

# Swiss Mercantile Society

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opportunity, one which also has its pleasant and more restful aspects — a change from the days when he shouldered the responsibility of taking decision in the name of the whole country at international negotiations.

P.M.B.

# NEWS FROM THE COLONY

## Swiss Mercantile Society

### “ASTERIX” IN SWITZERLAND

*Asterix's* reputation is firmly established on the Continent. He and his Gargantuan friend *Obelix* are two heroes from Gaul whose adventures are depicted in a highly-successful series of illustrated books. The series, which has been the rage of France for years, sees *Asterix* and *Obelix* live through their adventures in every country of Roman-occupied Europe. The humour of the script and the cartoons (respectively by Gosciny and Underzo) pertain to their grotesque exaggeration and the transposition of modern reality to Roman days.

*Asterix* has penetrated the British market for some years. There are at least nine titles, including *Asterix in Britain*, *Asterix at the Olympics* and *Asterix and Cleopatra*. Now, the series has been enriched with the addition of *Asterix in Switzerland* — adaptation of *Asterix chez les Helvetes*. The book is published by Brock Hampton Press, Leicester and costs 90p. Although the humour and originality which has ensured the success of the series on the Continent would seem more likely to appeal to a Latin mind, it appears that it has caught on here. One reason for being doubtful of the success in Britain of the formula is that it relies to a great extent of schoolroom reminiscences, and more particularly, Latin and history lessons. More emphasis is laid on such subjects in French schools and *Asterix* should thus amuse youth of a certain age, but not young children. The English translation remains close to the spirit and wit of the original.



### FISHERMEN AGAINST GAS PIPELINE IN LAKE GENEVA

The association of professional fishermen in Lake Geneva are to launch a political action against the projected construction of a gas pipeline under the Lake.

The natural gas company GASNAT, which will supply Switzerland with North Sea gas from Holland, plans to build the pipeline next year. It will carry gas brought down the Rhone Valley up to Villeneuve, at the end of the Lake, to Geneva and Lausanne. The pipeline would rest on the lake bed and connections would branch off to supply communities on the lakeshore.

The fishermen claim that the system is unsafe and that a fracture of the pipeline would have grave environmental consequences. They insist that the pipeline should be built alongside the present motorway joining the two ends of the Lake.

The twenty members of the Swiss Mercantile Society who were at Swiss House for the March Meeting enjoyed an exceptionally good film show. Three films were on the programme, one on Australia, one on Japan and one by a member, Mr. F. G. Sommer, on the historical celebrations held in Berne in the fifties to celebrate the 600th anniversary of that city's entry into the Confederation.

The film on Australia urged one to leave the cramped British Isles to enjoy the sun and prosperity of the expanses of a virgin continent. The film led us to a tour of that huge island — starting at Sydney, and continuing with Melbourne, Adelaide, Perth and the other coastal cities in which most of the population is concentrated, it brought us back after a full circle to the point of departure. The film had some beautiful views of the inside and wild reaches of this near-empty continent. The film on Japan had been supplied by the Japanese Tourist Office. It naturally dwelt on that country's phenomenal economic expansion, but also gave us insight into the Japanese way of life and offered glimpses into the country's beauty.

Mr. Sommer's film was in colour and showed a memorable procession in front of the Federal Palace. The dresses of spectators and the scarcity of cars in the street immediately indicated that Mr. Sommer had shot that film at least twenty years ago. Amateur films in colour were evidently as good technically then as they are today. It was striking to compare the seeming emptiness of the capital's street in the fifties with the traffic-clogged situation today.

As usual, the meeting was followed with beer and conversation in the Committee Room downstairs.

Prior to the film show, Mr. A. Jaccard, the President, told members that council permission had not yet been obtained for renewal work on the S.M.S. school of language, which is housed in Swiss House. The premises were bought last year with the help of the Society at home. Members had been told at previous meetings that part of the difficulty resided in neighbour's objections to the proposed works. Meanwhile, the nearly 300 students of the school will have to continue their studies. Mr. Jaccard stressed how important it was to continue normal teaching activities. Any interruption with the school's routine would have damaging effects and mean new efforts to build up attendance to its previous level. Earnest attempts to find temporary premises made in every

quarter — from the Salvation Army to British Rail proved vain. A solution seemed however to have been found thanks to the Swiss Catholic Mission, which is to put its Great Peter Street premises at the disposal of the school. Those premises are large enough to cater for about half the S.M.S.'s student enrolment.

### Concert at Endell Street

A concert was held in aid of the Swiss Church of London under the auspices of the Nouvelle Societe Helvetique on March 30th. This second edition of an event introduced over a year ago at the Swiss Church attracted a fair attendance in the quality of the performance certainly deserved a greater turn-up. Melodies from Mendelssohn, Telemann, Brahms and J.S. Bach resounded under the curved ceiling of the 19th Century Hall. An excellent performance was put up by Christine Sewell (mezzo soprano), Robert Bossert (violin) and Lennard Rabes (organ). The Cantata No. 14 “*Fleuch des Luste Zauberauen*” by Telemann was particularly moving.

Dear Sir,

*Having just returned from a wonderful ski-ing holiday in Switzerland with the Auslandschweizer for the fourth time, I feel I must write to you to let you know what an enjoyable time I had and to ask you if you would please give this holiday scheme a little publicity.*

*There were in all 35 of us from all different countries, and again I was the only English person there.*

*I feel that if only more people knew of this holiday more people would participate.*

*The ski-ing holiday this time was held in a lovely chalet in Schonreid. We skied most of the morning and afternoon, taking a picnic up the mountain for lunch. In the evening, we had films, lectures, parties or played Jass! (my favourite!).*

*Information can be obtained from the Swiss Embassy, or direct from:  
Auslandschweizersekretariates,  
Alpenstrasse 26  
3006 BERN  
Switzerland.*

Claire Bertschinger