

Winged diplomat

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WINGED DIPLOMAT

In October 1943, Major Patrick R. Reid, M.B.E., M.C., escaped from the notorious P.O.W. Camp at Castle Colditz in Germany and reached Switzerland safely with three other companions. It was one of the few entirely successful escapes. When he saw how slowly repatriation of escapers was moving by the "underground" routes from Switzerland through France and Spain, which were kept busy to capacity repatriating British airmen shot down in France, Pat Reid decided to take a post as Assistant Military Attaché at the British Legation (now Embassy) in Berne. He worked under Colonel Henry Cartwright, himself an escaper of the First World War, who was Military Attaché from March 1943 until December 1946. The British Minister at that time was Sir Clifford Norton, the present Chairman of the Anglo-Swiss Society in Great Britain.

Shortly after taking his post Major Reid was granted diplomatic status in spite of his illegal entry into Switzerland. He met his wife, Janey Cabot of Boston, educated in England, who was marooned in Switzerland during the war. They got married in August 1943 at Thun, and their wedding breakfast took place at Neuhaus on the Lake of Thun.

When Pat Reid was in Berne, Air Commodore "Freddie" West, V.C., was Air Attaché and head of British Air Intelligence in Switzerland. "Winged Diplomat" is the life story of Air Commodore West which Patrick Reid has written in a most attractive, lively manner. The interesting point is that the entirely true story is told in the first person singular which makes for fascinating reading. Occasionally, the admiration which the author has for "Freddie" West runs away with him and results in what appears to be self-praise. But on the whole he succeeded most admirably in writing a "pseudo-auto-biography", giving a very clear and vivid picture of the portrayed man, whose personality impressed me as being quite different from that of the author, whom I had the pleasure of meeting at the annual gathering of the Anglo-Swiss Society in London last June.

The story itself is an excellent and thrilling narrative and never lacks in excitement. The highly unorthodox upbringing of young West, his student life in Italy and Switzerland, his gruesome experiences in the trenches of the First World War, his passion for flying, which took him to the Royal Flying Corps and later to the R.A.F., and his subsequent career as Air Attaché — the whole life of this engaging personality, who, incidentally, is still alive, is cleverly unfolded in this, the third full-length book by Major Reid, who has already made a name for himself with his two best-sellers, "The Colditz Story" and "The Latter Days".

What makes it of particular interest to Swiss readers is the scrupulously fair and revealing picture of neutral Switzerland during World War Two as seen through the eyes of two British officers and diplomats. Switzerland was a breeding ground for secret intrigue by the two opposing forces. An unceasing battle was waged on Swiss soil by the members of the Intelligence Services of the belligerent countries.

Those interested in flying will find the early history of the Royal Air Force, its struggles and victories brilliantly

related by an expert. The book is not only a valuable documentary, but also an engrossing adventure story.

Mariann.

"Winged Diplomat" is illustrated by photographs and published by Chatto and Windus at 25s.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Every Thursday, from 6 to 7.30 p.m. — Discussion Circle in English — Young men specially invited. Tea from 6 to 6.15 p.m. Swiss Y.M.C.A., London Central Y.M.C.A. Building, Great Russell Street, W.C.1.

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Every Tuesday, from 6 to 11 p.m. — Swiss Yass Club at "The Fountains Abbey", 109-111 Praed Street, W.2. Fully Licensed. Cordial Welcome to all yassers, old and young.

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Every Sunday 7 to 11 p.m. — The Swiss Catholic Youth Club — Social at Westminster Cathedral School, 48 Great Peter Street, S.W.1.

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Every 1st Wednesday at 7 p.m. — Swiss Social Meeting at 2 Sussex Place, Widcombe, Bath.

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Every Thursday from 7.30 p.m. to 10 p.m. — Unione Ticinese — meets at the Swiss Hostel for Girls, 9 Belsize Grove, N.W.3. All Ticinese welcome. The "Corale" rehearses from 8 p.m. to 9 p.m.

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Sunday, 19th August — Swiss Club Manchester — Ramble to Ladybower and Bamford.

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24th-26th August 1962 — Assembly of the Swiss Abroad — Sion (Valais)

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Thursday, 30th August — Swiss Club Manchester — Monthly Meeting.

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August 1962 — City Swiss Club — No Meetings.

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August 1962 — Swiss Mercantile Society — No Meetings.

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August 1962 — Swiss Rifle Association — No Shooting.

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Sunday, 16th September — Swiss Club Manchester — Ramble to Stanage Edge and Hathersage and Bamford.

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Friday, 16th November 1962 — City Swiss Club — Annual Banquet and Ball — Dorchester Hotel (Ballroom), 7.30 p.m. for 8 p.m.

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Wednesday, 12th December 1962 — City Swiss Club — Christmas Dinner — Dorchester Hotel (Orchid Suite), at 6.30 for 7 p.m.