. This figure has diminished nowadays to somewhere between two and three thousand young Swiss.

If few hotels in Britain are run by or owned by Swiss today, it is because the later generations have become naturalised. In fact, a great many hotels are run and owned by the children or grand-children of the Swiss who started their career in this country at the beginning of the century.

The original generations were socially well organised. The list of Swiss societies that have disappeared during the past thirty years is sadly impressive. Among them one finds the three most frequented by employees: The *Union Helvetia* at Gerrard Place, the *Union Genevoise* in Shaftesbury Avenue and the *Schweizerbund* of Charlotte Street. The *Union Helvetia*, based in Lucerne, was probably the largest and disappeared after the war. The *Union Genevoise*, despite its name, was largely German run and its premises were confiscated because of that during the war. The original *Schweizerbund* premises had a more recent disappearance, due mainly to the inability of the Swiss Colony in London to pay the rent, or buy the freehold, of the Charlotte Street building. These clubs had rooms for jazz, billiards and for sing-songs, and other gatherings. Member-compatriots organised all kinds of sporting competitions, as attested by the impressive collection of cups and trophies standing on the sideboard of *Mr. Delaloye's* dining room.

(PMB)

## SWISS CHURCH BAZAAR

The traditional Bazaar of the Swiss Protestant Church in London was held on Saturday, 4th November at its usual venue: the Westminster Central Hall. This two-yearly event attracted a great many people, many of which one suspected were far from being Swiss. Despite the passage of time and the dwindling of the Colony so often decried, several hundred families visited the Bazaar throughout the afternoon. One was surprised at meeting so many new faces. The Bazaar seems to be one of the rare Swiss functions which enjoy the presence of Swiss people living in the neighbourhood of London never seen at other Swiss events.

The Youth Club of the Swiss Church was at Central Hall at 9 a.m. and was responsible for transporting the bulk of goods of sale and catering material. Some of the goods which had been prepared for the sale had earlier been stored in the Hall of the Church at Endell Street and stolen when thieves broke in two days before. Although they broke the lock of the Church entrance, they seem to have left with little loot.

Members of the Embassy arrived

in their cars stacked with the tins and Swiss specialities which the Embassy had obtained through its own efforts from Swiss firms at home. The Embassy Counter, run by the spouses of Embassy officials, turned out to be as usual, one of the most successful. It was dismantled at the end of the day with little of its wares left over.

Ladies of the Bazaar Committee, which had been presided this year by *Mrs. R. M. Suess*, busily decorated their respective counters in order to be in time for the official opening at 12 a.m. They had long been ready and business was well under way when the *Rev. Denis Muller*, Youth Minister for the French-speaking church, called the attendance in a circle by drumming on a tin box.

Our Ambassador, *Dr. Albert Weitnauer* fittingly reminded us of the regular support of Swiss companies to the Swiss Church Bazaar.

For the first time in its history, the Bazaar was not opened by a Lady, (namely the wife of the Ambassador *en poste* in London). When *Dr. Weitnauer* had declared the Bazaar open and urged us to buy as much as possible in support of our Church, queues built up behind the luncheon ticket desk and the food counter for basic Swiss chow, namely *schublig*, *cervelas*, potato salad, and *sauerkraut*. As in the past, the *cervelas* and *schubligs* had been supplied by *Messrs O. Bartholdi*.

Brisk business was pursued for the rest of the afternoon. As its name implied (oriental market place) the Bazaar was not only a place to buy, but also a place to meet friends while moving from counter to counter. It was a tea-time reception enlivened by the presence of many children.

The sale was curtailed by over half an hour. The Reverend *Dietler* explained that the hall was to be cleared by 5.30 p.m. and not 6 p.m. as agreed over a year ago. Two police superintendents had surprisingly appeared among this Swiss gathering an hour earlier and explained that demonstrators coming from Trafalger had rented the Hall and would want to occupy it by 5.45 p.m. They had asked us all to clear the premises so as to avoid confrontation with their rather agitated crowd, which one or two policemen standing near Central Hall were awaiting. This contretemps naturally upset the members of the *Con-sistoire*, who demanded explanations from the Caretaker.

Nevertheless, the forwarded clearing-up operation began with pulling down the strings of red and white flags hanging from the walls. Most upset of all were the ladies in charge of counters. One claimed that they had lost £300 worth of business because the end of the selling came just as prices were