

Society and social scene

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Have courage this Christmas

By Fr Paul Bossard

LOOKING at Christmas cards and all Christmas decorations I keep wondering whether they are apt to convey a message of strength and courage and a challenge to our usual way of life. They too often seem to suggest a flight into a fairy-world of dreams.

Let us consider for a moment – or meditate on it – what has really happened and what is happening when we celebrate Christmas. It is the primal source of Energy which lies at the depth of our ever expanding universe, the millions of brilliant suns, the huge galaxies and mysterious nebulas of compressed gasses and immense heat, and which is hidden in every tiny atom. It is the chief designer of our world, the inventor of human life and intelligence, who has entered our planet Earth, near the town of Bethlehem, in the disguise of a little, helpless child.

Had it been otherwise, had he

shown only a little bit of his tremendously energy, people would have been frightened to death, even to the present day! And what was his message? It was the same, whenever God had revealed himself to a person: "Fear not – I am with you – have courage – go and do what I am telling you!"

If we listen to this message in this context today, it is of greatest importance. We have become energy-conscious, afraid of wasting the existing resources

and scared of the still hidden nuclear powers and their destructive force.

We are facing world problems too huge for one man to tackle, or for one government or nation, or for a church. We must unite all possible forces of our world – or die. And we do not know how.

And here comes the Christmas message of the chief engineer of the universe: "Fear not – I am with you – have courage – go and do what I am telling you!"

Are we prepared to accept and work with it – work with this energy?

It is called Grace and has to do with gracefulness and love. Will we believe and trust in it? Will we accept the courage offered? Will we start today – or wait until it is too late? Will we give it a try with our little problems at home and at work? Will we find out that it really works?

The choice is ours – and there is only one way of finding out – to act upon it!

This courage, to act with confidence and trust in Him, I wish for me and for all of you this Christmas.

Bazaar had a festive air

ONCE again the Swiss Churches Bazaar, a bi-annual event, was held at the Methodist Central Hall in Westminster.

Ambassador C. Caillat declared the bazaar open and he and Madame Caillat were greeted by Mrs E. Crack, president of the Consistoire, Fr. P. Bossard and the Rev. U. Steiner. Madame Caillat was presented with a bunch of flowers by a little girl in Basle national costume.

The stalls were well stocked with goods donated by individuals and various firms. As usual the embassy stall with groceries and other wares straight from Switzerland attracted a lot of customers.

The youth club, and VEGSIL stall offered a variety of craft articles, such as pottery, toys, straw-stars, candles and cards. There was a white elephant stall, a stationery stall and clothes, embroidery and woollen goods were all on sale.

The "Frauenverein" sold jams, fruit, cakes and biscuits, bread, sausages and plants.

For the children a number of games had been organised as well as a childminding service.

The hall had been decorated

with flags and flowers, which helped to enhance the happy, festive, market atmosphere.

The Swiss Churches Bazaar is always a good opportunity to meet up with people one might not have seen for a long while or to make new acquaintances.

The buffet with bratwurst, sauerkraut, potato salad and frankfurters proved a main attraction, as did the splendid

cake-stall of the Mother's Group. About 500 lunch tickets were sold and scores of cakes. Gallons of tea, coffee and squash were drunk.

Feeding all these hungry mouths was no mean task for Mrs B. Kaluza and her helpers. Without a well-organised back-up troop of people who washed up non-stop, cleared tables and fetched and carried to and from

the kitchen, the operation would have ground to a halt.

Thanks are due to all who invested a great deal of time and effort into organising and preparing this year's Bazaar and to all who have contributed to make it again a happy and successful event: the bazaar committee, the two ladies groups (German and French-speaking) of the protestant church, the Swiss Catholic Committee, the Swiss Youth Club, the Mother's Group, the staff of the embassy and last but not least to the "money-minders" who looked after the proceeds of the bazaar, which amounted to approximately £5,000 and will be used in aid of the Swiss Churches in London.

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Mr Maurice Rothlisberger

MR Maurice Rothlisberger, Vice-President of the Swiss Benevolent Society, died after a short illness on October 16, in his 81st year.

The funeral service was held on October 22 at Beckenham Crematorium.

A full obituary will follow in the next issue of Swiss Observer.

Unione Ticinese Londra

THE Unione Ticinese's last three events have been a great success. First an unforgettable barbecue on the South Downs near Brighton, second a sightseeing trip to Knole Park, Sevenoaks and finally the traditional castagnata in Richmond.

To round off the year the organising committee is now looking forward to its biggest success and is hoping for a really good attendance at its Christmas dinner to take place at the Portman Hotel, London on Saturday, December 13.

At this event the committee would also like to welcome any new members of Ticinese origin living in the UK or any sympathisers of the Ticino canton and its traditions.

For a membership form and for details of the Christmas party please contact the Hon. Secretary Mr F. Allegranza, 41 Hare Lane, Claygate, Esher, Surrey. Telephone 78 62986.

Royal visit was the highlight of the year

By the Swiss Ambassador, M. Claude Caillat, speaking at the annual dinner of the Manchester Swiss Club.

MY first year as Swiss Ambassador to the Court of St. James's is nearly over. As a "starter", it has turned out to be an amazingly rich dish.

Dominating all other events was, of course, Her Majesty the Queen's official visit to Switzerland. It is no exaggeration to say that this was a highlight in British-Swiss relations.

You may know that, traditionally, the President of the Swiss Confederation does not leave Switzerland during his one year of office.

The Queen therefore went simply because she herself genuinely wanted to do so, knowing that her visit could not be reciprocated.

In my view, this makes the occasion all the more memorable; and judging by the warm welcome which the Swiss population extended to their royal guest, they must have thought so too.

That historic event was soon followed by high-level visits of the sort which, although part of the political routine, are nonetheless essential to the furtherance of good relations between

traditionally friendly countries.

In the summer the Lord Chancellor flew to Berne to meet his Swiss opposite number at the helm of the Department of Justice and Police, Federal Councillor Kurt Furgler. They exchanged ideas that might lead in the fairly near future to increased cooperation between the judicial systems of the two countries.

It was exactly 100 years ago, in November 1880, that the British Ambassador in Berne and Mr. Furgler's predecessor of that time signed an agreement for the mutual extradition of fugitive criminals. This agreement is still in force and constitutes a major part of the whole complex of legal co-operation.

Coming back to the calendar of this year's bilateral political

events, may I draw your attention to the most recent one, the visit by our Foreign Minister to the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs.

Only yesterday Federal Councillor Pierre Aubert concluded three days of talks with Lord Carrington. As there are virtually no bones of contention in bilateral British-Swiss relations, the two Ministers exchanged views on various issues affecting international cooperation or stability, and it was again obvious to what a high degree the attitudes and policies of our two countries coincide.

In talking about high-level visits I have, of course, focused on only one limited aspect of official British-Swiss exchanges during the year.

In all fairness I should at least make collective mention of the countless contacts established by visiting artists, businessmen or simply tourists. These can promote good relations as much as politicians would like to do.

Having lived here for nearly a year, and with memories of an earlier stay in this country, I can well understand why so many of my compatriots choose Britain as their second home.

The British and the Swiss share very many ideas and ideals. And as to our British friends' views on the Swiss community in these Islands, I can assure you that I have never heard any complaints. So may it remain that way.

The Embassy in London and its ally here in Manchester, the Consulate General, will continue to do their best to preserve this happy state of relations, so that you may all continue to prosper over here.



MEMBERS of the London Stamm of the Hotel School of Lausanne pictured during a wine tasting given by John Harvey and Sons. They are (left to right) René Ulrich, Bernard Jammet, Stammvater Gary Hall, host John

Harvey, Samuel Duni and François Sigrüst. The London Stamm has in its ranks many leading London hotel managers, as well as proprietors of top hotels in all parts of Britain.

Otto Bucher - a friend to Britain

A WELL known member of the Swiss community in London, Mr Alfred Otto Bucher, died in September at the age of 86.

Otto Bucher was born in Romanshorn in 1894. He began his long association with Great Britain after the First World War by working for the British Ministry of Munitions in Berne.

While serving in the Swiss army he helped to organise a number of temporary hospitals during the great influenza epidemic at the end of the First World War.

Subsequently he worked for a number of years for the League of Nations in Geneva where he met and married his wife Doris, née Lawrence.

Otto Bucher, who had studied art at the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Geneva, came to England in 1935 with his family and established himself as a picture restorer in St James's in London.

His own paintings showed the influence of Ferdinand Hodler whose work he greatly admired.

Otto Bucher restored paintings in the Knightsbridge Guards Barracks, the Wellington Barracks and in many country houses as well as at the Swiss Embassy and for members of the Swiss community in Great Britain.

After the Second World War he used to visit Berne to restore paintings at the Historical Museum.

Otto Bucher, who had a great capacity for friendship, was a member of the City Swiss Club and the Helvetica Lodge.

His active life was curtailed by a heart attack in 1962.

Twelve years ago he retired to Rustington in Sussex. His wife died in 1974.

During the last three years of his life Otto Bucher's health became increasingly frail. He divided his time between his two married daughters in Sussex and Geneva.

He died after a short illness in a nursing home in Littlehampton.

We extend our sympathy to his two daughters and four grandchildren.

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Change at the embassy

DEFENCE Attaché Colonel Werner Dudli left England at the end of November to take up a new position in the airforce command in Berne.

He has been replaced by Brigadier Heinrich Mändli, from Lufen/Uhwiesen/ZH.

Brigadier Mändli is married and the father of four children.

He has been an officer in the Swiss Army since 1949, first with the infantry and subsequently with the airforce and air defence command. His last position was commander of the airforce brigade.

Vintage glider wins award

THREE years ago Swiss gliding enthusiast Hugo Roth and his brother found an old Spyr glider rotting in an open-ended shed high in the mountains at Hochwald.

They spent nearly 3,000 hours restoring the machine. And their efforts have paid off.

For at the recent international vintage glider rally in Yorkshire they won a top award in the concours d'élégance.

Six of the 52 entries at the rally came from Switzerland.

But many of the other gliders taking part were of Swiss manufacture.

The international rallies always open and close with the ringing of a Swiss cow bell, presented when the event was held at Gruyères five years ago.

Pick up a poster

THE Swiss Centre restaurants' poster campaign in London tube stations featuring two Swiss dolls - reproduced on our cover this month - has been a great success. So many people have asked for copies that they have now been reprinted.

They are being given away free with purchases at the Swiss Gift Shop.

Scottish celebrations

THE Glasgow-based West of Scotland Swiss Club is holding its annual Christmas party at Mrs Galloway's, 37 Falkland Street, Glasgow, on Friday, December 12.

The club's next big social event will be a dinner dance on Friday, February 20, when they will be joined by compatriots from Dunfermline and Edinburgh.

IN London in search of the Miss World title, Miss Switzerland found time in a tight schedule to visit handicapped children at the Swiss Centre.

Miss Switzerland, 22-year-old Jeannette Linkheil from Lausanne, might have been voted a 'miss' by the contest judges but she certainly proved a 'hit' with the youngsters, pupils of the Oliver Wells School, Milton Keynes.

Pierre Aubert visits London

THE Madrid Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe was the main item on the agenda when Federal Councillor Pierre Aubert, head of the Department for Foreign Affairs, had talks with the British Foreign Minister, Lord Carrington, in London last month.

Lord Carrington and Councillor Aubert also discussed the Iran-Iraq war.

MHM

Hostel closed

PLEASE note that the Swiss Hostel for Girls, 9-11 Belsize Grove, London NW3 has been closed.