

SMS London and the Schweizerische Bundesfeierspende

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SMS LONDON AND THE SCHWEIZERISCHE BUNDESFEIERSPENDE

In a recent issue we reported on the 90th anniversary celebration of the Swiss Mercantile Society in London. Still in connection with this, three events took place early in February.

On Friday, 2nd February, the Swiss Ambassador, Dr. Ernesto Thalman, accompanied by the Economic Counsellor, Dr. J. -P. Zehnder, paid an **official visit to the College** in Fitzroy Square. At the same time, the President of the Swiss National Day Fund (Bundesfeierspende), Mr. Adolf Ehrsam, and his wife, visited the College and saw for themselves not only the valuable work being carried out at this educational establishment, but also how the financial gift of the Fund for refurbishing the College has been used. An invitation had been sent to the S.K.V. in Switzerland, but unfortunately, they had been unable to send a delegate to the special event. The visitors were received by the President and members of Council and Committees, and they met the teaching staff headed by the Principal, Mr. E. W. Makin, M.A., and the Vice-Principal, Mr. L. Cane, B.A. The party went round the College and sat in on some of the classes, including the newly-equipped language laboratory.

The second event that day was a **luncheon at the Swiss Embassy**, which the Ambassador gave in honour of the College and Mr. and Mrs. Ehrsam. The S.M.S. President, Mr. F. O. Hausermann, members of Council and Committees, Principal and Vice-Principal, Mrs. M. Meier, President of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique, herself a member of the Bundesfeierspende, as well as some members of the Embassy made up the party. (Mr. and Mrs. Ehrsam had been the guests of the N.S.H. the previous evening.) After the excellent luncheon, the Ambassador welcomed the guests and commented favourably on the work done by the College. Mr. Hausermann replied for the guests.

The third event took place the following day, Saturday, 3rd February, at London's Dorchester Hotel. It was the **90th Anniversary Year Dinner and Dance** of the Swiss Mercantile Society. It was attended by exactly 100 members and friends, including some students. As always, it was a most friendly gathering, and the President, Mr. F. O. Hausermann, was able to welcome a number of guests. He welcomed the Swiss Ambassador and Madame Ernesto Thalman and regretted that this would be their last

Annual Dinner before their retirement in November. He expressed appreciation of the interest the Ambassador had taken in the affairs of Society and College.

Next he welcomed the second guests of honour, Mr. and Mrs. Ehrsam in his capacity as President of the Swiss National Day Fund. He thanked him for the "sizeable sum" which the Fund had given the College and stressed how glad the S.M.S. was to be able to extend hospitality to Mr. and Mrs. Ehrsam.

The President next welcomed the representative of the Swiss Churches in London, this year Father Paul Bossard, and the President of the N.S.H. London Group, Mrs. Mariann Meier, who was also delegated by the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK. The Embassy, too, was well represented, Mr. and Mrs. Zehnder, Mr. and Mrs. Indermuehle, Mr. and Mrs. Keller and Consul and Mrs. Glauser. Mr. Hausermann also welcomed the Principal and Vice-Principal of the College and their ladies; Mrs. Kathleen Grob who were there at the head of three generations of her family, and last, but not least, the untiring Secretary, Mr. W. Burren and his wife, the chief organizer of the function.

The Swiss Ambassador, Dr. Ernesto Thalman, then proposed the toast of the Swiss Mercantile Society and its College. He referred to his visit to the College, and in a humorous way told a story of the importance of knowing the right language. He continued: "*In this day and age it is common knowledge that fluency in the major world languages can increase one's personal success enormously. What we don't always realise, perhaps is that along with words and grammar — like a gift wrapping, so to speak — comes a vast array of values, outlooks and habits; in short, a good part of the culture concerned.*" The Ambassador went on to say how important it was to learn a language in the country where it is spoken, and that the Swiss coming here to improve their English also had the advantage of looking at their Swiss background from outside and perhaps even of seeing themselves in a new perspective. He praised the College of the S.M.S. and congratulated the Society on their valuable work, so much of it done on a voluntary basis.

The next speaker was Mr. Ehrsam who spoke in English and without notes. He, too, said how much he was impressed by the College and its activities and great

aims and expressed satisfaction that the Swiss National Day Fund had been able to contribute towards the refurbishing of the school. He mentioned that the 1st August collection and sale of Pro Patria stamps in 1978 had been a great success and that most of the money would be for the benefit of the Swiss abroad, the Swiss elementary schools abroad and the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad, which runs the Secretariat in Berne. He also praised the Swiss outside Switzerland who themselves collect a fair amount of money every year by buying the 1st August badge. On behalf of the guests, he thanked the Society for their invitation and hospitality.

The second part of the evening was spent dancing to the excellent strict tempo dance music of Nat Temple and his band. Although the area of the dance floor was somewhat restricted, dancing went on with a swing, and two "Paul Jones" provided an opportunity of mixing. If the Dinner and Dance on 3rd February was anything to go by, the S.M.S. may look forward to its centenary in ten years time with satisfaction and hope.

M.M.

TRAVELLING THROUGH EUROPE WITH THE INTER-RAIL TICKET

In 1979 the Swiss transport undertakings are again offering youngsters the Inter-Rail season ticket enabling them to travel in Europe cheaply. An important innovation is that the age limit for obtaining this ticket has been raised from 23 to 26 without increasing the price.

The Inter-Rail season ticket is valid one month and entitles the holder to half-fare second-class travel in the country of residence and free travel on the state railways of the 20 other countries belonging to the scheme.

GRUYERES — NEW WAXWORKS MUSEUM

A new waxworks museum opened its doors in one of the towers of the fortress of Gruyères, displaying ten scenes of important events in Swiss history, such as William Tell at Altdorf, Winkelried at Sempach, Calvin at Geneva, Bonivard in the Castle of Chillon, Major Davel at Lausanne, Jean-Jacques Rousseau at Geneva, and Henri Dunant (the founder of the Red Cross) at Solferino.