

News from the colony

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NEWS FROM THE COLONY

LONDON CELEBRATES SWISS NATIONAL DAY

Once again, the 1st August celebration in London gave many of us an opportunity to remind ourselves that we were Swiss. This is surely the most valuable aspect of such events. They enable us to link up with our roots and remember what Switzerland should really mean to all her citizens. This year's celebration was particularly well attended. About 140 people crowded the Swiss church in Endell Street when proceedings were inaugurated by Mr. Vergil Berti, Chairman of the 1st August Committee.

He was followed in the pulpit by Father Paul Bossard, Swiss Catholic Chaplain in London, who gave a solemn reading of a complete translation of the Swiss Pact. The Rev. Urs Steiner, Minister of the German-speaking Swiss Protestant

parish, then said some very appropriate words recalling that, despite the passage of nearly seven centuries since the foundation of the Confederation, the Swiss today shared with their founding fathers one essential thing — a need and a love for the Fatherland.

The Rev. Steiner noted that the Federal Pact began with the words "in the name of our Lord, Amen". The same words appeared in the preamble of the Federal Constitution. Developing the meaning of this, Urs Steiner said that it reflected an awareness that our history, as all history, was presided over by the One above. The presence of God in our national history was our essential link with our ancestors over the ages.

Mr. Daniel Pètrevent, a third year theology student from Neuchâtel replacing the Rev. Orna-Ornstein, Urs Steiner's French-speaking counterpart, who was on holiday, then read a prayer of thanks for the gifts bestowed upon our country and its citizens.

It then befell on our Ambassador, Dr. Ernesto Thalmann, to address his message. Dr. Thalmann, who was attending his last 1st August Celebration as Ambassador in London, said that these traditional festivities occasionally tended to be viewed with boredom at home through the sheer force of repetition.

But he said that the picture was a little different abroad because the National Day celebration had a particular significance to Swiss people living away from the homeland. This anniversary reminded them of their country and its meaning. Dr. Thalmann took the opportunity of pointing out the special position of Swiss people living in Britain and the possibility they have of enlarging their horizons and enjoying the benefits of a great culture. He ended his address by conveying the greetings of the Federal Council.

A most opportune musical entertainment was then offered by the mezzosoprano Elena Rogers, who sang the Schumann Liederkreis (Op. 39) with the accompaniment of the pianist Nina Walker. The 1st August Committee must be congratulated for having brought a musical component of such quality to this patriotic celebration.

Elena Rogers was born in Romania but is of Swiss nationality. Although she sang at an early age and studied under Reinhold Gerhardt at the Guildhall School of Music, her family commitments had prevented her from becoming a professional. But now that her children have grown up, she has decided to concentrate on singing professionally. She is the wife of Mr. S. C. Rogers, Managing Director of

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Watches of Switzerland Ltd. As for Miss Walker, she is a pianist and accompanist of international standing. She being a member of the Royal Choral Society and of the Muscial Staff of the Royal Opera, we owed to the Covent Garden Opera the kind permission which enabled her to participate in this recital.

Both artists were rapturously applauded and beckoned to an encore which turned out to be a delightful Italian piece. In the midst of the applause, they were presented with two large bouquets. The Ceremony ended with the National Anthem, "Trittst in Morgenrot daher".

A sale of Bundesfeier badges and a collection in favour of the churches were organised in the entrance hall. The badges were particularly beautiful this year, representing a lovely five-petalled flower with the Swiss emblem in the centre. We heard that last year, the Swiss abroad had given more support to the Bundesfeierspende than the whole of Canton Vaud. This year, it was hoped to beat Berne.

The latter part of the evening was attended mainly by the young, at the Swiss Youth Club in the John Southworth Centre, Westminster. Two hundred young people enjoyed pop music, bottles of wine, roast veal sausages and raclette. An accordionist kept people in the main dance room in the right 1st August mood, and a Swiss conjurer took the stage for a while — but some of his tricks were a little obscure.

While the John Southworth Centre was resounding to this revelry, members of the 1st August Committee and of the Colony were entertaining the two guest performers of the evening at Frederick's, Islington. This latest edition of our National Day celebration in London will be remembered as particularly enjoyable and successful.

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at the Swiss Church, 79 Endell
Street, W.C.2, London, Concert by
Waldmann Youth Choir from Zurich
organised by NSH.

OBITUARY Mr. L. S. R. Asch

It is with great sadness that we announce the sudden death of Louis Sidney Roland Asch, of 7 Copse Hill, Oaklands, Welwyn, Herts. He died in Sunday morning, 12th August, at the age of 71.

Roland Asch was born in Winchmore Hill (then Middlesex, now North London) on 24th June, 1908. He was the eldest of four, and his father died when he was three and a half. His mother returned to her native Zurich in 1913, together with the children. Roland went to primary and secondary school there and then had his apprenticeship with Kuoni AG, forwarding agents and general carriers. He also attended the SMS College of Further Education in Zurich. A few years with the Zurich office of the National Cash Register Company gave him some insight into the often ruthless American business methods.

Roland spent his 21st birthday at the British Consulate, claiming his British birthright and in due course obtained a British passport. In spring 1931, he returned to London and worked first as German correspondent and later as sales manager for German-speaking Europe with Sterns Ltd, international merchants in lubricating oils.

Whilst he was on a business trip, the war broke out and he rejoined the Mitr. Kp. IV/69 to which he had been attached after his *Rekrutenschule* in 1928. He had over 700 days of active service to his credit. In between, he worked as travelling salesman in haberdashery and wooden barrels.

In 1945, he renewed acquaintance with William Beckmann of Cosmos Freightways, who was main shareholder of Bruce, Dawson & Co (London) Ltd. Roland Asch joined them as Export Manager when he

returned to London in 1946. Two years later, he was appointed director.

In 1931, he joined the Swiss Mercantile Society, and in fact, he would have been honoured this year by the SKV, its mother society in Switzerland, for 50 years' membership.

In 1947 he became a member of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique, and on the death of Mr. Richard Weist, he took on the Hon. Treasurership in April 1957. He gave it up last year after 21 years of devoted service. The NSH honoured him and his wife at their Christmas Gathering last December.

Up to his death he was also Hon. Treasurer of the Swiss Benevolent Society, since 1970 as well as of the Schweizerbund (Swiss Club). For some years he was also a member of the Consistoire of the Swiss Church, and he belonged to the Unione Ticinese and the City Swiss Club.

From 1951 to 1968, Roland was a member of the Metropolitan Special Constabulary.

This is a mere enumeration of offices held by a capable member. But Roland Asch was more than that. He was devoted and painstaking and utterly reliable, and he was as much at home at Council meetings as he was with the ordinary rank and file, and the contribution he made to any discussion was always well worth considering. He had a wonderful sense of fun which shone through even when he was at his most serious. Much is owed to Roland by the various societies, and it will be terribly difficult to replace him as a competent worker at any committee table. His counsel to me as President of the NSH was always sound and realistic.

Roland married his first wife, Eva, in 1937, and their son Christopher

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