

News from the colony

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agreement between Switzerland and Great Britain, and a few points have been pointed out to the Commission.

The Commission's representatives also actively participated in the 8th revision of the old age and invalidity insurance, which brings great advantages for the Swiss abroad and a new chance to join. I should like all Presidents to recommend it to their members.

The Commission is looking into the question of certain facilities for Swiss wishing to study at Swiss universities.

A Commission set up by the Federal Council brought out a report on the Swiss schools abroad, which is at present with the Government. Its Chairman, Prof. Roth, reported on the findings of the Commission. There is no doubt that the schools play a valuable part in the *présence de la Suisse* abroad.

The Commission also accepted the reports of the various services of the Secretariat. A special mention should be made of the youth camps in summer and winter. (*At this point one should add*

that Father Bossard made an additional report on the valuable work done by the youth service of the Secretariat and he thanked Mr. M. Ney, Director, and Mr. Ph. Garraux, inland member of the Commission, both present at the meeting, for their ready help in the interest of the youth work done by the Swiss Churches in London.)

The publication "Weltschweizer" is to be recommended, too. It is an interesting illustrated magazine specially for young people, free of charge.

Furthermore, the tape recordings deserve mention here, a series of topical discussions of problems affecting Switzerland. They are due to the initiative of the Swiss Short Wave Services and are called "Forum Helveticum". So far, the subjects include "Relations between Switzerland and UNO", "Political Rights and Duties for the Swiss Abroad", "Development Aid", "Problem of lack of voting participation", "Total defence" etc. They are to be had free of charge for the use of societies.

At the March meeting, the Commission approved the plans for the 51st Assembly in St. Gall from 17th-19th August. The theme will be "Activities of Swiss Societies Abroad". I have been asked to talk on the London Group of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique. I should like to extend a very warm invitation to all Swiss from the UK to attend this worthwhile event.

Lastly, I should like to say that I attended two meetings of the Council of the Solidarity Fund of the Swiss Abroad, on which I am one of, I believe, four individual members from abroad. Some far-reaching changes in the structure of the Fund have been worked out. It is fair to say that the solidarity aspect of the Fund has not much pull with our compatriots. Therefore, the investment aspect has been strengthened. There is but a modest number of members in Great Britain, and I should like to ask the presidents to encourage their members to join.

MM



VACANCY at the Swiss Embassy in London

There will be a vacancy for a nightwatchman in the near future. Persons of Swiss nationality, speaking one of our national languages with English, with experience as a watchman or in a similar post, and who think they would be able to fulfil the requirements of such an appointment, are requested to apply to SWISS EMBASSY, 16-18 Montagu Place, London W1H 2BQ



NEWS FROM THE COLONY

Former Swiss of England helps to protect Bangladesh from starvation

A recent report on Bangladesh in the French daily *Le Monde* described the massive relief task undertaken by the United Nations. Although the drought and famine hitting parts of India and West Africa are at present given more coverage, one should not forget that overpopulated Bangladesh has been on the verge of famine ever since it acquired independence after the December 1971 war. The country's foreign exchange is virtually all used on buying essential rice. The disruption caused by the war and the breakdown of the communications system have made the situation all the more complex.

A year ago we reported that *Dr. Victor Umbricht*, a former Ciba official who has spent many years in England, had been appointed as director of the UN relief organisation in Bangladesh. He is still occupying this vital job and co-ordinating the resources of over 30 humanitarian institutions. Quoted by *Le Monde*, *Dr. Umbricht* likes to compare the international relief operations under way in Bangladesh to the post-war Marshal Plan. Considering that 1.3 billion dollars had been spent or committed to helping Bangladesh at the end of last year, this comparison doesn't seem all that extravagant. *Dr. Umbricht* finds that world response to this new country's distress has been "marvellous". In a recent issue of the Ciba-Geigy Journal, he expresses considerable optimism in its future.

Although 80 million people crammed in an area the size of England, live at subsistence level, *Dr. Umbricht* believes that they have enough space for their food. Ciba-Geigy have played an important role in helping Bangladesh out of its troubles. Following an unexpected locust invasion, the company sent five plane-loads of the necessary pesticide. It has recently been invited by the Bangladesh government to open new facilities in Dacca. Thus the most important international relief job in the world is held by a compatriot whom many in the Colony remember from his stay in England.

Swiss Bank Corporation— Mr. A. E. Wilkins' retirement

Through his position as Deputy Manager at the London Office of the Swiss Bank Corporation, *Mr. Wilkins* has become well known to many members of the Swiss Colony here and we are glad to wish him well, after nearly half a century with the Bank, on his retirement on the 31st of May.

Mr. Wilkins joined the London Office in 1925 and went to Switzerland in 1928 where he was employed for some years in the Zurich and Lausanne offices respectively. He returned to London in 1932 where, apart from the inevitable period of war service, he has been based ever since.

He was appointed to the rank of Attorney in 1947, to Sub Manager in 1956 and to Deputy Manager in 1963. Always active in business and social life,

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SWISS CLUB MANCHESTER

Members of the Swiss Club, Manchester, and their friends met once more at the lovely and imposing premises of this great Swiss Firm, not only to admire an interesting programme of films but to enjoy at the same time their generous hospitality to the full.

It was on the evening of the 12th April that over forty people, including some children, were welcomed by the President and everybody sat down to a nicely presented buffet of an exquisite choice, and plenty of it.

After coffee, the company assembled in the spacious lecture theatre to admire a film made by Messrs. Ciba-Geigy about the City of Basle, which must have awakened many memories of the beautiful town. The main film was the Swiss Classic in the 50's called "Oberstadtgasse". Everybody enjoyed the show and appreciated the outstanding performance of Schaggi Streuli and Emil Hegrenschwyler and many more famous actors and actresses. The end of the film must have come as a relief for many present, who at times must have felt some anxiety as to the outcome of it.

A great evening, indeed, for young and old and sincere thanks are due to both the hosts and the organising committee, coupled with our wish and hope that in the not too distant future a similar happy function may be offered to us.

E. B.

SWISS CINEMA ON SHOW AT THE NATIONAL FILM THEATRE

A ten-day Swiss film season at the National Film Theatre in London was inaugurated by a Reception at the Embassy in early June. An unusually large and motley crowd gathered in the Embassy Salon to mark the première of

Swiss cinema abroad sponsored by the Pro Helvetia Foundation and the NFI. Those who participate in many Colony events found few known faces. Most of the guests had been invited from show-business and artistic circles.

When the time of the showing approached, everyone took to their cars and moved to the South Bank. The poor-

COMMENT

Six months have elapsed since our first Special Issue was sent to all the Swiss of this country. Like its predecessor, this special number is sent to you by the Swiss Government as part of its policy of keeping alive the bonds between 300,000 Swiss abroad and their Motherland. Ever since the Swiss at home have voted a new article in the Constitution fostering ties with their compatriots abroad, Berne has taken special pains to keep its expatriate nationals within the fold. You may have forgotten about that Swiss passport tucked away in the attic: Berne has asked us to remind you of its existence by sending you this special number. Its contents have been supplied to us from the Secretariat for the Swiss Abroad and the Embassy in London. It will be used in a similar publication to be distributed to the Swiss of Canada. Further special issues should soon reach all the Swiss living in the English speaking world. As this particular one is intended for every Swiss or Swiss-British national in Britain (there are over 14,000 of them), and not only to our readers, some of its material may already have appeared in our regular issues. Its news items may in particular appear a little old. We apologize for this to our subscribers and hope that those who are not will want to know more about Swiss events and subscribe to the Swiss Observer. To this end, we have

enclosed subscription slips in the hope that they will prove as efficient as they did last time, when we welcomed several hundred new readers. Our first special issue also encouraged many people to ring the Embassy for more details on Swiss Old Age Insurance and Pension, a major topic on which we give further precisions here.

In this issue, you are again reminded of the existence of institutions specially committed to the wellbeing of the Swiss living outside their homeland. At the head of these institutions is the Commission for the Swiss Abroad to which the Swiss of Britain are represented by two delegates (one from the North and one from the South) and their deputies. The delegate from the South reports in this issue on the recent activities of the Commission. A chart also represents the manifold activities of the Secretariat of the Swiss Abroad. The importance of its work is evident to the few "patriots" from Britain who manage to attend the annual assemblies for the Swiss abroad. This year, the Assembly will be held in St. Gall and examine the situation of Swiss societies abroad.

This subject may not appeal greatly to the majority of the Swiss in Britain who do not turn up at Swiss functions, but a trip to St. Gall and a weekend in a congenial and inspiring atmosphere may tempt some to make the journey.

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