

# Society and social scene

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# 'Little Parliament' meets in Berne

THE Commission of Swiss Abroad, the ASK, consists of members and their deputies elected by umbrella organisations in Swiss communities all over the world. In addition there are more than 20 inland members of influence – politicians, journalists, men and women who hold important positions. Among them is the President of the National Council, Mrs Hedi Lang, the highest woman (or man) in the land.

At the spring meeting of this "Little Parliament" Great Britain was represented by Dr. Alex Lang for the North and Mrs Mariann Meier for the South. The meeting took place in the Federal Palace in Berne.

The president of the Organisation of Swiss Abroad, Dr. Alfred Weber, welcomed members and guests, among them the honorary president, Dr. Louis Guisan, the president of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique, Mr Paul Schaffroth, and the president and manager of the Solidarity Fund for Swiss Abroad, Alfred Matter and Benito Invernizzi.

The annual report was discussed. It may be interesting to know that, at the end of 1980, 354,272 Swiss lived abroad, 160,074 Swiss only and 194,458 dual nationals. This means an increase of 13,000 people as compared with three years ago, and one of 117,000 over 1950.

This increase is both surprising and gratifying, the former because permits of work are not easy to come by in most countries, and the latter because Swiss presence abroad is important for an export-orientated country like Switzerland. There 210,566 Swiss living in Europe outside Switzerland, 102,204 in America, 14,020 in Australia, New Zealand and South Sea Islands, and 9,744 in Africa.

Regarding the annual accounts, they finished with a deficit of more than Sfr. 24,000, and an even higher loss is budgeted for 1982.

It was reported that the state of the Swiss schools abroad had not improved since they formed the theme of the Lugano Assembly in 1980. New restrictions had come into force, all as part of the savings campaign by the federal authorities.

Three schools in Italy will have to close down in the near future. Efforts are continuing to improve the position of these schools, which play such an important part in promoting the Swiss presence abroad.

Concern was expressed about the status of the wife of a Swiss working abroad for a Swiss concern in Switzerland – and thus compulsorily insured under the AHV/AVS – who was now declared to be not insured unless she had applied separately before the age of 50.

Nothing more had been achieved so far, but it was hoped that at the next meeting in August members would hear some results of efforts made by the organisation.

The ratio between payments received from and benefits paid to Swiss abroad under the voluntary scheme of the AHV/AVS had become smaller. It used to be 7.5 times as much on the side of benefits, and it had now dropped to 5.8 times.

Regarding sickness insurance, efforts were being continued to ensure that all Swiss returning home should be able to join any insurance company at any age. A holiday packet insurance scheme was being worked out for Swiss temporarily in Switzerland, who had been unable to take out travel insurance in their country of residence.

The question of the nationality of children born to Swiss mothers married to foreigners and living abroad was brought up, and members heard with satisfaction that the large Chamber – the National Council – had accepted the initiative put forward by the ASO president. A long way still to

go, though, before it becomes law.

We were told that the next federal plebiscite would take place on June 6, dealing with the new law regarding foreigners and the revision of the penal code.

The next assembly of Swiss Abroad will take place in Siders/Sierre in the Valais from August 20 to 22. The theme will be "The Swiss Woman Abroad".

**Mariann Meier**

## New Consul

DR Hansjoerg Wirz, Professor in Social Studies at the University of Edinburgh, has been appointed Consular Agent in Edinburgh with the title of Consul.

Dr Wirz, who was born in Olten and educated in Basle, first came to England in 1961. He moved to Edinburgh in 1962 where he spent six years as a youth leader while studying at the university.

He has been a member of the staff of Edinburgh University since 1966, and is married with two daughters.

## Solidarity the theme

SOLIDARITY was the theme of the Annual Dinner of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique London Group. The event took place at the Throgmorton Restaurant in the City on March 9 – a day earlier than planned due to the London Transport strike on the 10th. Although this meant a number of cancellations, the party again numbered nearly 80.

It was preceded by the annual general meeting at which the society's report on the year's activities – very varied and plentiful – and the accounts were accepted. The Council members were elected by secret ballot.

Both the meeting and the dinner were chaired by the president, Mrs Mariann Meier, who had the pleasure of welcoming

the Swiss Ambassador as honorary president of the society, and Madame Claude Caillat, and the new Minister at the Swiss Embassy and Madame Claudio Caratsch. She also welcomed the honorary vice-president, Dr H.W. Egli, and the guest speaker, Mr Benito Invernizzi, and his wife.

In her speech the chairman pointed out with appreciation that many other members of the embassy and their wives were present and regretted that the dinner was the last event attended by Consul-General and Mrs Charles Glauser before their departure for Manchester.

It was also most gratifying that the presidents of several Swiss societies were present, and this, Mrs Meier thought, was a good sign of solidarity within the Swiss community.

Solidarity, she said, was needed more and more in an ageing and dwindling colony, and to show solidarity with our homeland should not exhaust itself in patriotic longings and the purchase of the First of August badge. It was deplorable how few of our compatriots in Britain were members of the Solidarity Fund.

The Swiss Ambassador addressed the gathering next and touched upon the subject in a different way. He also thanked the society and its officers for doing a good job not only for the community in the United Kingdom but also for Switzerland.

Mr Virgil Berti, as honorary secretary of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK, brought greetings from the president, Mr Bernard Simon.

The main speech of the evening was that given by Mr Invernizzi, manager of the Solidarity Fund for Swiss Abroad in Berne. He reminded the audience of this great self-help institution of the Swiss living outside Switzerland, the only insurance in the world which pays back the premiums

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and covers loss of livelihood due to political strife, war, internal upheavals and nationalisation. And in addition, the fund offers a way of having a nest-egg in Switzerland which carried reasonable interest and no withholding tax.

He also stressed the fact that it was a former president of the London NSH, Mr Fred Suter, who, when the Fund was founded, put down a "Gold-vreneli" as a symbolic gesture. Thus there was an additional reason why every Swiss in his audience should join as a sign of solidarity.

It was a very successful evening, but the real success will only be shown once the applications for membership of the fund begin rolling in.

Information regarding the Solidarity Fund may be had from Embassy and Consulates.

**Mariann Meier**

## Marathon meetings

SINCE Schwyzerclub South West was founded in 1978 with seven members it has grown steadily, and today there are more than 25 German-speaking Swiss who meet formally twice each year to chat, exchange views and to help and advise each other.

Says club organiser Ruth Cole: "As our club covers Bristol, Bath and the Taunton area, we make the get-togethers whole day events. One of our members opens her house for the occasion, we others take the food. And what a selection of Swiss dishes there always is! We find that being in a Swiss home, with plenty of time, provides the ideal atmosphere.

"The gatherings are always extremely happy; we have time to sing our old school songs, we might read some Swiss poetry or broaden our Swiss knowledge with a quiz. We also organised a small bring-and-buy sale to raise money for our club funds."

In between these full day, marathon meetings, Schwyzerclub South West also organises small, monthly meetings which



## Tributes to Ernest Bader

THE memorial service for Mr Ernest Bader, whose death at the age of 91 was reported in last month's Swiss Observer, was attended by a great number of his friends. In the address, the Rev Lord Soper gave a vivid account of the life and extraordinary character of this great Swiss with whom he had a lot in common.

He was a man of peace who tried to put the gospel of Christ, especially the Sermon on the Mount, into the practical life of business. It was his firm belief that something which is morally right cannot be wrong in politics and economics, and he succeeded.

As the last of 13 children, he received from his mother a deep religious outlook and strict family discipline. While young he travelled widely, and he returned with a sense of the poverty of poor nations and a desire for their betterment which never left him.

Ernest Bader was not only an irresistible salesman and public propagandist, taking full page advertisements in The Times for

wonderful commonsense schemes for saving the world. He was a man of vision and saw that "peace can only come when there is unity, when people are no longer afraid of each other, when there is an universal consciousness of common ownership of the world's resources".

But at the same time he was a practical man who was able, by untiring work, to show people that his vision works and that there is an alternative beyond the capitalist system and beyond anonymous bureaucracy.

He was also a truly committed Christian and Quaker, but never ceased to be a true Swiss with all the independence and stubbornness typical of his country. He was well loved and well hated, often at the same time by the same people – a fighter for peace with a skull of rock and a heart of gold.

To quote from Lord Soper's address: "Now he is in heaven, which has become an even more exciting place since he is there!"

**Father Paul Bossard**

might take place briefly in a town centre over lunch, providing yet another opportunity for people to meet and talk.

The overall formula is certainly a successful one, and the next full day meeting will be held on September 25 in Taunton.

## Farewell to the Renzes

NEWS that the Renzes were leaving for Switzerland came as a great surprise, for Mr and Mrs Willy Renz have been so much part of the London Swiss community that one can just not

imagine it without them. Their address is now Steinwuchsstrasse 2, 9052 Niederteufen, Switzerland.

Although this village is in Appenzell, it is very near St. Gall, and Claire and Willy will be very happy to see old friends from Britain.

Willy Renz was born in St. Gall, where he studied economics and graduated at the Institute of Economic and Social Sciences, and came to London in 1922. He spent his professional life as a banker, and was manager of Hambros Bank and a director of Mocatta & Goldsmid, the bullion brokers.

He has been a member of the

## Mrs Helen Rothlisberger

IT is with deep regret that we announce the death in February of Mrs Helen Rothlisberger of 30 Markwell Close, Longton Grove, London SE26. She died after a short illness in her eightieth year.

Helen and her late husband Maurice were a well-known and popular couple in the Swiss community. He has been active in the Swiss Mercantile Society, the Swiss Benevolent Society, the Nouvelle Société Helvétique and was a founder member of the London Swiss Philatelic Society.

Helen accompanied him to a good many of the functions and was always a cheerful and welcome visitor. We shall remember them both with gratitude and affection.

**MM**

## Rudolph Furrer

THE sudden death of Mr Rudolf Furrer of St. Martin's, Guernsey, caused great sadness among his many friends.

Mr Furrer, who was 62, was born in Boumen, Switzerland, and was apprenticed to a hairdresser in Zurich. When qualified, he worked in Flims and Davos.

He emigrated to Guernsey where he met and married his wife, Betty, in 1950 and lived there until his recent death.

Swiss Mercantile Society since 1923 and the City Swiss Club since 1945, and was instrumental in revitalising the Nouvelle Société Helvétique after the war. He became its president in 1957 and held this office with distinction for four years. He is an honorary member of the society.

Willy and Claire – who was also a member of several societies, and one of the longest serving members of the ladies' group of the Swiss Church (Frauerverein) – will be sadly missed. But we must respect their reasons for wishing to return to their homeland, and we wish them many years of happy retirement.

**Mariann Meier**

SINCE last November, a gap within the established world of Swiss women's magazines has been filled by Die Neue, an attractively presented, well laid out magazine of about 50 pages, appearing 10 times a year.

Its target audience is made up of responsible Swiss women who have a keen interest in the changing world around them and their place in it; women who want to make sure that the equality article, accepted by the voting population of the country on June 14 last year, will not only remain a piece of paper but become reality.

Die Neue, however, is not a militant feminist magazine, rather one which tries to inform women in a sensible and encouraging way.

Well and lesser known Swiss women from the world of finance, the unions and various women's organisations are presented in personal interviews. The Swiss political scene, with an emphasis on Swiss women in politics, is examined as are women's roles in a changing and competitive world.

This more serious aspect is well balanced by travel reports,



Renate Holzgang, Ester Bäni and Erika Bedick-Strub

## Trio reflect the Swiss woman's world

cultural news, cookery ideas and an amusing guide to where to eat well (not slimline and health foods).

To prove the rule by the exception, men are featured too, but men who escaped the established concept of typical man's work. As guests at the offices of Die Neue they talk about their new ways of finding satisfaction in their jobs and their private lives.

Die Neue is published by a group of freelance women from

varied backgrounds, age groups and professions.

The editor-in-chief is Erika Bedick-Strub, an ardent lover of spaghetti, red wine, sports and gardening. Her way of contributing towards the success of women in today's world is the production of this magazine which she hopes will help women to become more aware of themselves and will encourage them to accept more responsibilities.

Ester Bäni, head of the

advertising department, loves Chinese food and aubergine coloured clothes. She would like to see young mothers better informed in order to help them overcome the feeling of being "only" a housewife.

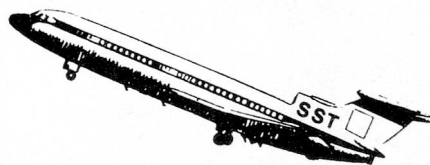
The third member of the team is Renate Holzgang, managing editor, who is fond of discussions and eating fish. Her aim is to show how much Swiss women have already achieved and how much there is still to do.



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