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SWISS MERCANTILE SOCIETY

The Annual General Meeting of the Swiss Mercantile Society (Limited by Guarantee), was held at the Swiss Club, 74, Charlotte Street, W.1, on Thursday, February 13th.

The President, Mr. J. J. Boos, extended a cordial welcome to the members present, numbering about 70, who had braved the elements and remained undeterred by the fuel crisis, which made itself felt as the evening wore on, despite an excellent and plentiful meal served by the Stewards of the Club.

The Secretary, Mr. J. J. Schneider, read the notice convening the meeting and the Auditor's report, as well as the minutes of the last General Meeting, which were adopted.

In elucidating the accounts for the period under review, the Auditor, Mr. Robert P. Huxley, A.C.A., said that the figures bore no resemblance to the previous year's working, when the scholastic activities were confined to evening classes, whereas in 1946 day classes had been running during the greater part of the year. The accounts showed a deficit, which, however, was not as large as originally anticipated and the Chairman expressed the hope that the subsidy to be received from the Swiss Government in respect of the years 1945 and 1946 would be sufficient to cover the deficit.

The Chairman's Report on the year's activities opened with a preamble on the general outlook on world affairs and the efforts being made to secure international co-operation in the political, economic and educational spheres through the various branches of UNO. Though progress was slow and often disappointing, positive results had been achieved, particularly in some of the sub-organisations in which, it was gratifying to know, our country had also taken an active part.

The report also briefly touched upon present conditions in Switzerland, particularly in so far as they affect the welfare of the people, and then went on to give a comprehensive survey of the Society's activities during the past year, brief particulars of which are given below :—

Membership: The Society to-day is composed of
25 Honorary Members,
97 Contributing Members and Donors,
270 Active Members (Ladies 17, Gentlemen 253).

There were 17 admissions during the year and 8 resignations, the latter mostly from members who returned to Switzerland where some joined the local Sections of the S.K.V.

Meetings: The Society, the Council and the Committees met regularly during the year to deal with the voluminous work, particularly in the educational sphere and in connection with the reconstruction of Swiss House. Full reports of the interesting and instructive lectures held in conjunction with our meetings, as well as our social gatherings, have already appeared in the columns of the "*Swiss Observer*." Suffice it to say that these functions enjoy an ever increasing popularity, as is evidenced by a steadily improving attendance, which can in some measure also be attributed to the fact that some members whose firms were evacuated during the war, have now returned to town.

S.K.V. Headquarters: The S.M.S. remains in close contact with the Headquarters of the Association in Switzerland. With nearly 50,000 members under the splendid leadership of Central President Strickler and the able guidance of Central Secretary, National Councillor, Ph. Schmid-Ruedin, the S.K.V. is going from strength to strength.

Employment Department: In his report, Mr. J. J. Pfaendler, now in his 37th year as Manager of the Employment Department, reports that he has placed over 500 applicants, more than double that number of vacancies having been registered, a sure sign of the dearth of labour. The figures show a considerable increase on those of the previous year and it is gratifying to know that despite the most stringent restrictions on immigration, a few of those placed were young Swiss who were able to take up work in this country, notably with Swiss firms established here or with firms engaged in British exports to Switzerland.

Finance: The Chairman expressed thanks to the many firms and individual donors who had so generously responded to the Society's appeals, a large number of donations having been received towards the Educational Fund and the College Re-establishment Fund. A handsome contribution towards the latter was received from the S.K.V., being a share of the proceeds from a collection made in Switzerland for "War damaged S.K.V. Buildings in London and Milan."

Affiliations: The N.S.H., the Swiss Male Choir, the London Swiss Philatelic Society and the Unione Ticinese, all have their headquarters at Swiss House and the Chairman welcomed back at practice, the Swiss Orchestral Society and the Swiss Accordion Club.

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With them, as well as the other Swiss Societies, the S.M.S. maintains friendly relations. The rooms at Swiss House are also gladly put at the disposal of many Swiss national committees, a fact which greatly helps in the organisation of the various functions in the Colony.

In conclusion, the Chairman thanked all those who had in one way or another contributed towards a successful year, mentioning in particular the Swiss Minister, Dr. Paul Ruegger, the Legation Staff, the Trustees, the Council and the Committees, and last but by no means least, the many members, some with over 50 years' active membership, for their loyal support without which the Society could not have risen to the position which it holds to-day.

The Education Committee's report was read by its Chairman, Mr. W. Meier. He gave a detailed account of the educational activities during the past year, dealing at some length with the immense preparatory work in connection with the reopening of the College.

Next, he reported on the engagement, qualifications and duties of both the Administrative and the Teaching Staff, as well as the curriculum, which was laid down after consultation with the competent authorities in Switzerland.

The question of accommodation, board-residence and many other difficult problems facing the Committee were explained in detail.

After an account of the opening ceremony of the College on May 1st which has also been fully reported, Mr. Meier went on to give particulars of the work done in the two courses held from 29th April to 17th August and from 26th August to 14th December, which were

attended by no fewer than 131 individual students. He gave particulars of subjects taught, diploma examinations, excursions, lectures, etc.

The report also covered the evening classes, which, with the arrival of a number of young people from Switzerland, mainly girls in domestic service, have shown a steady increase during the past twelve months.

Classes were held in English, French, Italian and Russian and arrangements for other subjects can be made as and when the need arises.

The Report of the House Committee was presented by its Chairman, Mr. L. W. Krucker. He dealt with the protracted negotiations in connection with repairs and alterations at Swiss House, the signing of a new lease and many other problems facing the Committee, whose aims to make the building suitable for our special requirements, are gradually materialising.

He expressed a special word of thanks to Mr. G. E. De Brunner, Trustee, whose valuable assistance in the difficult negotiations with the Landlord and the Architect were greatly appreciated.

Mr. De Brunner, in moving the adoption of the Reports and Accounts as presented, paid a tribute to the officers concerned for the excellent manner in which these had been compiled. This was duly seconded by Mr. L. Chapuis, one of the veteran members, and passed with prolonged acclamation.

Before passing on to the elections, the President, Mr. J. J. Boos, in a personal statement explained the reasons which had prompted him to relinquish the Presidency after eight strenuous years. He reviewed some of the important events during his tenure of office from shortly before the outbreak of war until the present day, when the Society has again resumed its normal activities. It was not without regret that he had taken this decision, but he felt he needed a rest from his many arduous duties and furthermore his business made greater claims on his time than had been the case during the last few years. The members were pleased to learn that Mr. Boos was willing to continue to serve on the Council where his long experience in Society matters will be of great value. On the recommendation of the Council, Mr. W. Meier was nominated to stand for election as President.

It was fitting that Mr. A. Stauffer, Hon. Member, was asked to occupy the Chair *pro tem* during the election. It was exactly 30 years to the day when he was elected President of the Society.

He paid a warm tribute to Mr. Boos for the great work he had rendered to the S.M.S. during eight momentous years, during which he had so successfully guided the destinies of the Society. He spoke of his tenacity and courtesy at all times, which had endeared him not only to the members of the Society but also to the Colony at large, and it was with great regret that he had to accept his resignation. Mr. Stauffer's words were enthusiastically endorsed by all present with prolonged acclamation.

The Auditor, Mr. R. P. Huxley, A.C.A., was then re-appointed and a proposal to increase the membership of the General Purposes Committee from four to six members and the Education Committee from five to six members, was passed without dissension.

As a result of the ensuing election, the Council and the Committees for the Financial Year 1947 were constituted as follows:—

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Department :* Mr. Ch. Chapuis.*Delegate to the N.S.H. :* Mr. R. Weist.

The Chairman *pro tem*, Mr. A. Stauffer, congratulated Mr. W. Meier, who had been Vice-President and Chairman of the Education Committee since 1935. on his election as President. and said that he felt sure Mr. Meier would fill his new office with the same energy and businesslike efficiency as he had devoted to the Education Department. Mr. Meier suitably responded on assuming the Chair and this terminated the proceedings.

The Annual General Meeting was followed by an Ordinary Monthly Meeting, at which Mr. J. E. Schneider was elected an Active Member.

W.B.

CITY SWISS CLUB.**(Monthly Meeting)**

The well attended Meeting of the City Swiss Club was certainly a memorable one for all those who love Culture and the real beauty of the French language when spoken by such a master as Monsieur René Varin, Cultural Attaché to the French Embassy in London.

In the absence of the Chairman, Colonel Anton Bon, who was unfortunately ill, Monsieur de Cintra took the Chair, and after the toasts to the King, La Suisse and, last but not least, "La France" he introduced our Guests of Honour, Messieurs René Varin and François Weymuller, French Press Attaché in London. He welcomed several other Guests amongst them Lt.-Col. Riesen, the new Swiss Military Attaché, Monsieur Clottu, Attaché Social, Monsieur Marin, Manager of Brown's Hotel, and Monsieur Dafasse, Secretary of the French Institute. He was very pleased also to welcome the sons of several of our Members.

He then asked M. Varin to address us, his subject being a sort of an aperçu on some aspects of the life of France. But it was not to a study or some lecture that we were to listen to, but to a most delightful *causerie* in that easy, elegant, flowing French of a most cultured man who never had to search for words but who, like an artist, brushed a picture full of colour, beauty and reality, all this mixed with charm and humour. After having remarked that the appointment of cultural Attachés was a novelty to be no doubt welcomed but which alas, had not brought much culture or charm in this world in the last few years, M. Varin proceeded to describe the effect of the Occupation on the French mind, the famous "esprit français." If that period had been a very sad one it had been a stimulating one as well, for those at least who had resisted and mixed courage, moral courage, with culture. The "Editions de Minuit" were a testimonial of this; it was during that time also that many books had been prepared in the silence of the Occupation. Artists had even decorated books which had not been written, which could NOT be written, but the pencil scribbled down in sketches what the pen could not write. The Germans were doing all they could to suppress any book which should testify that the French spirit was not dead but French ingenuity was there making light of this "heavy" oppressor. Hence the work entitled "Philosophie du Moyen Age" which was not allowed by the Germans because it showed the strong links which existed at one time or another between France and England. Its author asked then the Germans to mark with red pencil (not blue !!) the paragraphs they objected to. This they did. The author translated all these passages into latin and had them printed in italics; this "revised" edition was submitted again to the Germans who passed it at once with a triumphant smile! All these very obvious passages became famous and were often quoted.

New philosophies, new trends of thought were born during the war. The sadness of the occupation, the shadow it threw are often reflected in them, perhaps most in the much discussed Existentialisme, possibly also the neothenisme. But what really matters is that people still thought and never allowed their prison days to let their minds go stale. They re-acted and this was shown in the many stories, most of them true, which were told. There is the one of the

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