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PER ARDUA AD ASTRA.

The Swiss Colony in Great Britain has not, we think, been made sufficiently aware of the interesting link that was established last year between Switzerland and the Royal Air Force. The link has nothing to do with flying or international politics; it is a gastronomic link, brought about through the initiative and the unsparing efforts of Mr. W. Bachmann in connection with the International Cookery Exhibition held at Berne — Hospes — in May 1954.

Mr. Bachmann is no stranger to readers of the Swiss Observer in whose pages many of his publications have received notice. His versatility is astounding. One of the foremost modern exponents of the art of cookery and a practical expert in every branch of catering, Mr. Bachmann is also an occasional author and publisher. His magnum opus "Professional Knowledge — The Art of Cookery", published in three volumes, was reviewed in these columns at the time of its appearance. The work was displayed at the Berne Exhibition and, we are happy to note, gained the well-deserved award of a gold medal and diploma.

The Cookery Exhibition in Berne included a special "British Week" of which Mr. Bachmann as Chairman of the British Organising Committee was put in charge. For some time past he had been negotiating with the Air Ministry in London with the object of a team representing the catering branch of the R.A.F. being allowed to participate officially in the Berne Exhibition. The sanction was given and a team chosen from the R.A.F. schools of cookery at Halton and Innsworth was duly entered. They and their exhibits were in due course flown to Berne in a specially chartered plane of Swissair.

At the exhibition the R.A.F. did extremely well. Their entries proved to be of a high standard and they were awarded four gold medals, five silver medals and one bronze medal.

No less successful, let us add, were the six British civilian chefs whom Mr. Bachmann had brought to Berne. In respect of the 24 exhibits submitted they actually collected 21 gold medals and three silver medals. Who said the English cannot cook?

For Mr. Bachmann the "British week" proved to be an arduous one. He averaged barely three hours sleep a night but he had the satisfaction of seeing his efforts crowned with success. The British Ambassador in Berne took a personal interest in the Exhibition and visited it several times.

A touch of colour was introduced by the Glasgow Police Pipe Band, 24 strong, all men over 6 ft. 6 inch. in height, who had come over for the British week. It must have been a novel experience to the staid people of Berne to see these Northern giants marching through their dignified streets with swinging kilts to the skirl of the bagpipes. We hope they liked it.

On his return to England, Mr. Bachmann was invited to attend a prize-giving ceremony at the Halton station of the Technical Training Command of the R.A.F. When he arrived there in the Air Marshal's staff car he was greeted, much to his surprise, by a fanfare of trumpets which, the Air Marshal assured him, was entirely in his, Mr. Bach-

mann's honour. In the course of the ceremony, Mr. Bachmann presented the medals and diplomas to the men of the R.A.F. schools of cookery who had gained awards in Berne. He also delivered a neatly turned speech to which the Air Marshal replied.

Another presentation ceremony was held at the Air Ministry in London at which Mr. Bachmann, on behalf of the Swiss Exhibition Authorities, handed to the Air Marshal in charge, the certificates and diplomas that had been allotted to the R.A.F.

This should have been the final curtain but the R.A.F. had not done with Mr. Bachmann yet. He received a request, later in the year, to visit and inspect the Cooks Training Section of the R.A.F. station at Cosford near Wolverhampton. There he addressed the trainees in a fine and stirring speech and was shown over the station. He considers the Cosford kitchens to be the most up-to-date and the general layout the best he had ever seen in any training school.

Only a few days after the Cosford trip, Mr. Bachmann received from the Air Ministry an invitation to act as chairman of the panel of judges for the 1954 Inter-Station Cookery Contest to be held at Upavon. He complied and spent two more strenuous days in the service of gastronomy. The menus submitted make one's mouth water. If "that's the stuff to give the troops" no epicure need dread life in the R.A.F.

All the foregoing is taken from a beautifully illustrated book written and published by Mr. W. Bachmann and dedicated to the R.A.F.

It is obvious, as one reads the book, that the author is taking pride in the fact that his knowledge and experience have received recognition from so important a body as the R.A.F. and the many high-placed officials connected with it. But he has every reason to be proud of the task he has performed with such painstaking efficiency. He fully deserves the distinctions conferred on him and we would, in fact, not be surprised to see Mr. Bachmann's name appear in a Honours List one of these days.

J.J.F.S.

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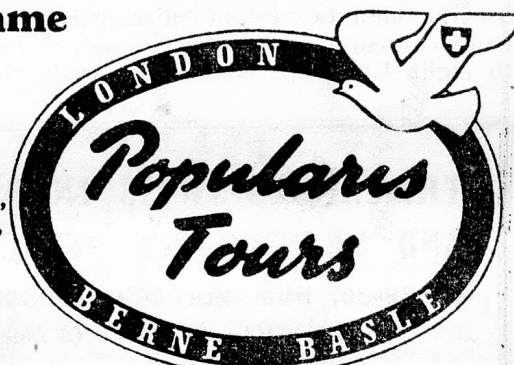
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