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NEWS FROM THE COLONY

Career of a Swiss Technician in The UK

A study of the careers of the most successful Swiss in Great Britain would show a high percentage in the import trade, hotel keeping, banking, commerce and in manufacturing. Most of the Swiss who have reached eminent positions in these fields came to Britain between the wars at a time when conditions were more favorable than they are now for success.

Mr. John Bader, a compatriot who runs a small engineering firm in St. Albans, probably never intended to make a career in Britain. With a diploma from the Technical College of Saint Imier, he arrived in Britain in 1947 at a time when most of the "successful" Swiss of Britain were already established in business, to work in a cam machining workshop which had recently been set up by another compatriot, Mr. L. O. Adam. A few years later, the L. O. Adam Engineering Company decided to abandon making cams and offered Mr. Bader the opportunity to carry on this branch. With the help of a partner responsible for accounts and management, Mr. Bader developed the business into a small factory, Cam Profiles Ltd., situated in a residential street in St. Albans.

Starting with about three machines lent by his former employer, one of which, an American milling machine, still works adequately today, Mr. Bader expanded Cam Profiles Ltd. into a 60 employee affair recognised in the business for its quality production. Cams are moving mechanical parts of irregular shape, and are more complicated than the majority of moving parts, which have a circular cross section easily machined into shape by standard tools. The profiles produced by Mr. Bader's company have intricate shapes requiring elaborate copying machines working on a master plate, equally produced by Cam Profiles specialists. Mr. L. O. Adam, the former owner of the firm, launched several firms in his career. One of them, Anglo-Swiss Screw Company, is a public enterprise.

Mr. Bader says that it would be extremely difficult to start a similar company today. The post-war reconstruction and the booming fifties helped Cam Profiles to success. The company could have expanded much faster than it did, but both partners agreed that the aim should not be expansion alone, but good service and satisfied customers. As for so many

self-employed persons, a choice had to be made between home life and business: two demanding priorities. Mr. Bader never accepted to neglect one for the other and refused to work long extra hours over his drawing board even if at the cost of the growth of his business.

Cam Profiles premises are at Waverley Road, St. Albans. Behind a rectangular one-storey administrative building are three workshops. The most important one, immediately adjacent to the administrative block, houses the main production of cams and profiles. A second smaller workshop is used for completing certain workpieces and for preparing cutting tools. The third workshop specialises in the adaptation of old machines to specific requirements in the manufacture of profiling masters.

Led by Mr. Bader, I made a tour of the workshops. At the entrance of the production floor there were two elderly workers, sand-papering newly manufactured cylindrical cams. The purpose was to clean off the beard, before being sent to Coventry for hardening. Owing to the complex treatment required by these machine components, they are sent from one small specialist firm to the other. Cam Profiles mill and grind the pieces into the right profile, another company does the necessary lathe-work and another, in Coventry, hardens their surface by a special process. A component therefore travels several hundred miles before it is ready for delivery to the customer.

Workers were posted in front of their machines waiting for them to accomplish the work they had been set to do. Spindles, chucks, drills, and milling wheels were whirling in a spray of lubricating liquid in every machine on the floor. We stopped to admire a huge copying machine, a German model which had cost £25,000 three years ago. It was in the process of slowly grinding into shape a large cam for a marine diesel motor. A worker stood by indolently as the monster churned away. The neighbouring machine was of a similar type. Built in America, it had cost £20,000 and was running constantly in order to pay for itself.

Existing machinery often had to be adapted to a specific job. One such device was used to machine radial grooves in a circular workpiece had been specially designed by Mr. Bader and adapted on a second-hand machine. We saw it in operation as its hydraulically actuated cutting tool neatly chipped away pieces of steel with clockwork regularity. Other similar machines were arrayed in the second workshop. Mr. Bader explained

that it is cheaper to buy old machinery (some ancient lathes can be brought for as little as £50) and spend time refurbishing them for particular jobs than to buy brand new equipment. The price of machines has soared tremendously in the last ten years and every manager has to think twice when he decides to increase his capital equipment.

Every machine must pay its way. One instance that comes to mind in this connection is a strike in a cigarette-paper factory in France after management had asked the staff to work week-ends to ensure the continuous run of a highly sophisticated machine which it had just brought. The workforce had flatly refused, despite the offer of shorter hours and more pay. Mr. Bader gets similar reactions from his workers because they could operate two machines at the same time. Once one is set, it will do its machining job by itself. But the workers have refused the idea, with the result that they spend much of their time waiting for machining jobs to be completed while other machines are lying idle.

Technical decisions and the engineering calculations are carried out in Mr. Bader's small office. Its stark furniture consists of a large drawing board and a desk covered with rolls of blueprints and an Olivetti computer. This apparatus is used to calculate the coordinates of profiles obeying mathematical functions. The data is sent to the tooling workshop and used for the manufacture of masters. This is the only piece of electronic equipment used at Cam Profiles. Mr. Bader said that numerical control was too expensive and presented considerable disadvantages for his type of business.

Not only does Mr. Bader have to translate the complex requirements of his customers in a language under-

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standable to his machine operators, he also has to know how to man these machines. If a worker on the shop floor has problems, there must be someone to help him out or else all work grinds to a standstill. Mr. Bader knows how to handle every piece of equipment at Cam Profile as well or better than the men on his payroll. He reckons there is no machining job which he could not do better than his men. "I've always had a love of mechanics" he said. This competence naturally fosters respect and authority. Workers have little regard for ivory tower engineers who are hardly ever seen near a machine. Mr. Bader not infrequently pulls on his white overall and gets his hands into the oil and grime of a sifting machine.

The most difficult problems faced by Cam Profiles is finding adequate labour. Good apprentices are harder to find. They claim for more wages and less work. Despite the thousands of unemployed in this country, small engineering firms are struggling to find the men they need and vying with each other for their ability. The workers concerned are the winners as they choose the employer with the better offer. This will go on as long as employers do not organise a common front.

But there are problems facing many other factory managers, and Mr. Bader certainly doesn't intend to have blood pressure troubles . . .

(PMB)

NATIONAL DAY IN MANCHESTER

Our people in Switzerland and the great multitude of compatriots scattered all over the world had once again the opportunity to meet between themselves, around their elected leaders and listen patiently but quite often with great interest to the appointed "Festredner" in the many languages of their host-countries, warm their hearts and minds at the many first of August fires, the beacon-lights of freedom, of our national unity, a vivid reminder of a great but not always easy past but also so much more showing us the long way which still lies in front of us.

Illness having prevented the writer from celebrating last year's festivities, Divine Providence allowed him this year not only to participate in the function of the Swiss Club of Bergamo, a somewhat early gathering, but on his return-journey from the Continent to stop at the Cotton Hotel in Knutsford near Manchester to meet his own people. Strange as it may sound, Swiss abroad are bound to assimilate some of the characteristics and the way of life of their countries of adoption but even in doing so, in the very essence and deepest down they remain true sons and daughters of their homeland, sharing to the full the hopes and fears of their compatriots at home. We think

of the many problems they are faced with, of the "Ueberfremdung" which may, if unchecked, endanger the way of life at home; we think of the many "Friedensapostel" who may, unwillingly expose our Country to risks nobody wants. For some of our neighbours it may be today a matter of convenience if not profitability to show themselves in the skin of a peaceful lamb, but let time change or new situations arise, as experience has shown us time and time again, then the wolf will show his teeth. For this we must be prepared not to let our Land become an "Ueberfremdete und wehrlose Schweiz". The fact that the great majority of our people, the young ones included, gather on such occasions in great number to honour their Country augures well for the future.

The Committee of the Swiss Club, Manchester, can be well pleased, and rightly so, with the response to its call, which was quite a massive one, all generations being well-represented and fully-supported by our many faithful British friends. From the Yorkshire Swiss Club attended the vice-president and few prominent members, who did not fear the long journey to partake in this particular evening. It should be mentioned that the Cotton Hotel is going full out to make such a gathering particularly welcome, opening to them their large but homely and richly decorated rooms and the well-stocked bar being one of the highly patronized focal points, a real booster to friendly conversation and fellowship. Entering the place we could admire the large Consular Swiss Flag, and smaller table-flags and lanterns in profusion.

Our President, Dr. Hans Rudi Bolliger, being absent in Switzerland it was for our Vice-President, Mr. Peter Senn, to open the proceedings, which must have been one of his "Premieres". He did this in a most friendly and humorous way, endearing him at once to all of us. He welcomed specially our Consul-General and Madame Born and brought through the good offices of Mr. E. Berner the good wishes and best greetings of the Consul-General of Milano, Dr. Georges Bonnant, after which he wished everybody a good evening.

It was a buffet-dinner, consisting of "Schueblig" specially flown in by Swiss-Air and for this due thanks were expressed to Mr. Weber, unfortunately not with us. They were accompanied by a good and appetising selection of salads, eventually to be followed by delicious strawberry tartlets as only a Committee member as Mr. Duerig could produce, and this without profit. Wines of good choice could be had in abundance at moderate prices, to be followed, eventually, by a good cup of coffee.

Hans of Switzerland, by his real name Mr. Hans Bertulett, a visitor from Yorkshire, always in great demand for his exceptional good voice

and his excellent concertina-playing and who would entertain us for the later part of the evening, gave the "signal-tune" for our Vice-President to address us.

He started by reading a greeting-telegram from our President and thanked Mr. and Mrs. Born for his attendance and continuous support and wishing him also many happy returns, this particular day being his birthday. Mr. Senn mentioned that a good attendance as this one made any of our events jolly and general, worth holding, and that on this evening all four of our national languages were present, romansch included. After a special reference and thanks to the Swiss-Air in connection with operation "Schueblig", he invited our Consul-General to speak to us.

This he did and we who know him were certainly not disappointed, everybody listening to him with great attention and interest. He started by telling us how much he and his wife felt "en famille" with us and thanking all the members of the Committee for all the work they do to bring Swiss together, as on such occasions. He reminded us of the Ruetli-Pact whose 681st birthday we were celebrating and what all this meant to us, in past history and the rapid political and economical developments with which we are daily confronted. He spoke of our Neutrality, practical and beneficial but entailing many obligations. Its impact on our policy regarding the United Nations and the European Economic Communities and the inherent danger that we may lose contact in many international spheres. Our continuing interest in E.F.T.A. and the quest of a modus vivendi with the Communities. He touched also on such problems as the Old Age and Survivors Insurance Scheme, the substantial increases promised for next year. The financial aid to be given to Swiss who find themselves in distress. Political rights of the Swiss abroad to be exercised at home. All this he explained to us in a very clear and concise way, the pros and contras. He concluded by telling us, and who does not know it, that we are most privileged to live in a country with a tolerant and understanding attitude, for which we can have only feelings of satisfaction and gratitude. His words were warmly applauded and to conclude the official part of the evening we could hear, clearly and loudly, the tape-recorded message of Mr. Nello Ceilo, the President of the Swiss Confederation, after which everybody joined in the singing of the "Schweizer-Psalm".

It was now for "Hans" of Switzerland to take over and soon we were engrossed by his folk-songs, his voice, his music, and he invited us to dance, starting with a snow-ball dance led by Mr. and Mrs. Born and another couple. This happy and vivacious atmosphere was to last for the rest of the evening,